

8 March 2021

Dear Principal,

As you are aware the Government decided on a phased return of pupils to in-school education.

These phases have been developed in close collaboration with primary education stakeholders and follow ongoing engagement with the Department of Health and Public Health, HSE.

The Department of Health and the HSE have reaffirmed that the gradual phased reopening can proceed as planned. The next phase of return is on Monday March 15th for all primary school children in 3rd to 6th class.

Public health has reviewed the measures put in place to ensure safe operation of schools and is satisfied that these infection prevention and control measures, if rigorously adhered to, will keep the school community safe during this period. They emphasise that all measures must be followed carefully by pupils, staff and parents.

In preparing for reopening I would like to remind schools of the additions to the COVID-19 Response Plan required by the Work Safely Protocol. These additions were communicated to all schools on the 23rd February. They can be found [here](#).

Schools are reminded that **all unnecessary travel should be avoided**, and that in the interests of minimising the spread of COVID-19, schools must make every effort to avoid organising events that could lead to the congregation of pupils.

Schools are also asked to remind parents and pupils **not to congregate in school grounds/at school gates**.

The Department is very appreciative of the ongoing efforts of the school community working to limit the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in schools and ensuring that the infection control measures put in place in line with the school COVID-19 response plans are effective in making schools safe for children and staff.

Yours faithfully,

Deirdre Shanley
Assistant Secretary