



INTO Covid SAFER SCHOOLS

into 

Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

SECTION 1

Returning to school after the summer will present many challenges for teachers and foremost among them for INTO will be the protection of teachers' health, well-being and safety coupled with no dilution of their terms and conditions of employment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In regard to health and safety, it is clear that the return to school will not be the same as usual. Prior to the reopening of schools and other education settings, **risk assessments** must be carried out and control measures put in place to mitigate the identified risks. These must be clearly communicated to all staff, pupils, parents/carers and visitors to the school.

Employers have a duty to consult in relation to risk assessments and INTO insists that such consultation is carried out with accredited INTO workplace representatives. Further information on risk assessment and the rights of Health and Safety Representatives can be found here:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/health-and-safety-representatives>

<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/risk-assessment>

Separate risk assessments should be carried out for vulnerable individuals, live streaming of lessons, pre-recorded lessons and all aspects of blended learning.

Teachers should follow the protocols and procedures as set out by the Department of Education which will have been adapted to suit the particular context of each school and education setting. These are based on the measures identified in the risk assessment alongside DE and PHA guidance relating to hygiene, social distancing, shielding and general health and safety in the workplace related to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

INTO have provided further advice (**INTO, Covid Safer Schools, Section 2**) to which members should refer to help ensure that adequate measures are in place to mitigate risk in their workplace. The key legislation in relation to Health and Safety at work in Northern Ireland remains in place:

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000

The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978

It should be noted that the 'Northern Ireland Re-opening Schools Guidance - New School Day' published 19th June 2020 states that: '*Under the Coronavirus Act 2020, they must have regard to the advice relating to coronavirus from the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland. In the event of any conflict between any applicable legislation (including health and safety legislation) and this guidance, the applicable legislation must prevail.*' This provides teachers with the assurance that key legislation, as referred to above, provide the crucial protection for a teacher's safety at work.

Members should discuss any concerns relating to Health and Safety in the first instance with their INTO workplace Health and Safety Representative and/or School Representative.

TEACHERS' TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The enforced changes, brought about by Covid-19, will not result in a dilution of teachers' terms and conditions of employment. Teachers will be returning to school, in many cases, at an earlier date than usual as announced by DE, but this will not result in any loss, in regard to, their working days. Each teacher is required to be available to work for 195 days per academic school year and their early return only means that the subsequent year will result in longer breaks within the normal calendar. The academic year of 2020/2021 will not be extended beyond 195 working days.

The new post-lockdown school day will still be guided by the workload agreement and the basic template of teachers being available to work for 1265 hours per year. This will not change except to take account of the newly acquired entitlement for teachers of 10% of directed time being available for Planning, Preparation and Assessment. (PPA) This PPA translates to 126.5 hours per year being included in the directed time budget.

Teachers returning from holidays, which were booked before the new school opening date was officially notified on Thursday 18th June 2020, will not be subject to any financial or other detriment should they return to school late because of the holiday or any quarantine arrangement that may need to be fulfilled. If teachers are expected to quarantine at home, they shall assist their school with the blended learning programme.

It remains a given that all duties, which are required from teachers, must be included in their directed time budget and the Covid-19 crisis will not result in additional administration, teaching or supervision outside of the 1265 hours. Current regulations in relation to teachers having a midday break of at least 30 minutes and not being compelled to participate in lunchtime supervision are still applicable.

Teachers engaging in blended learning, either face to face or remotely, will do so within the parameters of normal practice. They will not be expected to work outside of the agreed school working day and all time spent in preparing, organising or recording remote lessons must be included within the directed time budget. Time spent engaging remotely with pupils in 'real time' activities is contact time. While taking part in real time activities, teachers should treat these engagements in the same manner as traditional face to face classes where they are in control of the lesson. This means that they should have similar control over all participants' microphones and cameras. And while teachers are working remotely, they should only do so during normal school contact hours. Parental engagement during remote learning should follow the normal pattern and school managements should provide clear advice to parents in regard to parent/teacher appointment arrangements.

