

Department of Education (NI) Chronology of Actions

- 11 February 2020: letter from Chief Medical Officer (CMO) issued to all schools and education partners.
- 18 February 2020: DE issued Public Health Agency (PHA) Schools Advice leaflet and Self Isolation Advice leaflet to all education sector contact groups.
- 25 February 2020: Link to PHA website placed prominently on DE website.
- 27 February 2020: Minister wrote to all schools and education partners enclosing an updated letter from CMO.
- Engagement with PHA to ensure that advice is provided directly to individual schools, or groups of schools, as appropriate.
- 3 March 2020: DE wrote to all schools regarding travel and school trips.
- 3 March 2020: DE published Information on schools open for vulnerable children and key workers' children.
- 9 March 2020: DE wrote to all schools regarding travel and school trips.
- 10 March 2020: DE update issued to all schools highlighting change in Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice to all of Italy.
- 13 March 2020: DE wrote to all schools to provide an update on the current position and planning.
- 16 March 2020: Minister wrote to all schools attaching guidance for schools and other educational settings.
- 19 March 2020: Minister wrote to all schools attaching guidance for schools and other educational settings.
- 20 March 2020: Permanent Secretary wrote to all schools attaching guidance/FAQs on schools opening for children of key workers.

- 20 March 2020: Minister issues further guidance on Covid-19 response.
- 23 March 2020: Minister's update on school closures.
- 24 March 2020: Minister wrote to all schools providing updated guidance/FAQs on schools opening for children on key workers.
- 22 March 2020: Minister issues COVID-19 Related Letter of Indemnity [Not included in original RP - SUB-1572-2020 refers
- List of schools open for supervised learning of key workers' children and vulnerable children published daily. This is now available via an interactive map displaying schools open for supervised learning which can be accessed on the Education Authority website (link provided on the DE website).
- 26 March 2020: Minister announced Free School Meals payment scheme, with Minister for Communities. Guidance/FAQs published 31 March.
- 27 March 2020: Minister issued a call to all teachers, staff in DE, the EA, CCMS and the ETI on seeking volunteers to provide to provide essential support and assistance to schools
- 31 March 2020: Minister wrote to schools providing guidance on C-19 cluster arrangements. The Department will continue to issue information on known clusters throughout.
- 3 April 2020: Guidance published on implementing social distancing in education settings in NI.
- 6 April 2020: Minister widened the call for volunteers to include all members of schools' Boards of Governors, retired teachers, retired classroom assistants and colleagues from the wider educational sector including any current or previous staff within the Catholic Schools Trustee Service, Governing Bodies Association, Controlled Schools Support Council, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta.

- 8 April 2020: Minister wrote to schools regarding the continued provision of education for vulnerable children and young people.
- 9 April 2020: Joint ministerial announcement (with Department of Health) on childcare provision during the Covid-19 pandemic and provision of associated advice and guidance.
- 10 April 2020: Minister wrote to schools regarding the launch of the Safer Schools App. This focuses on safeguarding particularly in the online world and also provides information and messaging on a full range of safeguarding and child protection issues.
- 10 April 2020: Guidance published on vulnerable children and young people
- 10 April 2020: Update on Covid-19 school clusters published a list of clustering arrangements is available on the DE website and is updated regularly.
- 15 April 2020: Minister thanked all those in the education sector who have volunteered to give urgent assistance in response to Covid-19.
- 16 April 2020: Minister announced arrangements for summer examinations (Assembly statement)
- 21 April 2020: Revised FAQs published on schools opening for children of key workers. Revised guidance published 30 April.
- 21 April 2020: FAQs published for parents in relation to the COVID-19 response.
- 21 April 2020: Revised guidance published on implementing social distancing in education settings in NI. Revised guidance published 30 April (as part of FAQs on schools opening for children of key workers above).
- 27 April 2020: Support for parents and pupils (list of available resources) published. To be regularly updated.
- 27 April 2020: Details on Coronavirus National Testing Programme for key workers published.

