



12 January 2021

Parents of students receiving remote learning

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well at this difficult time.

As you know, from yesterday Monday 11 January, schools will be closed to students and all students at primary and post-primary level will now move to a programme of remote learning.

While NPHE is of the view that schools remain safe environments, the decision to close schools was taken in order to minimise mobility of the entire population and to support the suppression of the Covid-19 virus in the community. This will allow everyone to reduce their contacts, with a view to reducing the spread of the virus and a swift return to school for all.

Remote Learning during this period

Following the initial period of school closure last year, the Department has engaged with the education partners to revise remote teaching and learning guidance. This was agreed with all stakeholders last year and guidance for primary and post-primary schools was subsequently published online in October and December 2020 respectively.

As such, during this time, all teachers, including special education teachers (SETs), are required to continue to support teaching and learning for all pupils/students in their class/subject group or on their caseload.

Schools have been advised of the need to ensure appropriate provision and support for pupils/students during this time. Every school has been advised of the need to develop a contingency plan for remote learning that is appropriate to children's different ages and stages, and has been provided with guidance on best practice. The guidance provided to schools notes that it is crucially important that the learning of all pupils/students, especially those with special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage and/or early school leaving, are supported at this time. These guidelines are listed at the end of this letter.

Schools have been provided with funding as part of the Digital Strategy for Schools. In 2020 funding totaling €100m in 2020 was provided to schools and schools have been advised to prioritise supporting the purchase of devices for students who may not have access to devices for remote learning. The School Support services that are funded by the Department have developed a suite of materials to assist teachers in using an online platform to support teaching, learning and assessment. Furthermore, there is a range of



supports available to schools from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Junior Cycle for Teachers, An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscoilaíochta, National Educational Psychological Service, Education Centres and the Centre for School Leadership.

There has been an excellent take up by teachers throughout the country of training and supports provided in this area, and I know that schools will do their utmost in these difficult circumstances to provide the best possible experience for students. Schools will contact parents directly with their plans and arrangements for remote learning.

The Inspectorate of the Department will continue to offer an advisory service to schools to support the delivery of remote learning and to provide assistance to school leaders in particular. The Inspectorate will also evaluate and report on the quality of educational provision for students at this time.

Returning to in-person learning for all schools

The Department is conscious that closing schools has hugely adverse consequences at individual, family and societal level. For children, it impacts on wellbeing, learning, on social and emotional development.

School closure has significant impacts on children with special educational needs. School closure also heightens student anxiety, particularly for the Leaving Certificate cohort, in relation to state examinations.

The Government decision included provision that in-person learning would be maintained for two specific cohorts from Monday 11, pupils/ students attending special schools and classes and final year Leaving Certificate students. Despite the confirmation by Public Health that schools remain safe, unfortunately it has not proved possible to get agreement to provide in-person learning for these two groups. In these circumstance there is no alternative but to pause the limited reopening and continue engagement with partners. I will keep parents of these students updated on this engagement.

The latest public health advice received by Government is available [here](#). It clearly outlines that schools are safe environments, and that the protective measures and the considerable supports put in place to support schools have been successful.

Where there have been cases in schools, the enhanced school teams put in place by Public Health and the Department have worked effectively to support schools, and the level of transmission in schools has been low. Because of this, we continue to aim to return all students to in-person learning as soon as it is possible to do so.



Supports and wellbeing

It is important that students experience continuity of learning during this period to the extent that is possible for your family, bearing in mind your child's age and stage. Research conducted in Ireland concluded that while online learning worked for some students during the period of school closure, it did not replicate the in-school learning experience – this was also the experience internationally.

We all know that it can be difficult to achieve maximum interaction with remote learning, with many competing demands and restrictions. The best advice is that you provide the support that is possible for your family to your child and that you prioritise your child's and your own wellbeing, balancing that with supporting learning, during this period.

Links to some supports available are provided below.

I wish you and your family all the very best at this time, and hope to communicate soon with you on a safe return to in-person learning for all.

