

The latest news and announcements from Derbyshire UNISON

COVID-19 in schools

The Department for Education wrote to education and childcare settings on Friday 1 April to say: "Most of the Covid-19 specific guidance for education and childcare settings will now be withdrawn from GOV.UK"



Leaving school staff alone to battle Covid threat is reckless

The government's decision to withdraw most Covid-specific guidance for education and childcare settings is leaving school staff anxious and confused, says UNISON.

Workers - including teaching assistants, cleaners, catering workers, admin and clerical staff - worry ministers' hands-off approach is leaving them alone to battle the virus, the union says.

Removing free tests, which have been a crucial protection against rising infection rates in schools, is a reckless move. To do so with no plan in place to protect pupils and staff makes little sense, UNISON adds.

Schools had been expecting detailed guidance on how to cope with Covid but have only

been told isolation times for under-18s who test positive will be cut from five to three days. Slashing the isolation time for pupils, with no evidence to explain the reasoning behind the change, has increased bewilderment among staff, says UNISON. There's real concern that the decision is political and hasn't been made in the best interests of pupils and schools, the union says.

UNISON head of education Mike Short said: "Scrapping free testing in schools is a risky

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decision that will undermine all the work staff and parents have done to try to keep classrooms open and Covid out. To do so with Covid rates hitting a new high across the UK, and schools being badly affected, this decision makes little sense.

“With the exam season on the horizon and Covid rates sky high in schools, now’s not the time to scrap the only protection we have. As the cost-of-living squeeze hits household budgets, expecting people to fork out around £2 for a single test, illustrates how the government is hopelessly out of touch.

“Children’s education and the safety of staff seem less important to the government than maintaining the illusion the Covid threat has passed. Ministers must reinstate free testing for schools and provide extra funding to support them as they tackle yet another wave of the virus ripping through classrooms.”