- 28 April 2020: Minister announced arrangements for Occupational Studies and CCEA Entry Level qualifications.
- 28 April 2020: Volunteering scheme (Covid-19) update published. Scheme paused due to high numbers registered.
- 28 April 2020: Availability of COVID-19 testing for teaching, non-teaching and support staff in schools open, or willing to open, for vulnerable children and the children of key workers brought to the principals' attention through DE daily survey.
- 1 May 2020: Update provided on COVID-19 Childcare Support scheme.
- 4 May 2020: DE Minister video Q&A was published on the Parentkind website, further clips will be published on the website throughout the week as part of a series.
- 11 May 2020: DE Minister welcomes decision on post-primary transfer test dates.
- 14 May 2020: Update provided on COVID-19 Childcare Support scheme. The scheme is now open for eligible childcare providers.
- 15 May 2020: 'Safer Schools' app launched for children and young people
- 19 May 2020: DE Minister announced an income support scheme to help support substitute teachers during the Covid-19 crisis. Guidance published on the DE website.
- 20 May 2020: DE Minister announced temporary modifications to the assessment and school reporting legislation. The Minister also placed a temporary suspension on the collection of exams data, following the decision to cancel the summer 2020 examination series. Letter issued to schools 19 May. Guidance published on the DE website 20 May 2020.
- 21 May 2020: DE Minister outlined plans to provide digital devices to disadvantaged children.
- 21 May 2020: DE Minister outlined the DE response to the Covid-19 crisis covering the six priority areas, the Childcare Package and Restarting the Education System in a statement to the Assembly Ad Hoc Covid-19 Committee.

- 3 June 2020: Guidance on school development planning 2020/21 published.
- 3 June 2020: DE Minister published letter in relation to the Education Restart Programme.
- 4 June 2020: DE and DoH Ministers announced extension of definition of key workers to access childcare.
- 4 June 2020: Guidance to educational settings on safe working during the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak published.
- 5 June 2020: DE Minister published guidance for schools on supporting remote learning.
- 9 June 2020: DE Minister confirmed funding for BookTrust's Bookstart programme.
- 11 June 2020: Information on attendance at educational settings in NI since Covid-19 lockdown measures were introduced has been published on the DE website.
- 16 June 2020: DE Minister made a statement on Free School Meals. He is currently considering options to cover the July and August period and will be making a bid for funding of just over £12m from the Executive's Covid-19 fund to provide a summer food scheme for those children who normally receive free school meals.
- 17 June 2020: DE Minister thanked schools for their efforts in submitting examinations data for this summer's alternative awarding system.
- 18 June 2020: DE Minister set out plans for the re-opening of schools.
- 18 June 2020: DE Minister announced publication of childcare recovery plan.
- 18 June 2020: DE Minister outlined proposals to support vulnerable children and young people this summer, including special schools summer provision, youth services with priority given to key worker children and plans for a summer food scheme. The Minister also said he was considering bringing forward projects to support learning for children over the summer and beyond, subject to funding.

- 19 June 2020: DE Minister published new guidance setting out how schools should plan for the new school day.
- 23 June 2020: DE Minister published guidance for schools on curriculum planning for the 2020/21 academic year.
- 23 June 2020: New School Day - Pre-School Education Supplementary Guidance published.
- 23 June 2020: Guidance to support safe working in educational settings published.
- 24 June 2020: Information on the childcare recovery plan and Education Restart programme published which will align to form the basis for the return to school in August.
- 25 June 2020: DE Minister made an Oral statement to the Ad Hoc Committee on the Covid-19 response. SUB-1486-2020 Refers
- 26 June 2020: DE published new school day guidance for special schools.
- 26 June 2020: Guidance on Supporting Staff to Return to Schools published.
- 30 June 2020: DE Minister welcomes monitoring round allocations for a summer food scheme (£12m), learning support programmes (£12m) and childcare (£10.5m).
- 2 July 2020: Guidance on the safe delivery of summer activities 2020 (youth sector) published.
- 3 July 2020: Additional Guidance on Planning for the Foundation Stage within Primary Schools published.
- 7 July 2020: Minister Letter to schools – New School Day COVID-19 costs in schools [not included in Original Response Plan see ED1/20/172869. SUB-1522-2020 Refers.
- 8 July 2020: DE Minister announced free wi-fi scheme for disadvantaged pupils.
- 9 July 2020: FAQs on FAQs on Summer Food Payment Scheme published.

- 9 July 2020: Guidance on Supporting Staff to Return to Schools published.
- 10 July 2020: DE Minister provided details on resources available to schools this summer to support children. FAQs published.
- 10 July/24 July 2020: FAQs published on access to Software Packages for Year 6 (Going into Year 7 in 2020/21 Academic Year).
- 22 July 2020: DE Minister announced measures to support childcare providers.
- 24 July 2020: Guidance published on support during July and August 2020 for vulnerable children and young people.
- 26 July 2020: Education Restart – Publication of Special School Guidance for Re-opening Settings [ED1/20/160908]
- 26 July 2020: Education Restart – Publication of Guidance on Supporting Staff to Return to Schools [ED1/20/160890]
- 27 July 2020: Letter of comfort to those schools seeking to use additional premises in response to COVID-19 and the planned august 2020 schools' restart [SUB-1572-2020 refers].
- 6 August 2020: Letter from Minister issued to Principals to advise that the existing New School Day guidance will be revised to allow for all schools and settings to return to more normal patterns of operation and attendance, in line with standard legislative requirements, for all pupils from the week commencing 31 August 2020. [ED1/20/198430]
- 10 August 2020: Education Restart issue Public Health Agency information in respect of the StopCOVID NI Proximity App.
- 11 August 2020: Education Restart – Guidance on Supporting Staff to Return to Schools is published and made available on Department's website [ED1/20/201926]
- 12 August 2020: Education Restart to advise that an update on Revised New School Day Guidance to All Schools and Education Sector Partners will be issued ASAP [ED1/20/202795]

