

[Name: Head Teacher/Governor/Trust/Local Authority]
[Office Address]

Dear [Name]

Re: Air Pollution Inside Our Local Schools

I am a concerned [parent/grandparent and/or member of our community] and I would like to request your assistance with improving the air quality inside our local schools.

Breathing poor-quality air causes well-documented harm to children's immediate and long-term health and educational attainment. Indoor air is known to be up to five times more polluted than outdoors and a typical British school has around four times as many occupants per square metre than an adult office space, with poor ventilation and high levels of CO₂. Unsurprisingly, illness is the leading cause of all school absences in England for the 2023/2024 school year.

Immediate improvements to air quality inside schools could be made with simple measures. Effective ventilation and supplemental air filtration where appropriate, would improve pupil and staff health, address attendance issues and enhance educational performance.

Recent asthma research shows a 300% rise in paediatric hospital admissions during the autumn when children return to poorly ventilated classrooms. This is where children spend most of their time outside of the home exposed to asthma triggers such as viruses, dust mites and pollen while crowded into small spaces. The viruses that cause measles, COVID-19, and RSV predominantly spread through the air, and The World Health Organisation asserts that we remain in a pandemic. This is corroborated by expert witnesses for the UK COVID Inquiry who also state that COVID-19 can linger in the air for hours and schools are "...a big vector of transmission". Adults and children continue to develop chronic ill health after acute infection for which there is no cure, and symptoms can last indefinitely. Clinically vulnerable families remain at an increased and significant risk of harm and mortality.

Fortunately, a British school study into the efficacy of portable air filters found positive results. Professor Catherine Noakes OBE FREng states, "Underlying illness absence was reduced by more than 20% [...] They do make a difference". Further information supported by experts can be found on The Safe Air School Foundation's website: SafeAirSchools.org.

Schools are at the heart of our community. Our children have a right to be protected in these institutions and to learn in safe, healthy environments. Please can you raise this as an urgent issue and advocate for improved air quality inside classrooms:

- Review and reinstate the use of CO₂ monitors in classrooms and promote guidance for frequent window opening as advised by the Department for Education
- UK SAGE and other international experts recommend maintaining CO₂ levels below 800 ppm. Most classrooms will find this difficult to achieve because they are high-density and reliant on opening windows alone. Where CO₂ levels cannot be sustained below these recommended limits instruct ventilation specialists to audit school buildings via their Local Authority or Trust
- Supplement classroom ventilation with portable air filters where appropriate
- Educate school staff on the need for safer air quality
- Advise keeping symptomatic teachers and children away from schools and refrain from pressuring families to send them in.

Thank you in advance. I look forward to your response and hope to see positive changes in our community soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

Sources and References

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5. <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/air-pollution-uk-position-statement>
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7. <https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/covid-19>
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10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jKlsmf5hOw>
11. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>
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13. <https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/media/press-releases/number-children-hospital-life-threatening-asthma-attacks-could-quadruple-they>
14. <https://neu.org.uk/advice/health-and-safety/workplace-conditions/ventilation-schools-and-colleges>
15. <https://neu.org.uk/latest/library/how-use-co2-monitors-poster>
16. Boris Johnson. UK Covid-19 Inquiry, Module 2, Hearing 7th December 2023. “The fact is that sadly schools are terrific reservoirs of the virus and in the cold winter months they were going to be a big vector of transmission”
17. The Safe Air Schools Foundation website. safeairschools.org