



Contingency planning arrangements for 2020/21 school year

Concerns raised by principals and chairpersons in Educate Together Primary Schools

**Information gathered by email and focus group between 8th and 13th May.
Input was received from 59 schools.**

Accommodation/Capacity

- Allocation of space per person (i.e. include teacher, SNA(s), other staff) expressed as a specific ratio, e.g. x people in y squared metre
- Classroom size is not uniform across schools. Some schools in temporary accommodation have very small rooms.
- Toilets: Guidelines will be required for all kinds of configurations (block used by several classrooms, in-class toilets, etc.)
- Hot water: to be made available in all schools
- Serious concerns that additional / new accommodation / pre-fabs won't be ready in time for September. Possibility of delaying start dates in this case
- Rented buildings – clarity on who is responsible for what
- Yard supervision
- Isolation of children with symptoms isn't possible in most schools – no room
- School buildings with remedial issues, how can they prepare for 1st September if they can't get in to the building

Practicalities

- Split classes or split weeks
- Blended online and physical teaching puts huge burden on teachers and parents
- Use of shared materials, ability to deliver curriculum (Aistear, group work, physical contact)
- HSE/DES to agree realistic hygiene standards for schools
- Drop-off and collection
- Posters to be sent to all schools, age appropriate
- What gets moved between home and school?
- Online parent/teacher meetings (with due consideration for parents who do not have English as a first language, or who cannot access remotely)

Additional Education Needs (SEN)

- SET allowances to new and developing schools must be looked at again – schools already under-resourced with current allocation, cannot cope with new pupils in current circumstances. This is an urgent priority
- July Provision – urgent
- School Transport
- Is social distancing possible? Can it be implemented? Particularly for children with medical needs, online learning might work best
- Multi-sensory rooms would need constant cleaning
- Children with autism, need to visit school with family before attending
- In class support or withdrawal to small rooms – are either feasible?

Cleaning /PPE

- Extra cleaning required, particularly if using split classes in two shifts. Need extra funding for this.
- Guidelines for what thorough cleaning entails
- Sourcing sufficient hand-washing equipment, hand sanitiser, PPE
- Training for staff in use of PPE
- Clear guidelines on minimum requirement when dealing with different situations (e.g. children whose sensory needs mean they lick, or spit)
- Central sourcing of PPE, hand-sanitisers, etc. (many school have handed theirs over the HSE during the crisis)

Safety

- Fast access to testing for staff, and return of results
- Guidance for situations where contact is required, e.g. child with injury
- Template for Risk Assessment for staff and children (concerns that school could be sued for negligence if someone becomes infectious)
- Template/Checklist for opening in September

Administration/Management

- Attendance – parents withholding children from school – how to monitor/report
- End of September cut-off for calculation of capitation grant – how might that work with staggered openings over September/October?
- HSE or similar contact for what to do if there's an outbreak in the school
- Principal cannot be deemed to be the Safety Officer (see government advice on Return to Work)
- Insurance premiums – could state take over insurance of schools

- Fundraising, rental income, voluntary contribution will all be decreased, how will schools cover the increased costs (cleaning, PPE)? Increased grants?
- How to ensure/enforce self-isolation if child/staff member/shows signs of infection
- Garda Vetting for parents helping out in school
- If Government phases 1 – 5 are delayed, what are knock-on effects for school openings

Staffing

- EPV Days/Sick Leave/unexpected absence without a certificate – how to cover? Usual way is to divide class, no longer possible; make substitutable?
- Student teachers, Teaching practice
- How to support staff and families who are immune-compromised (e.g. where a staff member does not want to come in to school due to own or family member being immune-compromised)
- Reconfiguring Posts of Responsibility in line with new requirements
- Shared teachers, moving between schools, increased risk
- Option of rolling over fixed term contracts without interview
- Preventing staff burnout, particularly in smaller schools
- Extra admin days for teaching principals
- Particular consideration for single teacher schools – additional teacher allocation
- Support across education sector, not just left to individual schools, for mental health of staff, particularly in view of extra burden if teaching is blended
- Recruitment – delay in redeployment panel causing difficulties
- Clarity on role of SNA, expectations of role in current circumstances

School Transport

- Staggered opening times
- Children with Additional Educational Needs
- Cleaning between bus trips

Communication

- Video for children, explaining what precautions might be in place in schools, so they don't get a shock when they return
- As much notice as possible, please.
- One-stop-shop, evolving FAQ on DES website
- Please communicate directly with schools *before* social media and newsrooms
- Please don't say "It's a matter for the Board of Management" and then leave the board without the authority to make a decision