

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)



Continuation of Educational Continuity Direction and Arrangements for School Holidays – February Mid-Term and Easter

From: Education Restart Programme

To: All Schools

Date: 5 February 2021

Dear Colleague

Further to the recent statements from the Education Minister Peter Weir MLA and NI Executive, this correspondence provides an update on the extension to current arrangements via a revised Educational Continuity Direction and sets out the expectations for schools over the February Mid-Term and Easter holidays.

Educational Continuity Direction

The Education Minister has issued a further Educational Continuity Direction to give legal effect to the operational arrangements in the education system from 5 February 2021 ([Educational Continuity Direction No. 03](#)).

February Mid - Term and Easter Holidays

Following consultation with the Department for Health, it is the Department's expectation that all schools will take their scheduled holidays over the February mid-term and Easter breaks, when parents would be expected to have made their normal arrangements for childcare.

Resumption of the arrangements for key worker and vulnerable children will continue once the February mid-term holidays are over until March 5th, and will be reviewed as part of the wider consideration of restrictions by the Executive.

Special schools and EOTAS Centres will continue following the planned breaks as normal for face-to face teaching for the remainder of the school year or until their planned summer holiday period, unless advised to shut by the PHA due to health related reasons, or other non-health emergencies such as defined in Circular 2020/09 - [here](#).



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If any school is required to or proposes to close its premises (exceptionally) outside of their normal arrangements, they must apply to the Department for an exceptional closure. Only in exceptional circumstances, where the closing of the school is out of the control of the school authorities, will the Department be prepared to consider proposals for a reduction in the required number of days on which a school should be in operation.

Contact Tracing

PHA have advised that contact tracing will continue to operate as normal over the February mid-term holiday period, and therefore where cases are found in schools they will make contact with Principals to track and trace and identify close contacts. Experience over previous holidays indicates these instances are likely to be very limited.

Regards
Education Restart Programme Office

