

into



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BULLETIN 3

School Closure 19 – 30 October 2020

15th October 2020

Following the announcement by the Northern Ireland Executive concerning a four-week lockdown, schools have received a communication from the office of the Education Minister.

While clarifying a number of issues, INTO is concerned that parts of the Minister's letter may have caused confusion for school leaders.

Based on the information available:

- Letter from the office of the Minister dated 14 October 2020
- Circular 2020/09 School Optional Days and Exceptional Closure Days
- Circular 2020/09 Addendum
- Communication from Mark Bailey, Director Workforce, DE dated 14 October 2020
- 19 March 2020 letter from Education Minister, Peter Weir

INTO advises members that our understanding in relation to how 19 October to 30 October will be facilitated by schools is as follows:

- **Schools will not be operational from 19 October 2020 until 30 October 2020** (Circular 2020 Addendum)
- The two-week period will consist of the planned half-term holiday augmented by:
 - 2 additional optional days as set out in Circular 2020/09 Paragraph 4
 - Exceptional closure days as set out in Circular 2020/09 Paragraph 10

It is INTO's understanding that the two additional optional closure days are outside of the normal contractual 195 days, and principals and teachers cannot be directed to attend work on these days.

In relation to the exceptional closure days, these are days which would normally be applied for, to take account of exceptional circumstances, and are not those days set aside as School Development Days which schools will already have taken account of in their previously published holiday lists. Circular 2020/09 Addendum indicates that on this occasion schools will not be required to apply for such days and accordingly **schools should be closed to both pupils and staff** (Circular 2020/09, Annex A).

Members are advised that they may be directed to work from home on these exceptional closure days. This may involve teacher planning, preparation and assessment of work, it cannot involve teachers taking part in remote learning with pupils. Where a teacher is directed to work from home, these days will be included as part of a teacher's contractual 195 days and schools should not attempt to claw these days back at a later date.

All school staff will be paid as normal. Substitute teachers and non-teaching staff (including temporary and fixed-term employees) will also receive their normal pay for the period of time that they have been engaged to work. (Letters from office of Minister dated 14 October 2020 / 19 March 2020).

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