



25 January 2022

Dear colleague,

On Wednesday, 19 January the Prime Minister announced that the Government was ending England's 'Plan B' measures. This included the lifting of the recommendation that face coverings be worn in secondary classrooms from Thursday, 20 January, and the rules requiring face coverings in communal areas in all schools from Thursday, 27 January. [The latest guidance for schools is available by clicking here.](#)


Given the high case numbers and absences in school age children and staff, we, and an increasing number of organisations, including NHS leaders, have voiced concerns that this political decision by the Prime Minister is both premature and extremely risky. We are also concerned at the lack of scientific evidence provided by the Government to justify this decision.

We all want to see face coverings removed as soon as possible but to do so at a time of very high cases rates in schools risks even more infections and even more disruption. Secondary school pupils are facing exams this year. The priority, therefore, should have been to do everything possible to protect in-person education.

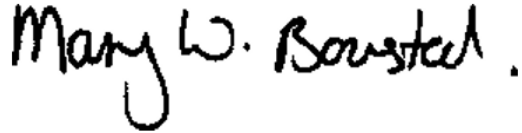
We are pleased that some employers and schools have already decided to communicate that they will continue to encourage the use of face coverings by staff and secondary students (unless medically exempt) in classrooms and communal areas. This includes one of the largest national multi-academy trusts, Oasis Community Learning. We would, therefore, strongly urge you to do the same, to help reduce the risk of transmission and disruption and to protect in-person learning.

No-one wishes to see further pupil or staff absences and we are clear that the proportionate measures in our checklist will help to reduce transmission risk and keep classrooms and schools fully open.

Yours sincerely,



Joint NEU General Secretary



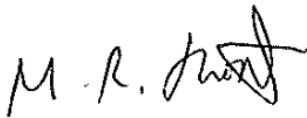
Joint NEU General Secretary



GMB National Officer



Unite National Officer



UNISON National Secretary