



23 February 2021

Dear Principal,

Further to the Government decision and the Taoiseach's address this evening I am pleased to advise that the next phase of reopening of schools will commence from 1 March 2021. This is in line with the public health advice received by the Government from NPHE.

Intensive engagement and input from education partners representing parents, students, unions, management bodies and principal networks on the plans for reopening of schools has also been ongoing.

It is recognised by all of the partners that remote teaching and learning is difficult for all and the return of all children at the earliest opportunity remains a high priority for Government in line with public health advice.

The framework (attached) is an interim arrangement to outline the arrangements for the safe reopening of schools.

Under the framework the following return to in-school provision on 1 March 2021 has been agreed:

- Special classes at post primary to continue to attend full time.
- Leaving Cert classes to attend full-time.

In order to support schools to plan and prepare for this phase of reopening I want to bring a number of things to your attention as follows:

1. Appendix 1 –Framework document
2. Appendix 2 – Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) guidance on the reopening of schools
3. Appendix 3 – Summary of additions to COVID-19 Response Plan required by 'Work Safely Protocol'. Link to the word version of the COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Post Primary Schools can be found [here](#).
4. Circulars on temporary changes to the parental leave scheme and unpaid leave and other temporary arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants in recognised post-primary schools – these circulars will follow under separate cover.

Extension of supplementary programmes for students with special education needs in post primary who have not yet returned to school under this phase:

- The Department is anxious to further support those students with SEN who are unable to return to in-school teaching and learning under these phases.
- The supplementary programme for these students will be extended by a further two weeks to allow these students access in-person support at a time when the public health advice does not support the full reopening of all schools.



There is a range of materials available for schools to support communication with parents and students and re-inforce public health messaging. These include video messages from public health doctors on the safety of schools, posters/digital graphics and digital animations and videos.

Posters can be printed and the digital resources can be emailed or uploaded to school channels such as Aladdin connect or seesaw as well as social media channels.

Further material is being added to this list and further updates will issue in the coming days as new material is added. All materials will be available [here](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/5572b-back-to-school-advice-for-parents-students-and-families/):
<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/5572b-back-to-school-advice-for-parents-students-and-families/> and on the Department's twitter feed @Education_Ire

The Department is very appreciative of the ongoing efforts of the school community working to limit the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in schools and ensuring that the infection control measures put in place in line with the school COVID-19 response plans are effective in making schools safe for children and staff. Discussions are ongoing about the further reopening of schools at the earliest opportunity in line with public health advice.

Yours faithfully,

Deirdre Shanley
Assistant Secretary