

#NoMasksInClass

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Dear Education Secretary,

Thank you for enabling all pupils to return to school on 8 March. Despite this, we have significant concerns about Government guidance recommending that children wear masks in classrooms.

This recommendation does not seem to be based on any scientific evidence, fails to recognise the new realities of us having offered the vaccine to the most vulnerable groups, appears to have been introduced without evaluation of potential harms, and significantly undermines the “national priority” of ensuring British schoolchildren have the education that they deserve.

As all the scientists keep telling us, the youngest are least affected by COVID-19. Yet last week the Children’s Commissioner reported that at least 850 million classroom days have been lost through school closures. The education recovery package and catch-up plans are hugely welcome, but your recommendation puts a huge confusing, and potentially harmful, impediment in the way of teachers who simply want to open their school gates and classrooms, teach our children and help pupils catch up after this devastating year.

Last Summer, the Government said masks in classrooms were unnecessary. The Prime Minister described it as “nonsensical” and said that “you can’t teach with face coverings and you can’t expect people to learn with face coverings.” Your own department’s August guidance said that they “can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom should be avoided.”

By 15 February, the NHS had vaccinated the top four most at risk groups – groups that have accounted for around 88% of COVID-19 deaths and about 55% of hospitalisations. The UK’s four Chief Medical Officers say that you get “substantial protection within 2-3 weeks of vaccination”, which takes us to 8 March. So upon what evidence is your department relying in order to recommend that masks in classrooms are today necessary – rather than “nonsensical” – now that the four most vulnerable groups have “substantial protection”?

There appears to have been little or no consideration given to any of the negative outcomes of facemasks being worn in classrooms all day. The WHO places responsibilities on authorities recommending face masks for children requiring the “monitoring and evaluation...measuring the impact on the child’s health, including mental health”. Can you reassure us that an evaluation by either DfE or DHSC took place before this latest recommendation was made?

Pupils all over the country have had a devastating year. We need teachers to be able to teach, not to be held back by confusing Government recommendations. Schools and teachers across the country will have to spend all their time enforcing these rules, performing their own cost-benefit analysis, and managing parents’ concerns about mask wearing, when we need them focusing on teaching.

Schools are not vectors of transmission. You yourself said back in August that “one of the largest studies on the coronavirus in schools in the world” made it “clear there is little evidence that the virus is transmitted at school”. Professor Chris Whitty this week said that “the risk to children is incredibly low from going to school and, indeed, from catching Covid”. And the Prime Minister told the nation on 27 January that “the problem is not that schools are unsafe – teachers and headteachers have worked heroically to make sure they are safe, they are Covid-secure.”

If you wish to keep this recommendation in place, please publish the new scientific evidence which makes this measure necessary – especially in light of the vaccination rollout – and show the evidence that this intervention has been properly evaluated for potential harms to both psychological and physical health, so that schools can make an informed decision about whether or not to follow Government guidance, and so that parents and pupils can have confidence in the measure your department is recommending. Otherwise, your department should reverse it.

Yours sincerely,

Selected Signatories

Academics

Professor Alan Floyd	Professor of Education, Reading University
Professor Anthony Fryer	Professor of Clinical Biochemistry, Keele University
Professor David Paton	Professor of Industrial Economics, Nottingham University
Professor David Seedhouse	Professor of Deliberative Practice, Aston University
Professor Dennis Hayes	Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Derby
Professor Ellen Townsend	Professor of Psychology, Nottingham University
Professor Ellie Lee	Professor of Family and Parenting Research, University of Kent
Professor Karol Sikora Buckingham	Oncologist and Founding Dean, Medicine School, University of
Professor Martin Neil	Professor of Statistics and Computer Science, Queen Mary, London
Professor Matthew Ratcliffe	Professor of Philosophy (Mental Health), University of York
Professor Marilyn James	Professor of Health Economics, Nottingham University
Professor Nicola Pitchford	Professor of Developmental Psychology, Nottingham University
Professor Richard Ennos Edinburgh	Honorary Professional Fellow, Biological Sciences, University of
Professor Robert Dingwall	Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Nottingham Trent University

