



EA Guidance for Schools

Arrangements for Early January 2021

Issued 31/12/2020

On the morning of 31st December 2020 the Minister for Education issued a statement altering the approach to reopening schools in early January 2021. A synopsis of the statement was provided on the DE website. Schools should note the following points arising from the communication.

Education Minister Peter Weir has announced revised plans for schools reopening after the Christmas break.

This follows recent advice on the current situation of the epidemic, levels of transmission and numbers of cases.

From w/b Monday 4 January (the first day of your school term):

- The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for the rest of the week
- Primary school pupils will be taught remotely until 8th January, after which they will attend school for face-to-face teaching
- Post-primary pupils will be taught remotely during the first week of January. From Monday 11 January pupils in years 8 to 11 will continue to be taught remotely until the end of January while pupils in years 12 to 14 will attend school for face-to-face teaching
- Nursery Schools and Nursery Units will be open as usual
- Special Schools will be open as usual
- EOTAS Centres will be open as usual
- Childcare settings including those attached to schools will be open as usual
- Exams due to take place in January will be facilitated compliant with public health guidance and schools will have flexibility to deliver face-to-face teaching to pupils due to sit those exams, should they wish to do so
- Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term.

The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for the rest of the week.

The full statement can be accessed at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/weir-announces-changes-schools-reopening-arrangements>



Schools will need to prepare to accept pupils back to school based on the information in the Minister's statement. To support you in this we have prepared phase specific information on the following pages. The Cross-Organisational Link Officer (COLO) support system will operate from Monday 4th January and you can contact your COLO for further advice.




1. Nursery Schools and Nursery Units

2.1 Key Points

- Nursery Schools and Nursery Units to be open as usual;
- Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term.

2.2 Common Questions for Nursery Schools and Nursery Units

Area	Question	Answer
Staff 	Are staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff who are not self-isolating or ill should be in school. • School staff are defined as Key Workers and so can access supervised learning in their child's own school. • The first day of the school term should be used as a planning day for staff. (This day will vary by school based on when you were due to reopen).
	Are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 26 December 2020, people in this category who are unable to work from home are advised not to attend the workplace. If you are in this category, liaise with your Principal/Line Manager regarding potential alternative working options, in line with normal arrangements.
	Will I still be paid if I am unable to attend work as a result of the change in restrictions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff impacted by the changes who are unable to attend the workplace or unable to be given alternative working options will be paid as normal, including substitute teachers who were booked to work from 4 January 2021.
Pupils 	What is expected for our pupils in January 2021?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursery Schools and Nursery Units will be open to all pupils as planned in the week beginning 4th January.
	How will targeted services be delivered by Children and Young People's Services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix Four of this document contains details of how targeted services for pupils will be delivered.
School Transport	Is school transport operating w/beginning 4th January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School transport services will be operating as normal from 4th January. • Post-primary pupils must wear a face covering on all school transport and we also

		<p>strongly encourage younger pupils to wear a face covering as well. (Medical exemptions may apply)</p>
<p>School Meals</p> 	<p>Are School Meals available on Monday 4th January?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As notified before Christmas the School meals service will not operate on Monday 4th January.
<p>Online and Remote Learning</p>  <p>(Online and remote learning may be needed for pupils who are self-isolating)</p>	<p>Where can I get guidance on supporting remote / home learning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EA 'Supporting Learning' website provides access to a range of support and guidance materials. It can be accessed through the following link: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home The sections titled 'TPL' and 'Case Studies' are of particular relevance.
	<p>How can I evaluate our readiness for Home Learning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In early December EA provided a checklist on readiness for home learning for all schools. It is attached as Appendix Three of this document for your information.





	<p>The Supporting Learning Website is available at: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home</p>
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2. Special Schools

