



**Irish National Teachers' Organisation**  
**Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann**

Wednesday, 22 April 2020

Mr. Seán Ó Foghlú,  
Secretary General,  
Department of Education and Skills,  
Marlborough Street,  
Dublin 1.

[secgen@education.gov.ie](mailto:secgen@education.gov.ie)

A Sheáin, a chara,

I hope that you and your family are keeping safe and well at this very challenging time.

I listened carefully to An Taoiseach's interview on Primetime last night and welcomed his statement that teacher unions will have a big part to play regarding any plans for the re-opening of schools. With that in mind, I write to request that you would at the earliest opportunity establish a working group involving INTO, representatives of school management and your own department to plan for an orderly and safe approach to the reopening of primary schools.

I am aware from the engagement that we and many of your officials had since March 12 that your staff have a lot on their plates at the moment.

The three teacher unions will remotely meet Department officials on April 29 regarding issues relating to Covid-19 and we will be in contact regarding many other issues in the coming weeks. Nevertheless, we in INTO believe that a very focussed work stream will be necessary in the weeks leading up to any re-opening of primary schools, even a partial or phased re-opening.

We are very grateful that your officials agreed to issue guidelines for the primary teachers who support children with special educational needs and children who are at risk this week.

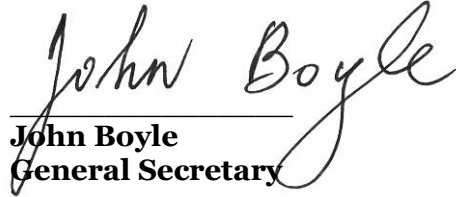
In our view the re-opening of primary schools on the advice of the NPHET, any time in May or June, would pose very particular challenges relating to the ages of the pupils, the numbers of parents who usually congregate near schools at reception time and at the end of the school day, the size of classes, school playgrounds, the many different types and sizes of schools and a variety of other factors.

With all of this in mind we think that a small working group has the potential to put the appropriate preparation in place well in advance of pupils and staff returning to their schools.

On a separate but related note, we have been contacted by a large number of principal teachers, who are requesting access to school buildings as soon as possible as many of them are finding it impossible to comply with the guidance on continuity of learning (especially when families cannot engage with online communication) and many are also falling behind with school administrative work.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss these issues or any other matters.

**Yours sincerely,**

  
**John Boyle**  
**General Secretary**