Professor Robert Endres	Professor, Biological Physics., Imperial College, London
Professor Robert Sauer	Chair of Economics, Royal Holloway, University of London
Professor Sarah J Lewis	Professor of Molecular Epidemiology, University of Bristol
Professor Sunetra Gupta	Professor of Theoretical Epidemiology, Oxford University
Professor Victoria Shingler	Professor of Molecular Biology, Umea University
Dr Lee Jones	University Lecturer, Queen Mary, University of London
Dr Jade Norris	Senior Research Analyst Autism Research, Bristol University
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Dr Ruth Mieschbuehler	Senior Lecturer in Education Studies, University of Derby
Dr Sebastien Viatte	Lecturer in Genetics, University of Manchester
Dr Tanya Klymenko	Lecturer in Biochemistry, Sheffield Hallam University
Dr Tom Jefferson	Physician Researcher
Jonathan Berry	Clinical Lecturer, Keele University
David Ridley	Senior Lecturer in Physical Education, Sheffield Hallam University

Public Figures

Tim Henman	Tennis Professional
Baron Moonie (Lewis)	Retired consultant in public health, and politician
Lord Sumption	Retired judge
Baroness Morrissey (Helena)	Company Director and member of House of Lords
Lee Hurst	Not Allowed To Work Comedian
Matthew Le Tissier	Self employed
Richard Madeley	Journalist
Sue Cook	Writer and broadcaster
David Perks	Headteacher
Anthea Turner	Media

Adam Brooks	Publican
Alexander Starling	Company Director
Allison Pearson	Journalist and Author
Bob Moran	Journalist
Calvin Robinson	Political adviser
Dan Astin-Gregory	Entrepreneur
Dr Zoe Harcombe	Author & Researcher
Emma Sayle	CEO
Francis Hoar	Barrister
Gillian Mckeith	Television Presenter, Nutritionist and Author
Graham Hutchinson	Previously Senior Chief Biomedical Scientist, Colindale.
Hugh Osmond	Director
Ian Seale	Actor
Joanna Williams	Journalist
Carol McGiffin	Broadcaster and Writer
Laurence Fox	Politician
Julia Hartley-Brewer	TalkRadio presenter
Laura Dodsworth	Writer
Laura Perrins	Journalist
James Delingpole	Journalist
Michael Yeadon	Retired, former R&D consultant Biotechnology & Life Sciences
Martin Daubney	Editorial Director, Unlocked
Richard Tice	Director
Robin Monotti Graziadei	Architect
Sonia Elijah	Journalist
Sonia Poulton	Journalist

Tonia Buxton	TV Presenter & Author
William Clouston	Party Leader, The Social Democratic Party
Mark Dolan	Broadcaster
Dominique Samuels	Political Commentator
Peter Hitchens	Journalist and Author
Anna Brees	Journalist
Alexander Adams	Author

Medical, Scientific and Mental Health Professionals

Alida Nel	Medical Doctor
C.Geoffrey Maidment	Consultant Physician (retired)
Clare Craig	Medical Doctor
Charlotte Bell	Immunologist and Veterinary Surgeon
Christine Suppelt	Doctor
Christopher Paul Chilton	Retired Consultant Urologist
Dr Alan Mordue	Public Health Doctor
Dr Brian Hands	Retired GP
Dr David Morris	General Practitioner
Dr David Critchley	Clinical Research Scientist
Dr Deborah Tattersall	Consultant Radiologist
Dr Elizabeth Corcoran	Doctor
Dr Fiona Martindale	GP
Dr Helen Westwood	GP
Dr Jon Rogers	Retired GP
Dr Michelle Morters	Vet and Epidemiologist
Dr. Philip George Hollywood	Retired Consultant in Anaesthesia
Dr Renée Hoenderkamp	GP