Regards,

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education



Information on guidance provided to schools on remote learning

The guidance provided to schools that it is crucially important that the learning of all pupils/students, especially those with special educational needs and those at risk of educational disadvantage and/or early school leaving, are supported at this time, and sets out the following requirements:

- Regular engagement with pupils/students: It is important that teachers engage with their pupils/students; in a primary setting this should, ideally, be on a daily basis; in a post-primary context teachers should, as far as possible, engage with students as per the normal school timetable.
- A blend of guided and independent learning tasks/experiences: Teacher-pupil/student engagement should involve both direct teaching by the teacher and the assignment of independent learning tasks for completion by the pupils/students.
- Appropriate and engaging learning opportunities: Teachers should ensure that the chosen learning tasks give pupils/students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a clear and concise way.
- Learning tasks: The tasks chosen should be specifically aligned to the needs of the pupil/student, including pupils/students with special educational needs (SEN), and should enable the teacher to monitor progress and give constructive, developmental feedback to support the next stages in their learning.
- Two-way feedback between home and school: Schools should ensure that two-way feedback between teachers and parents/guardians and between teachers and their pupils/students is encouraged and supported. Schools should provide manageable and accessible opportunities for all pupils/ students to regularly share samples of their work with the teacher(s) throughout each week. Teachers should ensure that work received is corrected and relevant feedback is provided.
- Support for pupils/students with special educational needs: Special education teachers (SETs) should continue to engage with the pupils/students on their caseloads and class/subject teachers should differentiate teaching and learning in line with their pupils'/students' needs to minimise disruption to their learning and progression.

Further details are available here:

- [Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19: Context: September –December 2020 For primary schools and special schools](#)
- [Guidance on Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning in a COVID-19 Context For post-primary schools and centres for education.](#)

[Circular 0074/2020](#)

- Guidance for parents/ guardians on supporting continuity of learning can be found [here](#) and is available in multiple languages.



Wellbeing

The wellbeing of all children and families is important, and the National Educational Psychological Service has a range of supports available on gov.ie/schools in the parents section which you may find useful. This material is being updated regularly so please check back: Gov.ie/schools/wellbeing.



12 Eanáir 2021

Tuismitheoirí le daltaí/scoláirí atá ag gabháil don chianfhoghlaim

A Thuismitheoir/Chaomhnóir, a chara,

Tá súil agam go bhfuil tú agus do theaghlach slán agus sábháilte ag an am deacair seo.

Mar is eol duit, ó inniu Luan an 11 Eanáir, beidh scoileanna dúnta do dhaltai/scoláirí agus bogfaidh gach dalta/scoláire ar leibhéal na bunscoile agus na hiar-bhunscoile ar aghaidh chuig clár cianfhoghlama.

Cé go bhfuil an Fhoireann Náisiúnta Éigeandála Sláinte Poiblí (NPHE) den tuairim gur timpeallachtaí sábháilte iad scoileanna go fóill, cinneadh iad a dhúnadh chun gluaiseacht an daonra ar fad a íoslaghdú agus chun tacú le víreas Covid-19 a chur faoi chois sa phobal. Cumasóidh sé sin do gach duine an líon teagmhálacha a bhíonn acu a ghearradh ar mhaithe le leathadh an víris a laghdú agus filleadh tapa ar an scoil a éascú do chách.

Cianfhoghlaim le linn na tréimhse seo

Tar éis dhúnadh na scoileanna anuraidh, d'oibrigh an Roinn lena gcuid comhpháirtithe oideachais leis na treoir maidir le cianfhoghlaim agus cianmhúinteoireacht a athbhreithnigh. Bhí comhaontú idir na páirtithe leasmhara ar fad anuraidh agus eisíodh na treoir ar líne do bhunscoileanna agus d'iar-bhunscoileanna i mí Dheireadh Fómhair agus mí na Nollag faoi seach.