INTO is currently engaging with the Department of Education with a view to drawing up clear guidelines, in respect of remote learning, for both pupils and teachers.

SECTION 2

For completion by the person delegated by the Board of Governors with the overall responsibility of managing the implementation of the School Covid Response Plan. This advice and guidance has been prepared by INTO to help Principals and Boards of Governors to plan and prepare in advance and in the initial stages of your school re-opening in a way that will help prevent the spread of Covid-19. This is advisory only and those charged with the management of schools and development of plans for them and other education settings are reminded that indemnification in relation to carrying out their roles is provided by the employing authorities. This advice should, therefore, be used in conjunction with DE and PHA official guidance.

PLANNING AND SYSTEMS

INTO advises:

1. The Principal and Board of Governors prepare for your school a Covid-19 Response Plan.
2. INTO advise that this plan should include systems and procedures;
 - to keep up to date with the latest advice from Department of Education, Department of Health and Public Health Agency;
 - to ensure that advice is made available in a timely manner to staff and students and to adjust your plans and procedures in line with that advice;
 - to provide your staff and students with information and guidance on the measures that have been put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus and what is expected of them;
 - to review and update risk assessments and safety statements in line with DE advice to take account of any controls to help prevent the spread of Covid-19;
 - to update their School Critical Incident Plan to take account of their Covid Response Plan.

STAFF

INTO advises:

3. the Principal and Board of Governors survey staff in advance of the wider re-opening of schools to determine their health and well-being and availability for a return to work in the school or working from home, and to inform planning should on-site roles need adjustment;
4. having surveyed staff and become aware of staff members who are at risk, under the DE guidance on people most at risk, have you taken the necessary steps to support their return to work as appropriate or access to Covid leave, in line with the health advice and in compliance with DE guidance on this matter;
5. the Principal and Board of Governors inform staff and pupils:
 - they must stay at home if sick or if they have any of the recognised symptoms of Covid-19;
 - of the availability of the INSPIRE and the support services available through EANI for pupils and other support services available to the school community.
6. the Principal and Board of Governors Board identify a Staff Representative to help advise staff and to monitor compliance with Covid-19 control measures in the school?

BUILDINGS / EQUIPMENT

INTO advises, the following checks are undertaken by the EANI maintenance team in advance of the school re-opening:

7. should your school have mechanical ventilation, check it is clean and scheduled or necessary maintenance is undertaken;
8. check the water system and flush if necessary, at outlets, following low usage to prevent Legionnaire's Disease;
9. a visual check, carried out by the Principal or Board of Governors, or EANI, on all equipment in the school for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
10. all equipment in the school, workstations, benches, doors and frequently touched surfaces points, have been thoroughly cleaned.
11. that unnecessary equipment and furniture have been identified and stored appropriately.

CONTROL MEASURES HAND / RESPIRATORY / HYGIENE

INTO advises, the Principal and Board of Governors to:

12. access from EANI supplies of hand sanitizers cleaning materials and any necessary PPE equipment in line with the health guidance relating to the wider re-opening of schools, from Guidance provided by DE;
13. ensure that hand washing/hand sanitising stations are in place to accommodate staff, students and visitors adhering to hand hygiene measures in accordance with DE guidance;
14. have arrangements in place to facilitate regular handwashing and access to hand sanitising facilities as appropriate;
15. take care to ensure hand sanitisers are easily available and accessible for all staff, students and visitors - e.g. in each classroom and at entry and exit points to school buildings, taking into account the risks of these products to young children and those with a learning disability;
16. have in place arrangements to ensure hand hygiene facilities are regularly checked and well-stocked;
17. continually re-enforce to staff and students the importance of hand washing;
18. insist that training is provided to staff and students on how to wash their hands (with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) and dry them correctly;
19. ensure staff and students are trained as to how to use hand sanitiser correctly and made aware of where hand-sanitising stations are located;