- 13 August 2020: Education Restart – Publication of Revised New School Day Guidance. Letter from Minister re Education Restart to accompany publication of New School Day guidance [see ED1/20/203271]
- 24 August 2020: Education Restart – Supplementary Special School Guidance issued to all Special Schools [ED1/20/212755]
- 25 August 2020: Education Restart – Update to Guidance on Face Coverings in Schools issued to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/20/214354]
- 27 August 2020: Education Restart – Supplementary Information – People who become symptomatic onsite / Actions where there are confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in school issued to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/20/214354]; including flowcharts setting out key actions, confirmed case pro-forma and communication template for parents’.
- 2 September 2020: Education Restart – Home Testing Kit Initiative launched with details issued to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/20/221572]
- 3 September 2020: Update on Home Testing Kit Initiative with clarification [ED1/20/223043]
- 4 September 2020: Education Restart issue New School Day Revised Flow Chart to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/20/223995]
- 6 September 2020: Education Restart issue update on the Home Testing Kits Initiative [ED1/20/233568]
- 15 September 2020: Education Restart issue Information for Parents and Carers and Leaflet– Irish Language Version [ED1/20/234829]
- 24 September 2020: Education Restart issue further iteration/update of New School Day Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for schools and educational settings in Northern Ireland [ED1/20/244172]

- 28 September 2020: Education Restart issue Revised Guidance on Absence Relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice for Principals, Managers and Staff [ED1/20/246786]
- 28 September 2020: Northern Ireland Re-Opening Schools Guidance – New School Day published.
- 1 October 2020: Minister letter to school principals to encourage uptake of ‘StopCOVID NI’ app (version 2)
- 20 October 2020: Minister letter to schools to advise that to create a break period to minimise interactions, schools should close from 19–30 October, and re-open on 2 November.
- 22 October 2020: Press release Minister welcomes extension of Free School Meal payments to cover Halloween break.
- 8 December 2020: DE Restart issue Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidance for Schools and Education settings.
- 8 December 2020: Minister writes to schools to reinforce direction that schools should stay open so not to impact children’s education.
- 31 December 2020: Minister issues Guidance Note to Principals on school closures.
- 8 January 2021: DE Restart issue Addendum – Guidance for Schools & Educational Settings in Northern Ireland January 2021
- 20 January 2021: Education Restart issue Reminder that there is a requirement for key workers and vulnerable children to be given access to schools and supervised learning in mainstream schools [ED1/21/16540]
- 29 January 2021: Education Restart issue notification that the Minister has agreed that schools will continue to provide remote learning until at least 5 March [ED1/21/26205]
- 29 January 2021: Education Restart issue guidance re courses delivered in collaboration with further education colleges so that for the period that remote learning is in place, learners undertaking courses in a Further Education college should not attend face to

face classes in college unless it is a necessary and unavoidable part of the course
[ED1/21/26274]

- 5 February 2021: Education Restart issue Continuation of Educational Continuity Direction and Arrangements for School Holidays –February Mid-Term and Easter [ED1/21/33301]
- 11 February 2021: Absence, Pay and Staffing Guidance Relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advice for Principals, Managers and Staff issued [ED1/21/42379]
- 22 February 2021: Education Restart issue update on the guidance re Coronavirus Test Kits for Schools with details of how to apply for more kits [ED1/21/49611]
- 24 February 2021: Minister issues letter to Principals to announce a phased return to full time face-to-face teaching for certain pupils in March 2021 [ED1/21/55790]
- 25 February 2021: Guidance re Coronavirus Home Test Kits for Schools - Applying for More Kits issued to pre-schools/nursery schools [ED1/21/57481]
- 5 March 2021: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland (4th Edition) issued to schools [ED1/21/68005]
- 5 March 2021: Coronavirus Act 2020 Educational Act 2020 Educational Continuity Direction No.4 and Temporary Modification of Education Duties (No.27) Notice (Northern Ireland) 2021 issued to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/21/68847]
- 5 March 2021: Minister issues open letter to parents re the school return arrangements [ED1/21/68851]
- 5 March 2021: Pre-School Education Guidance for re-opening settings issued [ED1/21/69412]
- 13 March 2021: Minister issues update on the phased return of pupils with the new arrangements for pre-schools, nurseries and P1–P3 classes [ED1/21/77538]
- 15 March 2021: FAQs re Asymptomatic Testing in Schools issued to all Schools and Education Sector Partners [ED1/21/79416]

