

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of

Education

www.education-ni.gov.uk

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To All Schools

1 April 2021

Dear Principal

RETURN TO SCHOOL FOR ALL PUPILS CONFIRMED FROM 12 APRIL AND FURTHER CORONAVIRUS GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

The Executive today confirmed that all pupils should return to classroom learning from 12 April. This means that the remaining pupils in Years 8 to 11 will be back in the classroom for the first time since the Christmas break.

I also want to take this opportunity to provide further clarity to schools on a small number of key issues. This is informed by the most recent advice provided by the Chief Medical Officer and the Public Health Agency. The information in this update will be incorporated into the full Department of Education Coronavirus Guidance for Educational Settings in due course.

Music in Schools

On CMO and Public Health Agency advice, no indoor singing or playing of wind or brass instruments should take place on school premises. Schools should note that this applies to pupils undertaking these activities either individually or as part of a group. These activities are permitted in outdoor settings where pupils remain socially distanced. This will be kept under review.

Ventilation in School Buildings

Schools will be aware that the ventilation of school buildings is referenced on pages 23-24 of the DE guidance¹. The ventilation of school buildings is a key mitigating measure in reducing the risk of virus transmission. While needing to balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, schools are reminded of the importance of maximising the ventilation of classrooms and other rooms where pupils and/or staff congregate. While it is preferable for rooms to be ventilated at all times with windows open wherever possible, it is recommended that rooms are particularly well ventilated at the change of classes or when pupils are not in the classroom due to breaks or other activities.

¹ [Coronavirus Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings - March 2021.pdf \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Pre-school/after-school Activities, Extra-curricular School Sport and Wraparound Care

I wrote to inform Principals on 26 March that there had been no change in relation to the pause on the delivery of school managed breakfast clubs, education visits, inter-school sports and after school activities. These are part of ongoing discussions with the Department of Health. There are also further discussions to finalise plans for a swift resumption of extra-curricular managed outdoor sports training within schools

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Weir".

Peter Weir MLA
Minister of Education