Dear Head Teacher

**School Closure and COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Risk Management and Control**

We write in reference to the Government’s announcement to close Schools from 20th March, to control the spread of COVID-19, within the United Kingdom and to encourage social distancing. It would appear however that these closures are not closures in the true sense of the word as Schools will remain open to certain groups of children and School Staff will still be expected to attend work. Whilst GMB appreciates you are not accountable for this decision and its apparent contradictions and resulting confusion, the responsibility for the wellbeing and welfare of the staff remains with you.

GMB hopes you will understand why it is necessary for reassurance to be sought about how our Members will be protected in this time of Public Health crisis and what provisions will be in place, should your School remain open. GMB always seeks to work in a cooperative and pragmatic way with Employers and this will continue during this unprecedented situation but it would be remiss of GMB to not ensure our Members continue to work in a safe and supported environment where risks are managed, mitigated and minimised. GMB understands there will be new and different pressures and requirements throughout this period but the expectation remains unchanged that our members should not be put at risk or have their health and safety compromised by being asked to do work for which they do not have adequate training.

GMB is seeking clarification surrounding the following:

1. Schools are being asked to continue to provide care for a limited number of children i.e. children who are vulnerable and children whose parents are critical to the Covid-19 response and cannot be safely cared for at home.

The amount of workers who fall within the ‘critical sector’ is extensive. How many children are you anticipating will still be attending school and how many staff are you anticipating will be working? GMB is aware that in the week preceding the Governments’ announcement that schools would close staffing levels were already seriously affected. GMB is concerned that staff to pupil ratios may not be at their usual levels and this potentially poses a risk.

1. Vulnerable children include children who are supported by social care, those with safeguarding and welfare needs, including child in need plans, on child protection plans, ‘looked after’ children, young carers, disabled children and those with education, health and care plans (EHCP). Please would you confirm that Members will be aware of any changes to Designated Safeguarding Leads and that adequate handovers and information will be provided to Members who may be working with children with whom they are not familiar.
2. Would you please confirm whether your contracted catering and facility management providers receive payment that covers provision for the whole school year, or if they invoice the school monthly or termly on a usage basis?
3. With regard to cleaning, what extra measures are being taken? Are cleaning staff being provided with PPE to protect them from potential exposure to Coronavirus and if new cleaning materials are being provided have new risk and COSHH assessments been completed?
4. If a child develops a fever when at School how will this be dealt with? How will you determine who cares for that child while they are waiting to be collected and what advice will be given to staff in these circumstances in terms of what they need to do?
5. Given that the school is ‘closed’ what will be the format of the school day? Will catering staff and SMSAs still be required to work? Will support staff still be performing their usual roles and would you please confirm that teaching support staff will not be used in place of teachers for taking whole classes?
6. Would you please confirm that the School will still break up for the Easter holiday period next Friday and be ‘properly’ closed? GMB is aware that some staff are being told they will need to work throughout what should be the Easter Holiday and is concerned there is a lack of detail surrounding schools and school support staff at this time.
7. To minimise risk of infection, and in accordance with social distancing, has the School cancelled all lettings?
8. If staffing levels fall, would you please confirm that those who are off sick will not be pressured into returning to work and that you will properly close the school, to protect Members from working in an unsafe environment?
9. Will the school only be opening for core hours or will there still be provision for breakfast and after school clubs?

As you can imagine, GMB Members are concerned about not only how this Public Health crisis may impact on them and their loved ones, but on their jobs. GMB is keen to provide reassurance to all of its members at this worrying time and hopes Employers will work with us in ensuring that all reasonable steps to reduce potential exposure to COVID-19 are being taken.

We would therefore be grateful if you would please respond to these queries as soon as possible so that this information can be provided to members.

Yours faithfully

 

**Keith Williams Lisa Bangs**

**Senior Organiser Lead Schools Organiser**