Le linn na tréimhse seo, ceanglaítear ar gach múinteoir, lena n-áirítear múinteoirí oideachais speisialta, leanúint le tacú leis an teagasc agus leis an bhfoghlaim do gach dalta/scoláire atá ina ngrúpa ranga/ábhair nó ar a n-ualach cásanna.

Cuireadh scoileanna ar an eolas faoin ngá atá ann le soláthar cuí agus tacaíocht chuif a chinntiú do dhaltai/scoláirí le linn an ama seo. Cuireadh gach scoil ar an eolas faoin ngá atá ann le plean teagmhasach a fhorbairt don chianfhoghlaim, ar plean é atá oiriúnach d'aoiseanna agus céimeanna difriúla na leanaí. Soláthraíodh treoir do na scoileanna maidir leis an dea-chleachtas ina leith sin. Tugtar faoi deara sa treoir sin go bhfuil sé an-tábhachtach go dtacófaí le foghlaim gach dalta/scoláire ag an am seo, go háirithe iad sin a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu agus iad sin atá i mbaol míbhuntáiste oideachasúil agus/nó luathfhágála scoile. Leagtar amach sa treoir freisin na ceanglais atá le comhlíonadh ag scoileanna. Tá na ceanglais sin liostaithe ag deireadh na litreach seo.



Tugadh cistiú do scoileanna faoin scéim deontas TFC agus cistiú dar luach iomlán €100m á sholáthar sa bhliain 2020. Moladh do scoileanna tús áite a thabhairt do ghléasanna a cheannach do dhaltáí/scoláirí ar féidir nach bhfuil rochtain acu ar ghléasanna don chianfhoghlaim. Rinne na seirbhísí Tacaíochta Scoile a gcistíonn an Roinn iad raon ábhar a fhorbairt chun cabhrú le múinteoirí ardán ar líne a úsáid chun tacú leis an teagasc, leis an bhfoghlaim agus leis an measúnú. Tá raon tacaí éagsúla ar fáil do scoileanna ón gComhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta, ón gComhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta, ón tSraith Shóisearach do Mhúinteoirí, ón gComhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta, ón tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais, ó Ionaid Oideachais agus ón Lárionad um Cheannaireacht Scoile.

Ghlac múinteoirí ar fud na tíre go sármhaith leis an oiliúint agus leis na tacaí atá ar fáil sa réimse seo, agus tá a fhios agam go ndéanfaidh scoileanna a seacht ndéicheall sna himthosca deacra seo chun an t-eispéireas is fearr is féidir a sholáthar do dhaltáí/scoláirí. Thar na laethanta atá le teacht, déanfaidh scoileanna teagmháil dhíreach le tuismitheoirí maidir leis na pleananna agus na socruithe atá i bhfeidhm acu don chianfhoghlaim.

Leanfaidh Cigireacht na Roinne le seirbhís chomhairleach a thairiscint do scoileanna chun tacú leis an gcianfhoghlaim a sholáthar agus leanfaidh sí le cúnamh a thabhairt do cheannairí scoile go háirithe. Déanfaidh an Chigireacht meastóireacht ar cháilíocht an tsoláthair oideachais do dhaltáí/scoláirí ag an am seo agus tabharfaidh sí tuairisc ar an méid sin freisin.

Filleadh ar an bhfoghlaim i bpearsa i ngach scoil

Is eol don Roinn go bhfuil iarmhairtí an-díobhálach ag an dúnadh scoile do dhaoine aonair, do theaghlaigh agus don tsochaí i gcoitinne. I gcás leanaí, téann sé i bhfeidhm ar a gcuid folláine, foghlama agus forbartha sóisialta agus mothúchánaí.

Imríonn an dúnadh scoile tionchar suntasach ar leanaí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu. Méadaíonn an dúnadh scoile an imní atá ar scoláirí faoi scrúduithe stáit freisin, go háirithe scoláirí sa chohórt Ardteistiméireachta.