20. display visual aids on how to wash hands correctly in appropriate locations;
21. inform staff and students when they need to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser, when or after engaging in the following activities;
- before and after eating and preparing food
 - after coughing or sneezing
 - after using the toilet
 - before smoking or vaping
 - where hands are dirty
 - before and after wearing gloves
 - before and after being on public transport
 - before leaving home
 - when arriving/leaving the school/other sites
 - after changing tasks
 - after touching potentially contaminated surfaces
 - if in contact with someone displaying any Covid-19 symptoms
22. ensure staff and students are aware of good respiratory measures to limit the spread of the virus such as:
- avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth
 - cover coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
 - disposing of tissues in a covered bin

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

INTO advises:

23. schools to minimise the need for staff to gather for meetings and interactions, for example, by arranging online or phone meetings with staff and parents.
24. staff are informed to avoid any physical contact between themselves, other adults and where appropriate pupils and observe the social distancing protocols as described in DE guidance. This includes sharing of resources e.g. Tea bags, coffee, mugs, cutlery etc
25. prior to schools reopening workstations, desks and tables should be set up to help with physical distancing in line with the DE guidelines provided.
26. all non-essential travel for school activities, should cease until a risk assessment has been completed, and scientific and health advice allows.

VISITORS TO SCHOOL

INTO advises:

27. Schools should limit the number of visitors who are admitted to school. Where activities involve interacting with essential visitors to schools, arrangements must be put in place to minimize physical contact in line with social distancing guidelines;
28. arrangements should be in place to inform essential visitors to schools of the measures to help prevent the spread of infection;
29. a system for recording visits to the school by external, essential visitors should be put in place to allow tracking of visitors (Covid-19 contact log);
30. All visits should be by appointment to allow for the completion of a health declaration form prior to external visitors entering schools.

CLEANING

INTO advises the Principal and the Board of Governors ensure that:

31. a system is in place for checking and keeping up to date with the latest public health advice from the NI Executive, Department of Education, Department of Health and Public Health Agency to ensure that advice is made available in a timely manner to staff and students and to allow for prompt adjustments to cleaning procedures in line with that advice from DE, EA, PHA;
32. EA have met with the principal and building supervisor to agree a system of thorough and regular cleaning of the following frequently touched surfaces:
 - table tops and desks,
 - door handles and light switches,
 - toilets and toilet doors, taps,
 - remote controls,
 - kettles, coffee machines, toasters, microwave, fridge handles,
 - kitchen surfaces and cupboard handles,
 - if disinfection of contaminated surfaces is required, a system is put in place to do this following cleaning;
33. staff have been informed of the protocols they need to follow in order to keep their own workspace clean including, where appropriate, providing them with cleaning materials such as disinfectant or wipes to keep their own desk/table/workstation clean;
34. staff have been informed that they are responsible for cleaning personal items that have been brought to work and are likely to be handled at work or during breaks. e.g. mobile phone, and to avoid leaving them down on communal surfaces or they will need to clean the surface after the personal item is removed;

35. EANI have provided enough bins with lids (preferably pedal bins) to allow safe disposal of tissues in all areas of the school;
36. arrangements have been made through EA for the regular and safe emptying of bins;
37. enough cleaning materials have been made available to your school by EANI, in addition to normal requisition, and at no additional cost;
38. building supervisors and auxiliary staff been trained in the new cleaning arrangements;
39. where staff have been instructed to wear gloves when cleaning or they have been made aware of the need to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, both before and after wearing gloves and to dispose of the gloves when leaving one area before being in another;
40. a system is in place for the disposal of cleaning cloths and used wipes which is reflective of the most up to date DE/EANI guidance;
41. there is a system in place to make sure reusable cleaning equipment including mop heads and non-disposable cloths are clean before re-use;
42. there is a system in place to ensure that equipment such as buckets are emptied and cleaned with a fresh solution of disinfectant before re-use.



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