

Important Information for school staff accessing schools on the 18th May 2020

On 1st May 2020, the Government published a roadmap to ease Covid-19 restrictions and reopen Ireland's economy and society. It is outlined in the roadmap that **schools will be re-opening in September 2020**. The National Return to Work Safely Protocol has been published. This protocol will inform discussions with all education partners so that appropriate guidance for schools is developed and arrangements put in place in time for the new school year.

In this interim period there is a provision for staff to **access school buildings in limited circumstances** from the 18th May 2020. In this context schools should observe all public health guidance and in addition adhere to the guidelines at Appendix 1.

Practical arrangements for the 18th May.

Travel to schools from the 18th May for essential work that cannot be done remotely is considered a necessary journey. Social distancing and compliance with public health guidance is the key requirement, access should be minimised and only in circumstances where the work cannot be done remotely.

Supporting the continuity of learning for the remainder of this school year

The Department appreciates the ongoing effort by schools to provide for continuity of learning for students and the innovation demonstrated by schools in adapting to support remote teaching and learning during these challenging times. A number of guidance documents have issued to schools on continuity of learning and are available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/covid-19/#guidance>. It is critical to ensure that the continuity of learning continues for the remainder of this school year. Access to schools from the 18th May is important to augment and support this important work.

School books and learning material

To support the continuity of teaching and learning schools can organise, prepare and disseminate books and other learning materials to students such as photocopies and written material in relation to tuition.

Online support for the continuity of learning

The school's ICT infrastructure will be accessible from 18th May to support the ongoing provision of teaching and learning for all students. Schools are asked to make school devices available for those students who cannot access the distance learning provided by the school because they have no access to a digital device, in keeping with the current circulars on ICT Grants available at

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0031_2020.pdf and
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0032_2020.pdf All

devices purchased remain the property of the school and schools are also advised to put in place loan agreements with students and parents with agreed undertaking to return the property when no longer required for this work.

Leaving Cert 2020– Calculated Grades

Staff can access schools in the context of the essential work required to support the calculated grades model in place for the Leaving Certificate 2020.

Planning and preparatory work for the 2020/21 school year

The requirements of the COVID-19 national emergency have undoubtedly impacted on the capacity to undertake essential planning and preparatory work for the coming school year, such as, the operation of school enrolment processes, teacher allocation and redeployment processes. This position will improve from the 18th May onwards as there will be access to schools for staff where this essential work cannot be done remotely.

Public health advice

In all circumstances schools should be mindful of and adhere to public health advice regarding social distancing and other public health guidance at all times and attendance in the school building should continue to be minimised.

Appendix 1

Schools should continue to facilitate remote working. However, for those staff members/contractors who, for exceptional reasons, require access to school premises/facilities, they are owed a duty of care. During the COVID-19 shutdown of schools, any access to a school must be approved by the school Principal or a person designated by the Principal.

From a risk management perspective:

- To ensure safe access and egress, there should be one point of entry/exit to the school during this time;
- Minimise common touch areas e.g. handles etc., and ensure that these are cleaned regularly;
- Hand sanitizer should be made available at the point of entry/exit or staff should be directed to wash their hands after entering the building;
- A contact person should be designated by the Principal and staff should check in and out with this designated person; sign in sheets and records should be kept;
- A suitable means of communication should be established with staff members working in the school e.g. staff members should carry their mobile phone, and keep in contact with the designated person;
- Caretakers must only undertake approved/risk-assessed activities and keep the designated contact informed of their location and tasks etc.;
- Any contractors engaged at this time must be done so in accordance with the Guidelines on Managing Safety, Health and Welfare in schools which can be found at the following link:
- <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Health-Safety-Guidelines/Health-Safety-Guidelines.html>
- Any persons who are in the higher risk demographic should not be entering the premises;
- All staff etc. should practise appropriate social distancing and keep a distance of 2 metres from each other;
- All staff etc. should perform regular and thorough hand hygiene practices, as well as good respiratory hygiene;

- Any staff member etc. who feels unwell or develops symptoms should not enter the school, the staff member should self-isolate and phone their GP and follow HSE guidelines;
- Further information regarding Covid-19 is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Any incidents or injury sustained should be reported to the designated person and appropriate procedures followed.