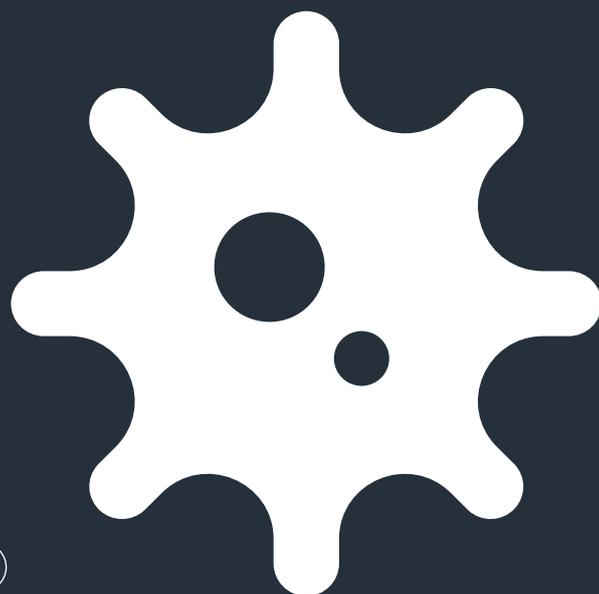
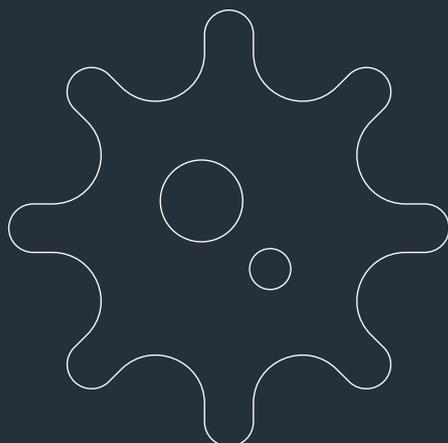


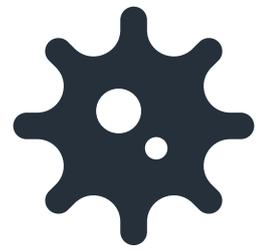
# Coronavirus guidance



# **Covid-19: our commitment to members, children and young people**



# Covid-19: our commitment to members, children and young people



Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, education professionals, teachers, leaders and support staff have worked tirelessly to educate pupils – whether in school or at home.

They are on the front line, keeping schools and colleges running and pupils engaged with learning.

But without enough support from Government, school and college leaders, teachers and support staff are becoming increasingly exhausted. The current situation in too many schools and colleges is becoming more challenging and unsustainable as the weeks pass and as more staff colleagues isolate.

## **The challenges education professionals face keeping schools and colleges as safe as possible**

The challenges of running a Covid-secure educational establishment are huge. Staff are working hard to implement new practices and procedures – staggered start and end times for school days, staggered lunch times, one-way circulation systems, managing pupil 'bubbles', overseeing the extra hygiene requirements and much more.

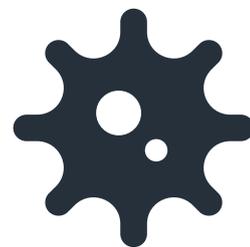
School and college leaders and staff are under enormous stress, keeping their schools open, their school community safe and responding to parents' concerns about the safety and welfare of their children.

Teachers and support staff are working in new ways. Often, they are much more isolated than they were pre-Covid as they are unable to engage with their colleagues face-to-face. Many are required to travel around their school to work in different locations throughout the school day. They are teaching and supporting groups of pupils in a confined space, with little or no PPE and often with no social distancing. In some settings, this also involves having to teach in very different ways, from the front of the class and not being able to work directly with children.

In most cases staff are unable to maintain social distancing in particular when working with pupils who need extra help with their learning on a one-to-one, or small group basis. In addition, many are being asked to undertake additional tasks, including cleaning in between lessons.

Every education professional knows how important schools and colleges are to keep pupils safe, support their emotional development, educate them and support the economy, allowing parents to return to work. But schools and colleges are under huge and increasing strain and urgently need more support from Government if they are to continue their essential work.

See [here](#) for the NEU's discussion paper on school rotas. We really want to hear your views about rotas and, in particular, implications for pupils and workload.



## Workload

Teachers and leaders are used to working hard. Already they work more hours of unpaid overtime than any other profession.

Staff are struggling as their colleagues isolate, waiting for tests and test results, or due to their own children isolating. As colleagues isolate, teachers and support staff who are in school find their already excessive workload increasing as they cover for absent colleagues.

Teaching assistants are being deployed to cover whole classes for weeks at a time – having to leave their teaching colleagues without support in their timetabled classes and pupils who need dedicated support to access learning without the help they need.