Áiríodh leis an gcinneadh ón Rialtas an fhoráil go gcoinneofaí an fhoghlaim i bpearsa ar bun do dhá chohórt shonracha ón Luan an 11 Eanáir, is iad sin: daltaí/scoláirí a fhreastalaíonn ar scoileanna speisialta agus ar ranganna speisialta agus scoláirí Ardteistiméireachta atá sa bhliain deiridh. D'ainneoin gur dheimhnigh an Rannóg Sláinte Poiblí go bhfuil scoileanna fós sábháilte, tharla sé, ar an drochuair, nach rabhthas in ann teacht ar chomhaontú chun an fhoghlaim i bpearsa a sholáthar don dá ghrúpa sin. Mar sin, níl an dara rogha ann ach sos a chur ar an athoscailt theoranta



agus leanúint le dul i dteagmháil le comhpháirtithe. Coinneoidh mé tuismitheoirí na ndaltaí/scoláirí lena mbaineann ar an eolas faoin teagmháil sin.

Tá an chomhairle sláinte poiblí is déanaí a fuair an Rialtas ar fáil [anseo](#). Leagtar amach go soiléir inti gur timpeallachtaí sábháilte iad scoileanna agus gur éirigh leis na bearta cosanta agus leis na tacaí móra a cuireadh i bhfeidhm chun tacú le scoileanna.

Nuair a tháinig cásanna chun cinn i scoileanna, d'oibrigh na foirne scoile breisithe ar chuir an Rannóg Sláinte Poiblí agus an Roinn i bhfeidhm iad go héifeachtach chun tacú le scoileanna. B'íseal an leibhéal tarchuir i scoileanna. Mar gheall air sin, tá sé mar aidhm againn go fóill gach dalta/scoláire a chur i mbun na foghlama i bpearsa an athuir a luaithe is féidir déanamh amhlaidh.

Tacaí agus folláine

Tá sé tábhachtach go bhfaigheadh daltaí/scoláirí leanúnachas na foghlama le linn na tréimhse seo, a mhéid is féidir le do theaghlach é sin á éascú, agus aird á tabhairt ar aois agus céim do linbh. Cé gur léiríodh sa taighde a rinneadh in Éirinn agus thar lear araon go ndeachaigh an fhoghlaim ar líne chun tairbhe do dhaltaí/scoláirí áirithe le linn thréimhse an dúnta scoile, léiríodh ann freisin nárbh ionann an fhoghlaim ar líne agus an t-eispéireas foghlama ionscoile.

Is eol dúinn go léir go mbíonn sé deacair rannpháirtíocht uasta sa chianfhoghlaim a bhaint amach agus go mbíonn a lán éileamh agus srianta san iomaíocht léi. Is é an chomhairle is fearr ná go dtabharfá do do leanbh cibé tacaíocht is féidir leat a thabhairt agus go dtabharfá tús áite d'fholláine do linbh agus do d'fholláine féin le linn na tréimhse seo, agus cothromaíocht á baint amach idir é sin agus an tacaíocht don fhoghlaim.

Tá naisc chuig roinnt de na tacaí atá ar fáil tugtha thíos.

Guím gach rath ort agus ar do theaghlach ag an am seo, agus tá súil agam go mbeidh mé i dteagmháil leat go luath maidir le filleadh sábháilte ar an bhfoghlaim i bpearsa do chách.

Le dea-mhéin,

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education



Faisnéis maidir leis an treoir a soláthraíodh do scoileanna maidir leis an gcianfhoghlaim

Sa treoir a soláthraíodh do scoileanna, tugtar faoi deara go bhfuil sé an-tábhachtach go dtacófaí le foghlaim gach dalta/scoláire ag an am seo, go háirithe iad sin a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu agus iad sin atá i mbaol míbhuntáiste oideachasúil agus/nó luathfhágála scoile. Leagtar na ceanglais seo a leanas amach sa treoir freisin:

