

All Covid safety measures being lifted in UK schools as Delta variant explodes

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UK Education Secretary Gavin Williamson confirmed Tuesday that all remaining safety restrictions in schools will be lifted in England in September, even as the new deadly, more transmissible Delta variant spreads exponentially.

The measures are part of the Conservative government's lifting of all mandatory Covid health protections to reopen the economy fully on July 19. This necessitates all children attending school so parents can be at work.

Among the restrictions ending is the policy of sending "bubbles" of schoolchildren home to self-isolate if one child in the bubble comes into contact with a Covid case. Children will only have to self-isolate if they personally test positive. The policy of setting up "bubbles" in schools was always a token measure and could never have halted the spread of Covid, but ending it will escalate the spread of the virus and make schools more unsafe for children, education staff, other school workers and parents.

At the beginning of the autumn term, secondary school children will have two lateral flow tests—which are not accurate—and then twice-weekly tests at home until the end of September.

The UK now has more daily Covid cases than the whole of the European Union combined, recording case numbers similar to the high point of the virus in December/January. Health Secretary Sajid Javid said on Tuesday that daily cases could reach 100,000 by August.

Department for Education (DfE) figures recorded 640,000 (8.5 percent) pupil absences on July 2 associated with Covid, the highest since schools reopened in March. This was a leap from 375,000 the previous week. Public Health England (PHE) figures revealed 151 new school outbreaks in school week ending June 20, compared to 96 the previous week. In the week ending June 27, 15,000 children tested positive for Covid and 24,000 were absent with suspected Covid.

While children are less likely to become ill than adults, a proportion end up hospitalised while others develop debilitating Long Covid symptoms.

The advocacy and support group Long Covid Kids provided the following alarming statistics for England,

compiled from Office for National Statistics and Public Health England data.

- Hospital admissions rose 28 percent to 6,129, week ending June 21.
- Children's covid hospital admissions are rising faster than in wave 2 of the pandemic last autumn.
- 8 percent of all Covid hospital admissions are children.
- One in every 100 child Covid cases result in hospitalisation.
- Infections are rising fastest in 5-14 year olds.
- Outbreaks in school nearly match those in December.
- 9,000 children have Long Covid extending beyond 12 months.
- One quarter of those hospitalised experience Long Covid symptoms for an average eight and a half months.
- There have been 59 paediatric deaths due to Covid.

The full consequences of Long Covid, including evidence of brain damage potentially impairing cognitive development, are unknown. Allowing the new variant to run rife as the government is doing, without any opposition from the Labour Party or the trade unions, means these figures could rise hugely.

Dr. Zubaida Haque of Independent SAGE (Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) said July 2, "I don't think we can do anything but conclude that this government is seriously carrying out its herd immunity policy through natural infection, through school children."

Professor James Naismith, Director of the Rosalind Franklin Institute, said Prime Minister Boris Johnson "is effectively conducting a mass experiment on young people as he lifts coronavirus restrictions."

To justify its homicidal mission, the government and supporters assert that schools are overzealous in sending children home to isolate. They cite the damage disruptions in education—which are in fact due to them allowing the virus to spread—is doing to children's mental health and lost learning, including among the disadvantaged.

The Conservative supporting *Telegraph* launched a "Campaign for Children" to stop sending "bubbles" home,

backed by former Education Secretaries, Tory Kenneth Baker and Labour's Lord David Blunkett, the Archbishop of York, head of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Peter Wanless, Javed Khan, the chief executive of Barnado's, and Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza.

This hogwash is not gaining traction with educators and parents. On the twitter page of SafeEdForAll—a group of parents “sharing a strong concern about the lack of Covid19 safety” in schools—someone tweeted that pupils are not sent home lightly from schools. Headlines in newspapers should reflect the truth and read, “pupils sent home to safeguard them from highly contagious chronic disease.” Another commented in support, “Schools not sent home because of overzealous isolation policy, they're closing because infection is exploding.”

Many tweets complain about lifting mask wearing, and the lack of funding for Co2 monitors and adequate ventilation systems.

Feigned handwringing over disadvantaged children and the need to “catch up” on missed education is belied by ongoing education cuts and the redistribution of wealth to the richest in society. According to the National Audit Office, education funding is being shifted from schools in the more disadvantaged areas to those in less disadvantaged areas.

Despite scientists recommending the roll-out of vaccines to children over 12 to halt further spread of the virus, the government remains reticent about vaccinating. The UK's medical regulator MHRA approved the use of Pfizer in 12-15 year olds, but the government is awaiting further data. The US, Israel and France have begun inoculating this age group.

The fascistic herd immunity policy that has cost over 150,000 lives is epitomised by comments by Nervtag (subcommittee of SAGE) member Sir Robert Dingwall.

Dingwall is also a member of the government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. He declared “children are better protected by natural immunity generated through infection than asking them to take a possible risk of a vaccine.” Without a shred of evidence, welcoming the lifting of safety measures in schools he said, “A last wave of mild infections in unvaccinated younger people may well be what we are now seeing.”

Dingwall urged the government to stop spreading “panic” by disclosing daily Covid cases. “Medicine cannot deliver immortality. We're all going to die one day,” he added.

Labour insists, in the words of leader Sir Keir Starmer, that children should be in school, “No ifs, no buts, no equivocation.” Shadow Education Secretary Kate Green urged the government to publish data before the end of term on pilot schemes in 200 schools to compare sending bubbles

home to daily testing.

School are only open and contributing to the surge in cases because the education unions sabotaged large-scale opposition by parents and educators. National Association of Head Teachers leader Paul Whiteman, ASCL's Geoff Barton and the National Education Union's Kevin Courtney and Mary Bousted wrote a joint letter to Williamson asking for clarity as schools “still have little idea” how prepare for next term.

On Tuesday, Courtney said, “It seems clear that the government policies are based on a new form of herd immunity strategy. They are hoping that the increase in vaccination rates and the increase in infection rates across the summer will eventually get cases to fall simply because there is no one left to infect.” Bousted said in a press release regarding the lifting of restrictions in education, “This is neglectful and reckless decision-making, when schools and colleges quite obviously need the backing of Government to ensure their workplace remains safe.”

Yet again, as the pandemic significantly worsens, there is no talk by the pro-capitalist unions about calling their members out on strike—only appeals to the government on how they should work with the unions as the proven means to keep education settings open.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on educators and parents to join the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee to fight for a rational response to the pandemic based on science, including the closure of all educational settings and non-essential workplaces until the virus is suppressed.

This requires a global response, including the lifting of patents, the vaccination of all age groups, and the strictest public health measures to suppress the virus and prevent the emergence of new variants.

To attend the next online public forum of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee on Saturday, July 10 at 2 p.m. BST, register [here](#).



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