

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Education Restart – Update to Guidance on Face Coverings in Schools

From: Education Restart Programme

To: All Schools, Education Sector Partners

Date: 25 August 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to advise that the Minister of Education, Peter Weir MLA will announce later this evening that the guidance in respect of face coverings in schools will be updated.

The Minister has taken this decision following further advice which he received from the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Scientific Adviser today.

It is recommended that pupils and teachers wear a face covering in corridors and other communal areas of post-primary schools. This updates the existing guidance on the use of face coverings in educational settings. This will come into effect on 31 August 2020 when schools return on a full-time basis.

The existing New School Day guidance, published on 13 August 2020, already covers the use of face coverings. In terms of school transport, the advice remains the same that we strongly recommend that all pupils wear a face covering on all dedicated school transport including buses and taxis where it is appropriate for them to do so.

In relation, to communal areas in schools, the guidance already strongly encourages face coverings for activities that entail large numbers of staff or pupils within an enclosed space where social distancing is not possible.

Given the risk mitigations in place in schools to limit and contain the spread of COVID-19, face coverings are not recommended as being compulsory for routine use in education settings. However, staff and pupils may wish to use them during the routine school day and this is acceptable. Schools should also be aware that some persons (including some children) are exempt from wearing face coverings.

The Department's New School Day Guidance will be updated to reflect this recommendation.

A further email will issue to schools on publication of the revised guidance.

Education Restart Programme