

**From: Adrian Murphy**  
**Restart Programme**

**Date: 17 November 2020**

**To: Peter Weir MLA**  
**Education Minister**

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**Current and Potential Mitigation Measures**

<b>Issue:</b>	To update you on - a) mitigation measures we currently have within schools/education to reduce the threat of covid 2) measures employed by neighbouring jurisdictions but not currently in place here 3) a range of potential options for further/ tightening of measures.
<b>Timescale:</b>	Routine.
<b>Financial/Resource Implications:</b>	None.
<b>FOI Implications:</b>	This submission is likely to be fully disclosable, however we could consider using a Section 35 exemption, if any of the potential measures are considered to be future policy.
<b>Statutory Duties Implications:</b>	None.
<b>Presentational Issues:</b>	None.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That you note the content of the tables attached which highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the current measures in Northern Ireland and those employed by neighbouring jurisdictions: and,</li></ul>

- a range of potential mitigation measures which could be employed, should current measures no longer prove effective.

## **Background**

1. You are aware that currently all jurisdictions with the United Kingdom and Ireland are employing differing mitigation measures within schools to attempt to control the Covid virus.
2. All measures are based on current public health advice and jurisdiction's interpretation of that advice, taking account of the school system in place. Measures are constantly under review, dependent on the latest advice being received and each jurisdiction's policies.
3. Attached are two tables: Annex A which highlights the current situation across the four UK jurisdictions and the situation within Ireland and Annex B which sets out a range of potential further measures which could be employed if required.

## **Differences across Jurisdictions**

4. Northern Ireland employs a very similar approach to that in other UK regions and Ireland, with all schools open for full time classroom education, with physical distancing where possible and transportation mitigations in place. The table at Annex A highlights the current measures in place here and sets out the differences between NI and the neighbouring jurisdictions.
5. In some European countries like Denmark and Switzerland where masks are not used in schools, there is more of an emphasis on social distancing and hygiene policies, but once again key mitigations are broadly similar.

## **Potential Measures for Consideration**

6. Officials are constantly reviewing the ongoing changes to any PHA/CMO advice with a view to revising or preparing new guidance for schools. However, it is prudent for the Department to consider further preventative measures or restrictions which could be put in place in the event that instances within schools continue to escalate. Some of the potential further measures under consideration which might be available are attached at Annex B.
7. Policy leads within business areas, in co-operation with the Restart team, will draft appropriate guidance if any further measures are viewed as highly desirable or essential. Officials will also continue to review any new approaches from wider afield, with a view to possible implementation if required.
8. As you are aware, DHSC are leading on a national programme to roll out mass testing technology and two NI schools will be part of the testing phase. This has the potential to be a key risk mitigation going forward.

## Recommendation

9. That you note the content of the tables attached which highlight the current measures in place here and those employed by neighbouring jurisdictions: and potential mitigation measures which could be employed should current measures no longer prove effective.

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