3.1 Key Points

- Special schools to be open as usual from w/b 4 January

3.2 Common Questions for Special Schools

Area	Question	Answer
Staff 	Are staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff who are not self-isolating or ill should be in school. • School staff are defined as Key Workers and so can access supervised learning in their child's own school. • The first day of the school term should be used as a planning day for staff. (This day will vary by school based on when you were due to reopen).
	Are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 26 December 2020, people in this category who are unable to work from home are advised not to attend the workplace. If you are in this category, liaise with your Principal/Line Manager regarding potential alternative working options, in line with normal arrangements.
	Will I still be paid if I am unable to attend work as a result of the change in restrictions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff impacted by the changes who are unable to attend the workplace or unable to be given alternative working options will be paid as normal, including substitute teachers who were booked to work from 4 January 2021.
Pupils 	What is expected for our pupils in January 2021?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Schools will be open to all pupils as planned in the week beginning 4th January.
	How will targeted services be delivered by Children and Young People's Services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appendix Four of this document contains details of how targeted services for pupils will be delivered.
School Transport 	Is school transport operating w/beginning 4th January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School transport services will be operating as normal from 4th January. • Post-primary pupils must wear a face covering on all school transport and we also strongly encourage younger pupils to wear a face covering as well. (Medical exemptions may apply)
School Meals 	Are School Meals available on Monday 4th January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As notified before Christmas the School meals service will not operate on Monday 4th January.
	How will Free School Meals be paid/provided in January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 direct payment for all FSM pupils week beginning 4th Jan; to be paid retrospectively week beginning 11th Jan

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where FSM child is present at school meal can be provide on humanitarian grounds
Devices 	Where can I find information on how to access IT devices or internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on devices and a request form can be found on C2k exchange – click on the banner Requesting IT Devices & Wi-Fi.
Online and Remote Learning  (Online and remote learning may be needed for pupils in Special Schools who are self-isolating)	Where can I get guidance on supporting remote / home learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EA ‘Supporting Learning’ website provides access to a range of support and guidance materials. It can be accessed through the ‘Supporting Learning’ icon on the front page of C2K ‘My-School’ or via the following link: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home The sections titled ‘TPL’ and ‘Case Studies’ are of particular relevance.
	How can I evaluate our readiness for Home Learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In early December EA provided a checklist on readiness for home learning for all schools via the C2K noticeboard. We have attached it as Appendix Three of this document for your information.

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3. Primary Schools





4.1 Key Points

- The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for the rest of the week.
- Primary school pupils will be taught remotely until Friday 8 January, after which they will attend school for face-to-face teaching.
- Childcare settings including those attached to schools, pre-school facilities, nurseries and special schools to be open as usual;
- Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term for supervised learning.

The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for the rest of the week.

4.2 Common Questions for Primary Schools

Area	Question	Answer
Staff 	Are staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff who are not self-isolating or ill should be in school. • School staff are defined as Key Workers and so can access supervised learning in their child's own school. • The first day of the school term should be used as a planning day for staff. (This day will vary by school based on when you were due to reopen).
	Are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 26 December 2020, people in this category who are unable to work from home are advised not to attend the workplace. If you are in this category, liaise with your Principal/Line Manager regarding potential alternative working options, in line with normal arrangements.
	Will I still be paid if I am unable to attend work as a result of the change in restrictions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff impacted by the changes who are unable to attend the workplace or unable to be given alternative working options will be paid as normal, including substitute teachers who were booked to work from 4 January 2021.
Pupils 	What is expected for our pupils in January 2021?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary School pupils from P1 – P7 will be taught remotely in the week Monday 4th January to Friday 8th January. • Primary School pupils will return to school on Monday 11th January. • During this time vulnerable children and the children of key workers can attend their own school for supervised learning. (The DE Definitions of a vulnerable child and a key worker child are provided in appendices one and two of this document)

	How will targeted services be delivered by Children and Young People's Services?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix Four of this document contains details of how targeted services for pupils will be delivered.
School Transport 	Is school transport operating w/beginning 4th January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School transport services will be operating as normal from 4th January. Post-primary pupils must wear a face covering on all school transport and we also strongly encourage younger pupils to wear a face covering as well. (Medical exemptions may apply)
School Meals 	Are School Meals available on Monday 4th January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As notified before Christmas the School meals service will not operate on Monday 4th January.
	How will Free School Meals be paid/provided in January?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 direct payment for all FSM pupils week beginning 4th Jan; to be paid retrospectively week beginning 11th Jan Where FSM child is present at school meal can be provide on humanitarian grounds
Devices 	Where can I find information on how to access IT devices or internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on devices and a request form can be found on C2k exchange – click on the banner Requesting IT Devices & Wi-Fi.
Online and Remote Learning  (Online and remote learning may be needed for pupils in Primary Schools who are self-isolating)	Where can I get guidance on supporting remote / home learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The EA 'Supporting Learning' website provides access to a range of support and guidance materials. It can be accessed through the 'Supporting Learning' icon on the front page of C2K 'My-School' or via the following link: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home The sections titled 'TPL' and 'Case Studies' are of particular relevance.
	How can I evaluate our readiness for Home Learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In early December EA provided a checklist on readiness for home learning for all schools via the C2K noticeboard. We have attached it as Appendix Three of this document for your information.