- 16 March 2021: Minister issues letter to schools to advise that school managed breakfast clubs, educational visits, inter-school sports and after school activities will remain paused until advised otherwise.
- 19 March 2021: Education Restart issue update on courses delivered in collaboration with further education colleges to all School Principals of Post-Primary Schools, Special Schools with 14-19 Provision and Further Education College Principals re pathway out of restrictions which includes “partial return to practical face to face learning”.
- 20 March 2021: Coronavirus Act 2020 Educational Act 2020 Educational Continuity Direction No.5 issued to schools [ED1/21/84094]
- 1 April 2021: Minister issues letter signifying return to school for all pupils confirmed from 12 April and further Coronavirus guidance for educational settings
- 14 April 2021: Minister issues letter to school Principals with updated guidance on wraparound care, outdoor school sports and singing/music provision
- 20 April 2021: Letter issued from the Minister of Education in relation to correspondence received by a number of schools from the Health and Rights branch of Unite in the Community [ED1/21/126063]
- 12 May 2021: Minister issues letter to Principals on COVID posters and checklists for teachers and Boards of Governors.
- 14 May 2021: Minister issues letter to Principals re the resumption of extra-curricular activities, inter-school sports and day educational visits.
- 21 May 2021: Restart issue updated guidance note in relation to numbers attending in school meetings [ED1/21/155140]
- 9 June 2021: Letter issued from the Minister of Education for the extension of lateral flow device testing in post-primary schools and the attendance of spectators at school events [ED1/21/200860]

- 15 June 2021: Restart guidance note issued to all schools to confirm that the Executive's current guidance for non-domestic indoor gatherings also applies in educational settings [ED1/21/180798]
- 18 June 2021: Minister issues letter re guidance note update on Indoor Gatherings in Educational Settings
- 11 August 2021: Letter issued from the Minister of Education in respect of the development of COVID-19 guidance for educational settings [ED1/21/258113]
- 18 August 2021: Revised DE Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland (5th Edition) published. Minister issues letter to all Principals to advise [ED1/21/283528]
- 6 September 2021: Absence, Pay and Staffing Guidance Relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice issued to all school Principals, Managers and Staff [ED1/21/258436]
- 9 September 2021: Department circulates revised arrangements for the identification of close contacts in schools via letter from Public Health Agency and the Chief Medical Officer to all educational settings [ED1/21/260150]
- 14 September 2021: DE Restart and COVID Response Team issue guidance in relation to contact tracing in schools to schools [ED1/21/263960]
- 17 September 2021: DE Restart and COVID Response Team issue notification of webinars being held on contact tracing [ED1/21/268065]
- 17 September 2021: DE Restart and COVID Response Team issue Information pack for schools on what to expect when managing COVID-19 in schools [ED1/21/268381]
- 8 October 2021: DE Restart issue Guidance Note in relation to the use of face coverings in post-primary settings [ED1/21/290076]
- 13 October 2021: DE Restart issue Guidance Note in relation to educational visits outside of Northern Ireland [ED1/21/296413]

- 10 January 2022: Minister responds to an Assembly Motion on Keeping Schools Open and Safe
- 10 January 2022: DE Restart issues Absence, Pay and Staffing Guidance Relating to Coronavirus (COVID-19) Advice for Principals, Managers and Staff to all education settings
- 13 January 2022: Minister issues letter to school leaders and parents on COVID issues [ED1/22/29319]
- 17 February 2022: DE Restart issue COVID guidance note following the announcement of the change to health protection restrictions [ED1/22/47417]
- 11 March 2022: DE Restart issue COVID guidance note regarding the use of face covering by post-primary pupils in classrooms to Assembly, schools and Trade Unions [ED1/22/75062]
- 25 March 2022: DE Restart issue Guidance note on changes to the guidance on a number of areas including COVID testing and contact tracing [ED1/22/86233]
- 6 April 2022: Department release revised Coronavirus (COVID): Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland [ED1/22/60096]
- 6 April 2022: DE Restart issue Guidance Note to all schools and education settings re the changes outlined in the Department of Health's Transition Plan and the impact on educational settings [ED1/22/162218]