

16th December 2021

Dear Colleague

Re: Omicron and Reopening of Schools and Colleges in January 2022

We hope you are well. We write further to the letter we sent you earlier in the week to provide our guidance on the reopening of schools and colleges in the spring term. As a result of the surge in cases of the coronavirus linked to the new Omicron variant, school and college employers are required to take steps to demonstrate that they have in place appropriate measures to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils.

All school and college employers have been reminded of the need to update risk assessments in consultation with staff and trade unions. Employers must take all reasonably practicable steps to demonstrate that they have in place appropriate measures to safeguard the health and safety of staff and pupils.

The NASUWT maintains that it is a matter of priority to ensure that members can continue to work safely. As previously shared, the national Union is continuing to make strong representations to governments and employers for further measures to be implemented to protect the safety of staff when schools reopen in the new year.

Ready for the start of the spring term, all school and college employers should be able to confirm to staff:

- the preventative measures in place to limit the transmission of the new Omicron variant;
- that revised and updated risk assessments and safety protocols are in place and that these have been the subject of consultation with staff and the NASUWT. (NB. Risk assessments prepared for use during the autumn term are not sufficient for the purpose of meeting the employer's statutory duties and legal obligations in regard to health and safety at work);
- that reviewed and updated individual risk assessments (i.e. VERAs) will be provided for staff/pupils with vulnerable clinical conditions and those at higher risk;
- that staff who can work from home will be able to do so. Where any aspect of a teacher's work can be undertaken off-site, e.g. attendance at meetings, there should be no expectation for teachers to remain on-site;

- the additional measures in place to encourage the effective use of lateral flow device (LFD) tests on reopening;
- the arrangements for the effective implementation of mass on-site testing of pupils, where applicable;
- that all measures are in place to ensure full compliance with the relevant Government guidance, including full compliance with rules on self-isolation.

We would like to remind you that the employer has a duty during this pandemic to do whatever it takes to ensure that all schools are safe places for teaching and learning. The contents of this letter have been shared with Kirston Nelson, Director of Education and Skills at Coventry City Council.

Given the changing nature of the pandemic, we trust that you will fully consider the matters raised in this letter. As previously stated, the NASUWT would like to continue to work with you in the interests of children, young people, and our members in all schools.

In the spirit of joint partnership, we will share any updates to our guidance made available over the holiday in advance of the start of the spring term.

We wish you a safe, festive and restful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Pippa Richings, Manjinder Bhandal and Nigel Buckler
NASUWT Coventry