Dr Ricky Freeman	GP
Dr Rosamond A K Jones	Consultant Paediatrician (retired)
Dr Ross Worthington	BM BCh
Ian Comaish	Surgeon
Ivan Trotman	Doctor
James Royle	Consultant Cancer Surgeon
Jai Chitnavis	Medical Doctor
Malcolm Loudon	Consultant Surgeon
Patrick Walsh	Consultant Surgeon (Retired)
Pauline Jones	Retired GP
Redvers Cording	Retired Dental Surgeon
Rupert Mason	MBBS, LRCP, MRCS
Andy Halewood	Psychologist
Camellia Kojouri	Psychologist
Dr Elias Diamantis	Liaison Psychiatrist
Dr Faye Bellanca	Child Clinical Psychologist
Dr Harrie Bunker-Smith	Clinical Psychologist
Dr Damian Wilde	Highly Specialist Clinical Psychologist
Dr Tom Carnworth	Psychiatrist
Dr Zenobia Storah	Clinical Psychologist
Dr. Rachel Mahoney	Clinical Psychologist
Dr. Bruce Scott	Psychoanalyst
Jo Cullen	Psychologist and educationalist
Lauren McCoy	Psychologist
Naomi Murphy	Clinical Psychologist
Heidi Stone	Consultant Positive Psychologist

Leigh Jones	Clinical psychologist
Gary Sidley	Retired Clinical Psychologist
Elizabeth Bentley	Psychotherapist
Gillian Rock	Retired psychotherapist
Josephine Patten-Walsh	Psychotherapist
Kayleigh Morrison	Psychotherapist
Kate James	Psychotherapist
Lorraine Valentine	Psychotherapist
Richard Rowland	Psychotherapist
Shereena Hamilton	NHS Children's Mental Health Support Worker
Amanda Cairns	Occupational Health Nurse
Alex Penfold	Nurse
Chantel Greenwood	Nurse
Claire Ganley	Occupational Health Nurse
Diane Macgregor	RGN, Nurse Practitioner
Danielle Ashe	Nurse
Elsbeth Hill	Paediatric nurse
Emma King	Paediatric nurse & Health visitor
Emma Greenslade	School Nurse
Ealeorah Ravleen	Nurse
James Fair	Nurse
Johanna Hubbard	Retired nurse
Julia Harding	Nurse
Julia Desousa	Registered Nurse
Katie Richards	Nurse
Katherine Hooper	Retired nurse specialist/paediatric

Lesley Collins	Retired RN
Leanne Ludlow	Staff nurse
Lisa Henderson	Nurse
Louise Smith	Registered Nurse
Lucy Richards	Nurse
Luke Knight	Nurse
Michael Cockayne	Occupational Health Nurse Practitioner
Nicola McQuaid	Retired Staff Nurse
Peter Roberts	Nurse
Roisin Bradley	Nurse
Sheila Skipworth	Retired Midwife/Nurse
Steve Dean	Nurse
Susan Martin	Nurse
Suzanne France	Nurse
Timothy Adams	Staff nurse
Leona Jupe	Paramedic
Darren Smith	Paramedic
Annabel Acheson-Gray	Physiotherapist
Tanya Croall	Physiotherapist
Jo Rogers	Occupational Therapist
Teresa Harding	NHS Health Care Assistant
Natalia James	NHS Manager
Angela Taylor	NHS Psychological Therapist
Fiona MacCallum	NHS Worker
Peter March	NHS Worker
Gregory Lynn	NHS Worker

Anna Rayner	Health Professional
Colin Cambray	Microbiologist
Colin Knaggs	Microbiologist.
Cristina Roadevin	Health Economist
David M Livermore	Microbiologist
Dr Alvin Milner	Consultant Biostatistician
Gerry Quinn	Microbiologist
Rachel Nicoll	Medical Researcher
Richard Allread	Bio pharmaceutical Development Director
Samantha Fallon	Analytical Chemist

Education and Children's Services Professionals

Annabel Nicolls	Academy Trust Sponsor
David Perks	Headteacher
Pauline Wood	Educational Consultant and former Headteacher
Zoe Staines	Deputy Headteacher
Alex Stapaj	Assistant Head of Year
Raymond French	Vice Principal (Rtd)
Adrian Baker	Teacher of Physics
Alastair Burr	School Teacher Secondary
Amanda Britton	Teacher
Josephine Hussey	Teacher
Adele Stevens	Teacher
Adrian Dulston	Teacher
Alec Lee	Teacher
Alison Wormald	Retired teacher
Amy Harman	Teacher