	The Supporting Learning Website is available at: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionallearning-ea/home
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4. Post-Primary Schools






5.1 Key Points

- The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for remote learning.
- Post-primary pupils will be taught remotely during the first week of January.
- From Monday 11 January pupils in years 8 to 11 will continue to be taught remotely until the end of January while pupils in years 12 to 14 will attend school for face-to-face teaching;
- Exams due to take place in January will be facilitated compliant with public health guidance and schools will have flexibility to deliver face-to-face teaching to pupils due to sit those exams, should they wish to do so;
- Pupils in Year 11 sitting GCSE module exams will have flexibility to deliver face-to-face teaching to pupils due to sit those exams, should they wish to do so;
- Schools in the Dickson Plan will have flexibility to deliver face-to-face teaching to pupils in year 10, should they wish to do so:
- Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term, for supervised learning.

The first day of the normal school term can be used to prepare for remote learning.

5.2 Common Questions for Post-Primary Schools

Area	Question	Answer
Staff 	Are staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff who are not self-isolating or ill should be in school. • School staff are defined as Key Workers and so can access supervised learning in their child's own school. • The first day of the school term should be used as a planning day for staff. (This day will vary by school based on when you were due to reopen).
	Are clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff expected to be in school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 26 December 2020, people in this category who are unable to work from home are advised not to attend the workplace. If you are in this category, liaise with your Principal/Line Manager regarding potential alternative working options, in line with normal arrangements.
	Will I still be paid if I am unable to attend work as a result of the change in restrictions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff impacted by the changes who are unable to attend the workplace or unable to be given alternative working options will be paid as normal, including substitute teachers who were booked to work from 4 January 2021.
Pupils	What is expected for our pupils in January 2021?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Monday 4th January all Year 8, 9, 10 and 11 pupils will move to remote learning until Friday 29th January. • Vulnerable children and the children of Key Workers in Years 8,9,10 and 11 can continue

	<p>How will targeted services be delivered by Children and Young People's Services?</p>	<p>to attend school in January for supervised learning. (Definitions of Vulnerable and Key Worker Children are provided in Appendices One and Two.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Years 12,13 and 14 will be taught remotely for the week of 4th-8th January with face to face resuming on Monday 11th January. • Post-Primary Schools have the flexibility to consider facilitating face to face teaching for pupils sitting examinations in January from 4th January onwards.
<p>School Transport</p> 	<p>Is school transport operating w/beginning 4th January?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School transport services will be operating as normal from 4th January. • Post-primary pupils must wear a face covering on all school transport and we also strongly encourage younger pupils to wear a face covering as well. (Medical exemptions may apply)
<p>School Meals</p> 	<p>Are School Meals available on Monday 4th January?</p> <p>How will Free School Meals be paid/provided in January?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As notified before Christmas the School meals service will not operate on Monday 4th January. • 1 direct payment for all FSM pupils week beginning 4th Jan; to be paid retrospectively week beginning 11th Jan • Where FSM child is present at school meal can be provide on humanitarian grounds
<p>Devices</p> 	<p>Where can I find information on how to access IT devices or internet access for vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on devices and a request form can be found on C2k exchange – click on the banner Requesting IT Devices & Wi-Fi.
<p>Online and Remote Learning</p> 	<p>Where can I get guidance on supporting remote / home learning?</p> <p>How can I evaluate our readiness for Home Learning?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EA 'Supporting Learning' website provides access to a range of support and guidance materials. It can be accessed through the 'Supporting Learning' icon on the front page of C2K 'My-School' or via the following link: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacher-professionallearning-ea/home The sections titled 'TPL' and 'Case Studies' are of particular relevance. • In early December EA provided a checklist on readiness for home learning for all schools

		via the C2K noticeboard. It is attached as Appendix Three of this document for your information.
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 The logo for 'Supporting Learning' features the words 'Supporting' and 'Learning' stacked vertically in a purple, rounded font. A multi-colored rainbow arches over the text.	<p>The Supporting Learning Website is available at: https://sites.google.com/c2ken.net/teacherprofessionalllearning-ea/home</p>
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Appendix One

Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan>)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is 'on-the-edge' of receiving support from children's social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

Appendix Two

Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (Jan 21)

(Please note that if one parent meets this definition then the child can attend school)

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Appendix Three



Readiness for Continuity of Learning At Home

A basic checklist intended to help schools prepare for learning at home.

