



17 June 2021

Dear Principal

As primary schools are approaching the end of term and post-primary schools will shortly come to the end of the Leaving Certificate examination 2021, the Department would like to thank you for your cooperation and support to ensure schools operated successfully during this past term. It is acknowledged that 2020/2021 was a challenging and difficult school year for all and the hard work and dedication of the whole school community to respond to the challenges presented is appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to update and reassure you about a number of arrangements for the next school year.

### **Covid-19 response plans**

It is expected that schools will continue to operate with the current infection prevention and control measures in place to support their safe operation during Covid-19 when they reopen in August/September. Schools should therefore plan to reopen in August/September and continue to operate in line with their Covid-19 response plans. Schools will continue to be supported in terms of the additional resources necessary to provide for these measures.

These plans will be updated by the Department during the summer and will be available for schools in advance of reopening. It is not envisaged that there will be any updates that require schools to take action in advance of normal reopening.

As you are aware these plans are based on the Government's Work Safely Protocol which reflects the most up to date public health advice for the workplace. It sets out the range of measures required to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

### **Communication with parents and pupils/students about the 2021/2022 school year**

The Department will undertake a communications campaign with parents and students/pupils in advance of school reopening to inform and remind them of the arrangements in place in schools operating during Covid-19. This will include specifically targeted information at new pupils entering primary and post-primary schools to ensure they are familiar with the new arrangements.



### **Staffing arrangements for 2021/22 school year**

Further to the Department's [Information Note TC 0013/2021](#), HSE/NPHET advice is awaited on the working arrangements for 'Very High Risk' teachers/SNAs and pregnant teachers/SNAs who are currently not attending the workplace, but are working remotely.

The working arrangements to cater for COVID-19 will be published ahead of the 2021/22 school year.

### **EPV Leave for Primary Teachers**

In accordance with the Department's [Information Note 008/2020](#), the maximum EPV Leave entitlement in the 2021/22 school year of 5 days, including any carryover continues to apply. In line with the exceptional arrangement for the 2020/21 school year, the Department/ ETB will provide substitute cover for the first day of EPV Leave taken by a teacher in the 2021/22 school year. Subsequent EPV Leave may be taken only where the effect on the school's operation, including its COVID-19 Response Plan, is minimal and where this can be enabled without disruption to the teaching of the class and without the division of the class group between other classes.

### **School year 2021/22**

The Department will continue to work closely with all of the education partners and public health specialists so that schools will continue to be supported when they reopen for the 2021/22 school year.

In the meantime I hope you all enjoy a lovely summer break.

Yours faithfully

Deirdre Shanley  
Assistant Secretary