Angela Dobric	Teacher
Ann Parry	Teacher
Anna Fauzy-Ackroyd	Retired primary school teacher
Anna Dunham	Secondary school teacher
Andreana Ashby	Secondary Teacher
Andrew Wilson	Teacher (retired)
Catherine Edwards	Teacher
Christa Swain	Teacher / director
Claire Braisdell	Teacher
Claire Emery	Teacher
Claire Souter	Teacher
Colette Rowley	Teacher
Dave Wardle	Retired Teacher (Head of Faculty)
Daniel Caffarey	Teacher
Dawn Fletcher	Teacher (SEN)
Denise Wood	Retired teacher
Edward Casey	Retired teacher
Dr Sophie Messenger	Teacher
Fatema Paretha	Teacher
Fiona Beddow	Teacher
Fraser Stark	Teacher
Gavin Welch	Teacher (Sixth Form)
Georgina Jones	Teacher
Harrison Thompson	Teacher
Hayley Compton	Teacher
Helen Backhouse	Teacher

Jacqueline Webb	Teacher
Jane Hall	Teacher
Jenny Pollock	Teacher
Jenny Knapton	Supply teacher
Jessica Elms	Teacher
John Duffy	Teacher
Karanjot Panesar	Teacher
Karen Connell	Teacher
Kathryn Napier	Teacher
Katie Howarth	Teacher
Kathryn Keigher	Retired teacher
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Judith Hawarden	Retired teacher
Louli Money	Retired teacher
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Louise Newby	Science Teacher
Madeleine Gillies	Teacher
Maeve Keenan	Teacher
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Michael Stokes	Teacher
Natalie Duncan	Teacher
Nicole Gibbs	Teacher
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Rebecca D'Cruz	Teacher
Robert Willson	Teacher

Samantha Savage	Teacher
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Stephen Martin	Teacher
Susan Mathewson	Teacher
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Tim Jones	Teacher
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Valerie Carter	Teacher
Zoe Nicolaou	Teacher
Julie Green	Teacher
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Emma Farquharson	Teacher
Emma Flourentzou	Teacher
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Katie Stark	Teacher
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M K Wilson	Retired teacher
Nathalie Franklin	Teacher
Nina Evans	Teacher
Ortal Wolfson	Teacher
Padraic Flynn	Teacher
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Rebecca Attwood	Teacher

Robert Horan	Teacher
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Sara Fanner	Teacher
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Sonia Dignum	Teacher
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Brankica Bokan-Tomic	Teacher
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Georgina Jones	Teacher
Gillian Barham	Teacher
Hayley Compton	Teacher
Helen Backhouse	Teacher
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Jayne Dickerson	Teacher
Jessica Elms	Teacher
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Justin Noutch	Teacher
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Katie Fox	Teacher
Katie Howarth	Teacher
Katie Stark	Teacher
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Mariam Zaidi	Teacher
Martin Davies	Teacher
Michelle Cooper	Teacher
Nathalie Franklin	Teacher
Phillip Dixon	Teacher
Rebecca Attwood	Teacher
Robert Horan	Teacher
Robert Pokorny	Teacher
Sara Fanner	Teacher
Sarah Harrison	Teacher
Seamus Rush	Teacher
Simon Holloway	Teacher
Sonia Dignum	Teacher
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Susanna Verde	Teacher
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Karen Woods	Early years educator
Victoria Pratt	Early years educator
Amy Boyd	Early years practitioner
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B Roberts	Education
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Jonathan Cubitt	School Bursar
Katie Windle	School Chaplain
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Janine Gumm	School counsellor
Victoria Holland	SEND and Safeguarding Administrator

Jennifer Wild	Student Support Adviser
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Tara Webb	Social worker
Victoria Swift	Social worker
Carla Jamieson	Residential childcare officer