



Dear Principal,

I hope that this email finds you well. I am writing to today to provide an update on a few key aspects of school reopening, as well as to thank again all members of school staff and parents for the roles they are playing and will continue to play as schools return at the end of August. Reopening schools would not be possible without the co-operation of all members of the school community, and I am deeply appreciative of the role that each of you play.

As you will be aware, I, along with Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD and Minister for Special Education and Inclusion Josepha Madigan TD, last week published a detailed plan *Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for The Full Return to School*, along with details of a financial package of over €375 million to support its delivery. I am pleased to share today that significant progress has been made in the delivery of this funding and other supports to schools.

For example, €102 million in funding has already issued to primary and post-primary schools to carry out minor works to create more space in the classroom or install additional handwashing stations. Funding has already been made available for schools to hire aides to help reconfigure classrooms and install hand sanitising stations. Guidance has also been circulated detailing how schools can best access PPE and hand sanitiser supplies.

As you will be aware, *Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for The Full Return to School* was based on public health advice from the HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre. As evidence regarding Covid-19 and the epidemiological situation evolve, this advice will be periodically updated. This week, the Health Protection Surveillance Centre confirmed to my Department that all recommendations published in the public health advice by the Minister at the beginning of July including physical distancing guidelines as set out in the recently published roadmap still apply in all schools, with the exception of the recommendations on face coverings which has been updated to reflect the latest research and expertise.

It is now recommended that teachers and other school staff as well as post-primary students wear face coverings, similar to those worn in shops or on public transport, when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. As of this morning, this clear recommendation has been notified to the representative bodies of students, parents, teachers, and principals. It is also recommended that primary school teachers and staff wear face coverings where a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. Primary school children will not be required to wear face coverings under any circumstances.

As of this week, funding of approximately €102 million has been issued to schools around the country to support minor works which may be necessary for schools to reopen at the end of this summer. Funding of €4.2m for aide/s to assist with the logistical arrangements in advance of school reopening including physical reconfiguration measures and setting



up hand sanitising stations, helping with signage, training and engaging with parents and students.

Schools have been provided a Covid-19 specific capitation payment will be used as the mechanism to support the implementation of enhanced cleaning regimes in schools. This is intended to allow for an extra 4 to 6 hours cleaning per day in schools.

In addition, significant additional measures are being adopted to increase the supply of teachers at both primary and post-primary level, including offering additional hours to the 2,800 teachers who are working part-time in post-primary schools, allowing job-sharing teachers to work additional hours and making it more attractive for teachers on career break to provide substitution and cover. Schools have been notified of these changes, allowing them to more easily hire additional teachers. Guidance on these changes has now been circulated to schools.

Once again, I thank you for all the work that have you done to date and will continue to do over the coming weeks.

Best regards,

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Norma Foley TD  
Minister for Education