

into



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BULLETIN 6

PRIORITISE SAFE SCHOOLS

4th January 2021

COVID-19 continues to impact on schools, cases are increasing in schools and communities.

DE Education Restart Guidance for School and Educational Settings in NI (December 2020) has seen a further tightening, not relaxing, of safety procedures. There should be no relaxing of the guidance in schools. Thorough risk assessing remains key to ensuring a safe working environment and any changes to current school day procedures/practices must be fully risk assessed.

School management must have completed whole school risk assessments, **given the emergence of a new variant Covid-19 strain, schools should revisit these risk assessments to ensure that they are fit for purpose, and amend accordingly in light of the ever-changing advice from DE – these updated risk assessments should be shared with staff and school-specific guidance provided.**

INTO advises all members to resist the introduction of practices that has the potential to relax mitigation of identified risks.

Key changes to the guidance published on 28 September include:

Meetings	<p>Social Distancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tele-conference or videoconference must be used for all parent teacher meetings • Open nights/days are not permitted • All in-school meetings with more than six adults must be held by video conference or teleconference • Physical attendance by staff at external training should be strongly discouraged. Attendance at statutory training sessions which cannot be facilitated online remains appropriate, where a thorough risk assessment has taken place, and attendees have sight of same.
Sporting events	<p>Social Distancing</p> <p>Spectators (i.e., Parents, siblings and carers) should be advised they must not attend school sporting or cultural events</p>
Face Coverings	<p>It is mandatory for all post-primary aged pupils to wear face coverings on public or school transport unless they have a reasonable excuse not to. It is strongly recommended that primary school pupils, regardless of their age, should wear face coverings on public or school transport</p>
Education Visits	<p>Domestic overnight and overseas education visits have been paused and should not be arranged. This advice remains under review. Schools can resume non-overnight domestic educational visits. As normal, schools should undertake full and thorough risk assessments prior to all educational visits to ensure they can be done safely</p>
Parental Support	<p>DE Guidance</p> <p>Parents should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote compliance with school guidance in relation to Covid-19 • Ensure compliance with PHA guidance of child isolating while awaiting test results whether an identified close contact or staying at home if symptomatic
Ventilation	<p>Emerging evidence points to the importance of good ventilation in reducing transmission through aerosols and airborne particles. The use of ventilation, whether natural or by mechanical means, should therefore be maximised as far as practicable.</p> <p>To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, the following measures should also be considered where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opening high level windows in preference to low level to reduce draughts • increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied (e.g. between classes, during break and lunch, when a room is unused) • providing flexibility to allow wearing additional, suitable indoor clothing • rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct drafts <p>Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained, particularly in occupied spaces.</p>
PHA Guidance	<p>Compliance with Test Trace and Protect</p> <p>All staff and pupils must comply with Test Trace and Protect. Where it is clear to a Principal that an individual has been:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in a location that requires 14 days quarantine on return: or, • a close contact of a confirmed case; or, displaying clear COVID-19 symptoms. <p>In line with their general duty of care for all pupils and staff, the Principal should inform them that they cannot attend the school until the required period of self-isolation has been completed. Where such an individual attends school they should be isolated in line with the above guidance on protective isolation and be sent home from the school.</p> <p>Where an individual is displaying symptoms of COVID but will not or cannot have a test, the Principal should discuss the situation with the PHA education team for further advice.</p>

With the increase in daily COVID-19 cases now is NOT the time for the relaxation of safety procedures and protocols in schools.

Members should continue to be diligent in their safety measures.

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