



25 August 2020

Dear Principal

I am writing to you in particular as Principal of a school in Kildare to thank you and your whole school team and community for all the work that you have undertaken to support re-opening our schools.

I know that you have been working under very difficult circumstances, particularly in light of further restrictions currently in place around Kildare, and I hope that you have found the supports and resources provided so far useful.

I want to take this opportunity to tell you that we fully support you and appreciate hugely the efforts you have made to ensure a safe return to school for all.

I have seen some of this work at first-hand and I know the ingenuity and effort that has gone in to your re-opening plans. I am proud of the huge effort that the teams across our schools have made to make this important re-opening happen.

We have updated gov.ie/backtoschool with new materials for parents and for students. These are designed to be age-appropriate and have been developed in consultation with children and young people and parents. I am grateful to everyone who has participated in giving us this feedback and support and I hope you find them useful.

I would be grateful for your support in ensuring that parents receive the following, important information from the Department and the HSE with regard to returning to school. Links to each of these are in the attached document, so that it is as easy as possible for you to send on the relevant items to your school community:

- Video for parents with key information on supporting children to return to school available [here](#) and [here](#)
- Fliers for parents – these are attached in this email but are also available for download [here](#). The HSE has prepared material on recognising symptoms, which complements the material from the Department on returning to school. This is available [here](#)
- Age-appropriate videos for children and young people at different stages. Videos for primary (both junior and senior level) and post-primary students are available [here](#)
- Resources in a wide range of languages. Many schools will enjoy a huge diversity among their student and parent community. To support these parents, we have translated guidance for parents at gov.ie/backtoschool.

The Covid-19 World Service project has also consulted with the Department and has used our key messages to produce a range of videos in a variety of languages which your school community may find helpful – please see more at <https://nascireland.org/covid-19-world-service>



The Department has also produced a series of induction training videos for all school staff at primary and post-primary level.

This series includes further detailed information for Cleaning in schools, SNAs, School Bus Escorts and the new Covid-19 Lead Worker Representative in schools. This training will outline the steps that all staff need to take to ensure a safe return to schools for everybody and are all available [here](#)

It is also envisaged that further guidance will be issued later this week on the protocols that will underpin the arrangements for dealing with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. I think this will be very helpful and reassuring for all school communities.

Ultimately, the key message is that where there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 amongst school staff or pupils, schools will be required to follow the public health instruction of the HSE Public Health.

Finally, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has developed webinars and resources to support the wellbeing of school communities, which are all available at gov.ie/backtoschool.

The re-opening of schools will require everyone to adjust and get used to new arrangements and routines. This change of culture won't happen overnight and will take a bit of time in the initial re-opening period to get fully established and embedded into the daily operation of our schools.

If you have concerns with regard to your re-opening plans, I encourage you to contact reopeningschools@education.gov.ie. We have been working with schools all around the country to support them to solve some of the challenges they are facing and together have found solutions to many of the issues that arise. Some of the most common issues have now been detailed in the schools sections on gov.ie/backtoschool and you may find that useful.

I'd like to thank you once again for your efforts, and to wish you and all the students a very happy and healthy return to school.

Yours faithfully

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education