All pupils are affected. As the winter cold and flu season approaches, parental demand for testing for their children increases. As case numbers rise, pupil attendance falls and more schools and colleges send home larger numbers of pupils. No one wants this to happen. Irregular pupil attendance is really destabilising for teachers and pupils and a huge disruptor to effective learning.

Education professionals are also supporting pupils who are anxious and stressed. Too many of these pupils will have suffered during lockdown and look to their teachers and support staff for help and guidance when they are in school. Something that educators give willingly.

Increasingly, teachers are telling us that they are being directed to work beyond the 1265 hours of directed time.

### Action:

The National Education Union's (NEU's) [directed time calendar](#) enables members to calculate their directed time working and to take action if the 1265 hours of directed time are going to be exceeded by the end of the year. Further guidance [here](#) and [here](#).

## Remote/blended learning

Schools have a responsibility to support the learning of pupils who cannot attend school due to Covid-19. However, we do not think that the Government's current expectations are realistic or helpful.

We believe that it is reasonable for staff who are working from home to be asked to support the remote learning provision being made (assuming that they are well enough to do so). Staff being asked to support home learning must have access to the necessary technology and there should be a clear policy that covers critical issues such as agreed methods of communication and safeguarding.

Supporting remote learning must not create significant additional work for staff, too many of whom are telling us that their workload is being doubled as they teach in schools and colleges whilst also preparing work for pupils who are isolating at home. This is not sustainable.

### Action:

The NEU has produced [guidance on remote/blended learning](#).



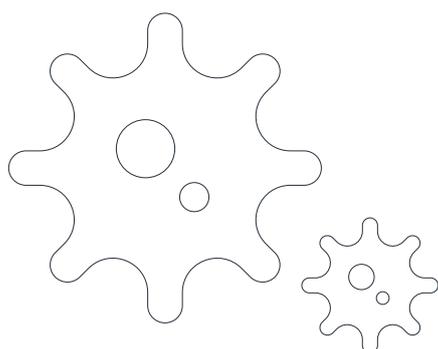
## Primary assessment

Government ministers repeatedly assert that SATs are not a measure of individual pupil performance, but of school standards. This being the case, it is clear that SATs should not take place this year. School performance during Covid cannot reasonably, or fairly, be compared to previous years.

### Action:

All forms of primary statutory assessment, and associated performance tables should be cancelled for 2020/2021. Any attempt to use this data to make school-to-school comparisons, or individual judgements about schools, would be entirely meaningless given the unique experience each school and each child will have had this year when it comes to attendance and local lockdown measures. The time pupils spend in school now should be focused on reengaging with learning, not to prepare for statutory tests.

See the NEU's position on [primary assessment](#). The NEU is also working as part of the campaigning coalition More Than A Score to argue for the cancellation of Government primary tests this school year. [Sign the More Than A Score Drop SATs 2021 petition](#) and find out more about the [campaign](#).



## Secondary assessment

Only Boris Johnson, Gavin Williamson and Nick Gibb believe that the only change needed to GCSE and A-levels is a three-week delay. It is becoming clearer by the day that, as rates of Covid-19 infection rise in secondary schools, students' education is increasingly disrupted as they have to isolate. This disruption is worst in areas of high infection and deprivation – such as Knowsley and Calderdale. This is why the Northern metro mayors have stated that going ahead with GCSE and A-level exams in their current form will be unfair to young people in their areas.

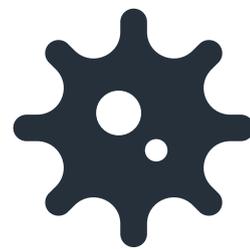
The NEU, along with ASCL, the NAHT, the NASUWT and the NGA submitted a [joint policy paper](#) on GCSE and A-levels to the Government. Our joint, evidenced and practical proposals have been ignored and ministers appear to be determined to press ahead as though the Covid-19 pandemic had no effect on secondary schools and colleges.

This position is not sustainable. The Government is in danger of making the same mistakes that it made this summer and of causing another exams crisis.

Whilst the uncertainty over GCSE and A-level is allowed to continue, teachers are reporting pressure from some leaders to take 'catch up' classes and revision classes before and after school.

### Action:

The English Government must follow the examples of the Scottish and Welsh governments, recognise that schooling is disrupted for all pupils, and in particular for those living in high Covid-19 areas, and plan properly for fair and valid GCSE and A-level qualifications



for summer 2021. This planning must include changes to GCSE and A-level exams – including greater topicality and scalability, and a plan B based on moderated centre-assessed grades.

Teachers should not be taking extra classes outside of the normal school day for catch up or extra exam preparation. This is not necessary as Government has accepted that grade boundaries will have to be altered to compensate for the five-month break that most students experienced from in school education.

See the joint NEU, ASCL, NAHT, NASUWT and NGA guidance on secondary assessment and find out more about our campaign [here](#)

## Ofsted

When the suspension of routine inspections was announced, the Secretary of State said: “Given the pressures on our school leaders and their staff, it is only right that Ofsted temporarily suspends its routine inspection timetable. This will help schools to focus on their core functions at a difficult time.”

