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18 May 2020

Dear Head Teacher/Chair of Governors

### **Government's plans to increase number of pupils in schools from 1 June**

I am writing to say how worried I am about the Government's plans to increase the numbers of pupils in some schools from 1 June and the potential threat they pose to the health and safety of pupils, parents and staff in our school community.

We all want to see schools up and running and our school community back together again, but only when it is safe to do so. Any plan to achieve this needs to be clear on issues such as social distancing, PPE, testing, tracing and isolation. The current Government guidance is not.

My Union, UNISON, is taking these issues up with the Government, calling on it to step back from an unsafe increase in pupil numbers on 1 June. Unions and the Government need to work together to create the conditions for a safe return to schools, based on the principles and tests set out by education Unions representing Support Staff, Teachers and Head Teachers ([see TUC statement](#)).

I don't believe that the current situation is the fault of the school or its leadership and I understand that the school has to plan for all eventualities. Therefore, my Union has advised me to request that you urgently provide an update on the following issues:

- Copy of school's risk assessments for increasing pupil numbers
- What the plans are for maintaining social distancing; with all pupils and staff to be kept 2 metres apart
- What PPE will be supplied and under what circumstances
- Arrangements for handwashing and sanitising
- Arrangements for protecting vulnerable pupils and staff
- How testing, tracing and isolating will work locally and how it will apply to our schools
- Arrangements for screening out workers exhibiting symptoms of the virus
- Plans for enhanced cleaning of workplaces

- Procedures for travel such as parking, using public transport, car sharing given the 2-metre rule

I think it is really important that we all stand together to ensure that everyone in the school and community is safe and that we meet health and safety laws. This means that we should only open up the school when it is safe to do so. My Union and I do not believe that this is possible by 1 June.

Finally I would like it to be formally noted that my involvement in any meetings and discussions will be on the basis of a sharing of information only, and not my agreement to an unsafe reopening from 1 June. I would further request that you enter into collective discussion with my Union on the measures that need to be taken for a safe increase in pupil numbers, [as stated by the DfE](#). I call on the school not to put pupils and staff at risk with an unsafe increase in numbers from 1 June.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JORG' with a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

John Burgess  
Barnet UNISON Branch Secretary

CC: [Ian Harrison, Director Education and Skills](#)