

into



INTO
Vere Foster House
23 College Gardens
Belfast BT9 6BS

Phone: 028 90 38 14 55
Fax: 028 90 66 28 03
Email: infol@into.ie
Web: www.into.ie
Twitter: INTO_NI

Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

A nation's greatness depends upon the education of its people



BULLETIN 3

Latest Update

3 January 2022

Senior INTO Officials, including the Northern Chairperson, along with trade union colleagues from across the education workforce met with Department of Education and employer representatives on December 31st.

In that meeting, INTO raised the following as priorities with DE to protect our members and the wider workforce in education:

- Additional exceptional closure days to be made available to schools; to identify available staff, review risk assessments, ensure all mitigations are in place and updated including CO2 monitors, hand sanitisers, lateral flow tests etc.
- Immediate review of close contact in school to reflect the updated PHA advice and highly transmissible variant.
- Improved response, including additional funding, to schools in crisis on the part of DE and EA/CCMS.
- Data to be gathered of the impact of COVID on nursery/pre-school settings as a matter of urgency to identify possible additional mitigations required.
- Additional PPE made available e.g., fluid repellent face masks for all staff. Face coverings for primary pupils should be introduced.
- Strengthen DE Guidance with respect to non-business critical activities in schools.
- Contingency plan for lack of availability of lateral flow tests.
- Reinforce message that schools can only stay open where there is an appropriate level of staffing available to ensure the safety of the school community.

INTO was and remains dissatisfied with the response of the Department of Education and the employers in the meeting of 31st December. We will continue to challenge their inaction and offer practical suggestions to them in the hope of further protections being made available to members and the young people in their care.

Meanwhile INTO reminds and advises all members, in particular principal members:

- Schools are not safe to be open in event of 25%+ staff being absent. Where cover is not available, pupils should be sent home. To date, attempts to recruit retired teachers onto NISTR appears to be an abject failure. Principals should ensure staff being redeployed to cover for absent colleagues are qualified for the role.
- Risk assessments outline mitigations up to and including school closure/exceptional closure in event of key staff absence e.g., cleaning staff. It is important that individual risk assessments be revisited in the light of the latest Covid-19 variant.
- All mitigations must be considered and implemented to fully support schools being open safely.
- Establishing a Covid Safety Team in school would assist principals and leadership teams by further drawing on support from Health & Safety Reps and other nominated staff from across the school workforce.
- If you believe you are a close contact, follow the PHA guidance.
- If you are unable to access support from the employing authorities contact INTO and we will provide what support we can by intervening with the relevant body on your behalf where appropriate.
- The FAQs on our website were updated in the week prior to the Christmas holidays and will be continually revised in light of any further changes or necessary clarifications.

Make your voice heard – join the largest most effective teaching union in Ireland

**9/10* Teachers find our
car insurance cheaper**

NI's leading teacher insurance provider for over 20 years



 **cornmarket**
insurance services
028 9044 2201
cornmarketinsurance.co.uk