The challenges schools are now facing are at least as significant, if not more so, than when this was first announced. School leaders, teachers and support staff are having to focus huge efforts on keeping schools safe in light of a growing number of reported Covid-19 cases. This work involves putting in place detailed responses to reported cases, working closely with health protection teams and also providing remote learning for pupils.

Ofsted has accepted that its inspectors must not make in person visits to schools this term and has now announced that it will move its inspection visits online until

Christmas. Ofsted should go further and commit to no inspections until the end of the pandemic.

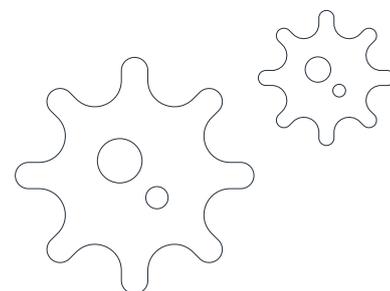
Even if Ofsted wanted to start routine inspection again, it would be impossible for it to do so against the methodology in the existing inspection framework – activities such as classroom observations and curriculum ‘deep dives’ simply could not take place given current restrictions.

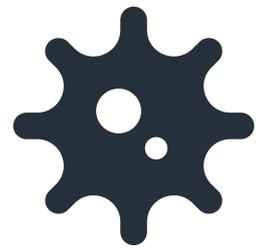
Given these increased pressures, the current situation with Covid-19 and the impossibility of predicting what restrictions may still be necessary from the start of 2021, it is difficult to see how a return to routine inspections could be achieved in any meaningful way. Schools should be allowed to focus on the job in hand and not be distracted from this crucial task. As such, Ofsted inspections should remain suspended in the spring term and kept under review after that.

### Action:

Ofsted should extend the suspension of routine Ofsted section 5 inspections and all section 8 inspections which evaluate or make judgements on a school’s provision for the rest of the academic year. Ofsted should engage with stakeholders, including trade unions, to review its autumn term visits and identify the nature and scope of its activities during the spring term.

See the NEU’s position on Ofsted [here](#)





## Staff management

As more demands are made on colleagues, it is ever more important that schools and colleges are collegiate, professional and supportive places to work. We must all recognise we are not in normal times and all of us have extra workload and stress. It is imperative that we do all we can to reduce this wherever possible along with continuing Covid-secure environments.

Covid-related staff absences, the need to develop and implement remote and blended learning offers at pace are, among other factors, generating unprecedented pressures on teachers' and school leaders' workload as well as their physical and emotional health.

The extraordinary nature of these circumstances and the impact they are continuing to have on teachers and school leaders require schools and colleges to ensure that all possible steps are taken to support staff, maintain safety and allow professional time and attention to be focused on teaching and learning and meeting the needs of children and young people.

Discretionary lesson observations, learning walks and drop-ins that schools are not legally or contractually required to undertake, should be suspended. It is important to note that continuing such activities during the pandemic is likely to have adverse implications.

### Action:

Schools should discontinue those activities that distract from the direct provision of teaching and learning and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of pupils and the workforce.

Pay progression decisions should look favourably on teachers and leaders. Appraisal targets set in pre-Covid times may be inappropriate and unachievable for many, and no-one should suffer a detriment because of this. Instead this should be recognised, and colleagues rewarded for the work they are doing day in and day out in such difficult circumstances.

### Action:

Teachers should not be disadvantaged as a result of the impact of Covid-19, either in terms of their ability to access pay progression or with regard to any other aspects of the performance management/appraisal process. See the NEU's position on performance related pay and appraisal [here](#).



## In the end...

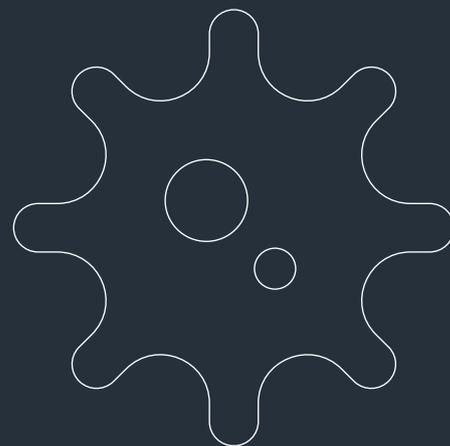
Government needs to do much more to support schools and colleges. Many of the recommendations in this paper are for Government ministers.

Other recommendations are for school and college leaders. In these pressured and uncertain times, it is important that education professionals work collaboratively together, understand the pressures that they are facing and support one another. The links in this document provide support for best practice for sustainable schools and colleges.

If you are concerned about workload or safety, use the [NEU app](#) to support your concerns being raised and action taken to improve the situation.



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