

Mr Robin Swann MLA

Minister of Health  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont BT4 3SQ



23 February 2021

*From Maxine Murphy-Higgins, chair NIC-ICTU Education Trade Union Group.*

Dear Minister Swann

The NI Executive has stated that it is their priority to get all pupils back to school and college and today we hear that Minister Weir was recommending a full return of the schools from the 8<sup>th</sup> March and that he believed the health officials at Stormont had been “over-cautious” in recommending a phased return.

However, re-opening schools and colleges fully on 8 March is one thing; keeping them open and preventing the need for further restrictions is quite another.

It is vital that the NI Executive recognises that it has already lost the trust of many education workers and needs to do much more to win the confidence of the sector that has continued, throughout the pandemic, to deliver everything that has been asked of them.

Although the rollout of the vaccination programme is going well, it is hugely regrettable and frustrating that the NI Executive has continued to refuse to prioritise education staff in the vaccination programme. Vaccinating education staff would send a clear message that the NI Government is taking seriously the concerns of the profession and demonstrating a genuine commitment to limiting the risk of further disruption to children’s education.

Vaccinating education staff can be done now if there is the political will to do so. There is simply no excuse and no reason to not do so.

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Maxine Murphy-Higgins

Chair, NIC-ICTU Education Trade Union Group