Access	<p><i>Please make sure that everyone can access learning.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do all staff have internet access and a laptop or other device? b) Do all the learners have internet access and a laptop or other device? c) Do we know who has no internet/laptop/device? Can we address this? d) Do we know who has poor internet connection? e) In this case, how are we providing alternative learning materials, feedback and opportunities to speak with staff and peers? How often?
Routines	<p><i>Please do not try to replicate a school timetable.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Have we made online lesson protocols clear to keep everyone safe? b) Do we expect every learner to log in every day? c) What is our minimum expectation for teacher contact with each class? d) What is our minimum expectation of teacher-led lessons per day/week?
Wellbeing and engagement	<p><i>Please make sure the learners have regular two-way contact with their teachers and with peers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do we have a simple checklist for the learners of what the school expects of them? b) Do we have a daily point of contact for the learners with a pastoral focus, eg a morning greeting from Class Teacher/Form Teacher? c) Do we have a group online conversation for learners about how they are managing, eg with as a Form Class with their teacher? d) Do Classroom Assistants assigned to learners have a daily/weekly contact routine? e) If learners are not engaging, what are our approaches to help them? f) If a teacher is ill, what contingency do we have in place?
Teaching, Learning and feedback	<p><i>Please make sure there is a good balance of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) teacher-led, independent and collaborative learning; b) online and off-line learning; c) ways in which to collect the learners' work, eg typed and submitted; photographed pieces of writing or art; recorded piece; d) ways in which to provide feedback to the learners, eg individual, whole class, verbal, written, video, marks, grades and/or annotations.
Monitoring and evaluation	<p><i>Please make sure to keep regular checks that all of the agreed approaches, routines and structures are working well for the learners, their parents/carers and staff.</i></p>
Communication with parents/carers	<p><i>Please make sure there is regular two-way contact with parents/carers.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do we have a clear and straightforward checklist for parents/carers, eg "What you can expect from our school"? b) Do we have clear and accessible guidance for parents on how to help their children access and engage in their learning and stay safe online? c) Are our parents/carers clear on how to make contact with the right staff member if their children have any difficulties related to their wellbeing or to their learning?

Appendix Four

Delivery of Targeted Services by Children and Young People's Services (January 2021)

1. Is support available to help me identify and support my vulnerable young people?

Yes, Education Welfare Officers are available to support Principals and Senior Leadership Teams when identifying vulnerable young people, as required.

Special School Support Officers will also provide support to Special School Principals. Cross Organisational Link Officers can also help with planning regarding staff, remote learning and provisions required to ensure that young people can access school. Egg: school meals and transport.

2. Is EOTAS open for young people currently accessing placement?

Yes, EOTAS Centres are open for all young people accessing a placement. Young people who access EOTAS on a part-time basis can continue to attend their placement if they are not attending the school site Senior Teachers are available to discuss arrangements for individual young people, as necessary. All young people who were due to take up placement in January will be able to access this placement within the EOTAS setting.

3. If I have a Child Protection concern, who should I contact?

The Child Protection Support Service will continue to support you with all child protection matters, including the identification and response required for children who may be at risk of significant harm. You should continue to follow the normal Child Protection Guidance and call **02895 985590**

4. How will Exceptional Teaching Arrangements be delivered?

Exceptional Teaching Arrangements usually delivered within the home will be delivered remotely. Staff will contact families directly to make necessary arrangements.

5. How will counselling be delivered during restrictions?

Counselling will be provided by the EA's Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) for post primary pupils in accordance with a risk assessment and as appropriate. This may be onsite, via telephone or secure online video calling. Counsellors will be made available on the same day each week as they would normally have been in the young person's school.

Referrals will be made through the school's key contact as normal, who will then liaise with the school counsellor as appropriate. The key contact will provide the counsellor with the young person's contact details to facilitate the session(s).

6. How will EA Support Services directly supporting young people be delivered in restrictions?

Services directly supporting young people will be delivered in school in accordance with presenting need and risk assessment. If young people are not accessing school settings, services will be delivered remotely as appropriate and possible during the period of restrictions.