- **Teagmháil thráthrialta le daltaí/scoláirí:** Tá sé tábhachtach go rachadh múinteoirí i dteagmháil lena gcuid daltaí/scoláirí. I suíomh bunscoile, b'fhearr go ndéanfadh siad amhlaidh ar bhonn laethúil. I gcomhthéacs iar-bhunscoile, ba cheart do mhúinteoirí dul i dteagmháil le scoláirí de réir an ghnáth-amchláir scoile, a mhéid is féidir.
- **Meascán de thascanna/eispéiris foghlama treoraithe agus neamhspleáiche:** Le linn na teagmhála idir an múinteoir agus an dalta/scoláire, ba cheart don mhúinteoir teagasc díreach a dhéanamh agus tascanna foghlama neamhspleáiche a shannadh lena ndéanamh ag na daltaí/scoláirí araon.
- **Deiseanna foghlama atá cuí agus spésiúil:** Ba cheart do mhúinteoirí a chinntiú go dtugtar sna tascanna foghlama roghnaithe deis do dhaltaí/scoláirí a gcuid foghlama a thaispeáint ar bhealach soiléir agus beacht.
- **Tascanna foghlama:** Ba cheart na tascanna roghnaithe a bheith ailínithe go sonrach le riachtanais an dalta/scoláire, lena n-áirítear daltaí/scoláirí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu, agus ba cheart don mhúinteoir iad a úsáid chun faireachán a dhéanamh ar dhul chun cinn agus aiseolas cuiditheach forbartha a thabhairt chun tacú leis na chéad chéimeanna eile d'fhoghlaim an dalta/scoláire.
- **Aiseolas dhá threo idir an baile agus an scoil:** Ba cheart do scoileanna a chinntiú go spreagtar aiseolas idir múinteoirí agus tuismitheoirí/caomhnóirí agus idir múinteoirí agus a gcuid daltaí/scoláirí agus go dtacaítear leis an aiseolas sin. Ba cheart do scoileanna deiseanna indéanta inrochtana a thabhairt do gach dalta/scoláire chun samplaí dá gcuid oibre a chomhroinnt go tráthrialta leis an mhúinteoir/leis na múinteoirí i rith na seachtaine. Ba cheart do mhúinteoirí a chinntiú go gceartaítear aon obair a fhaightear agus go dtugtar aiseolas ábhartha ina leith.
- **Tacaíocht do dhaltaí/scoláirí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu:** Ba cheart do mhúinteoirí oideachais speisialta leanúint le dul i dteagmháil leis na daltaí/scoláirí atá ar a n-ualach cásanna agus ba cheart do mhúinteoirí ranga/ábhair an teagasc agus an fhoghlaim a dhifreáil ar aon dul le riachtanais a gcuid daltaí/scoláirí ar mhaithe leis an gcur isteach ar a bhfoghlaim agus ar a ndul chun cinn a íoslaghdú.

Tá tuilleadh mionsonraí ar fáil anseo:

- [Treoir maidir le Cianfhoghlaim i gComhthéacs COVID-19: Meán Fómhair - Nollaig 2020: Do bhunscoileanna agus scoileanna speisialta](#)



- [Treoir maidir le Teagasc agus Foghlaim Éigeandála ó chian i gComhthéacs COVID-19: Le haghaidh iar-bhunscoileanna agus ionaid oideachais](#)

[Ciorclán 0074/2020](#)

- Tá treoir do thuismitheoirí/caomhnóirí ar leanúnachas scolaíochta ar fáil [anseo](#) agus tá sé ar fáil i dteangacha éagsúla eile.

Folláine

Tá tábhacht ag baint le folláine gach linbh agus teaghlaigh. Dá réir sin, chuir an tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Síceolaíochta Oideachais raon tacaí a d'fhéadfadh a bheith úsáideach duit ar fáil sa rannán do thuismitheoirí ar gov.ie/schools. Coinnigh súil ar an suíomh, toisc go dtugtar an t-ábhar sin cothrom le dáta go tráthrialta: Gov.ie/schools/wellbeing.