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**Joint General Secretaries**  
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### **Primary school leaders**

Dear colleague,

These are very stressful and pressured times for school leaders. The Government has unfairly devolved decisions about the safe wider opening of schools to you. It is now clear that many schools will not reopen more widely on 1 June. Other schools will not open for four year groups and will take a staged approach over a longer period of time.

The National Education Union (NEU) wants schools to open more widely. We know how important schools are for children, and particularly for vulnerable children.

But we believe that it is not safe to open schools more widely on 1 June.

Experts are clear and unequivocal about the dangers inherent in a 1 June wider school opening. Sir David King, of Independent Sage, said last Friday: "It is clear from the evidence we have collected that 1 June is simply too early to go back, by going ahead with this dangerous decision, the government is further risking the health of our communities and the likelihood of a second spike."

Professor Dame Angela Maclean, chief scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defence and a professor of mathematical biology at Oxford, when answering a question about the Government's wider opening proposal at a Downing St briefing, said loosening the lockdown was reliant on a strong system of test track trace being available throughout the country, social distancing being maintained and the case count being reduced to manageable proportions to enable a test, trace and isolate function to work effectively. She emphasised that none of these essential conditions for a loosening of the lockdown was reliant upon a date.

We realise it is difficult to suggest that the Government may be wrong. But in Professor Maclean we have the Government's own scientific advisers stating that the safe opening of schools is conditional upon an effective and fully functioning test, track, trace and isolate system being fully implemented. In so doing she is agreeing with Independent SAGE.

As we write it seems increasingly unlikely that we will have efficient contact tracing running by 1 June.

The NEU believes that we all need to take account of what expert opinion says about the risks to pupils and families, staff and their families and to the wider community.

We must, together, recognise that this same expert opinion suggests that it might be safe to open on 15 June – just two weeks later. This advice suggests that risks to adults and children would have halved during that time and that risks to the community would be much lower.

We have made clear that we would work together with the Government for a phased wider opening from 15 June – dependent on widespread community testing and tracing and ministerial engagement with the NEU on questions of social distancing and protection of vulnerable staff.

We would like to work with school leaders on a similar timescale.

As a trade union, it is also important for us to say that the Government has not given us modelling of the risks to various categories of staff, including BAME staff for example.

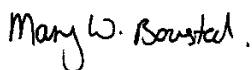
We want to work with school leaders on the issues around vulnerable staff in particular and we will support our members who feel that they must continue to work on the present patterns in order to stay safe.

We want schools to open more widely and children and young people to get back to a life of greater normality. But this can only happen if parents, the community, school staff and children feel safe and cared for.

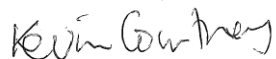
We ask you to act with care and with caution and to use the flexibility that is apparent in ministerial suggestions that it is understood that many schools will not have wider opening on 1 June.

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of children, their families and your colleagues in school.

Yours sincerely



**Mary Boustead**  
joint general secretary



**Kevin Courtney**  
joint general secretary