

# Emergency Meeting! Close All Schools to Stop the Spread of Omicron!

Statement of the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee (UK)  
7 January 2022

The Educators Rank-and-File-Safety Committee (UK) has called an emergency meeting for Tuesday January 11 at 7 p.m. to discuss a fightback against the rampant spread of COVID-19 throughout schools.

Readers can register for the meeting [here](#).

This Tuesday the committee issued a statement “No Return to Schools! Children’s Lives Matter!” insisting, “Schools must shut in favour of online learning, as part of an urgent programme of lockdowns and other public health measures to eliminate the virus.”

The situation facing teachers and support staff in the UK and internationally is intolerable, with complete disregard shown for the health and lives of children. This has to stop now! We urge teachers and school staff to take matters into their own hands. Mass walkouts from unsafe schools must be organised! Independent rank-and-file committees must be formed to lead this fight and impose the necessary restrictions to bring the virus under control.

Omicron is not “mild” and we cannot learn to live with it!

Some 127 children have already died of COVID in the UK. More than 77,000 are suffering Long COVID symptoms. On January 7, another 133 children in England alone were admitted to hospital with the virus. This took the total number of child hospitalisations since the beginning of the pandemic to 14,533. Of the 149,405 new COVID cases reported in England yesterday, 32,551 (21.7 percent) were children aged 0-19.

The Johnson government’s allowing Omicron to rip through the population has left thousands of educators ill and unable to work at the start of term. A survey by the National Association of Head Teachers of 2,000 mainly primary schools on the *first day back Tuesday* showed:

- A third of schools in England had whole-school staff absences over 10 percent.

- A quarter of schools had over 10 percent of teachers absent due to COVID-19.

- Nine percent of schools had more than 20 percent absences.

- 95 percent of schools reported pupil absences, and almost a third were missing 10 percent of their pupils due to COVID.

Teachers are being told to merge classes and move sites, with non-teachers asked to cover. With no mask wearing in primary schools and little or no mitigations elsewhere the virus will continue to spread, putting lives at risk.

The education unions have done nothing to protect teachers’ and children’s lives, only asking that classes aren’t merged “to stop further transmission” and calling for more ventilation and air filters in classrooms.

Educators in Chicago in the US are showing the way forward by overwhelmingly supporting strike action. Their lead is being followed by teachers in other states nationwide.

Invite your friends and colleagues to attend Tuesday’s online meeting to discuss these important issues and the fight to end the pandemic.

*Register for the meeting [here](#).*



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**