



T :0131-244 4000
E :dfmcse@gov.scot

Dr Patrick Roach
nasuwt@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

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Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your letter, dated 20 April, about the re-opening of schools. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure you that I am committed to working with all the teacher unions during these challenging times. Collaborative working and communication will be vital during the coming months.

As you know, all schools were advised to close on 20th March 2020, with the exception of any critical provision required to protect a number of key groups and interests. This decision was based on scientific advice that closing schools would help to slow the spread of Coronavirus. Whilst the Government is clear that we don't want restrictions to be in place any longer than they need to be, the decision on when and how to re-open schools will not be taken lightly. As you outline in your letter, there are many complexities to consider including, but by no means limited to, the education workforce, staff and pupil wellbeing and the practicalities around physical distancing. The Government also recognises that any decisions made around school re-opening must not be considered in isolation due to the impact on families, working parents and wider society. Therefore the C-19 Education Recovery Group has recently formed, which brings together expertise from across the education and early years sectors in Scotland. We expect to see a phased return for schools, of which there are many permutations currently being considered ahead of the science indicating that it is safe to re-open education settings.

In the meantime, as set out in the [Term 4 guidance document](#), published on 20 April, our current primary focus is that pupils, teachers, practitioners, parents and carers are supported to cope with the challenging circumstances in which we all find ourselves in. Scottish Government will continue to work

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with a wide range of partners including NASUWT to ensure that learning is supported with a focus on learning at home; parental and carer involvement and engagement; and supporting our teachers, practitioners and school leaders.

With regards to the points you raise about PPE, updated guidance for general (non-healthcare) settings was published by Health Protection Scotland on 14 April. The updated guidance can be found here: <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/>. It states that occupations should continue to use PPE as per existing health and safety policies. The exception is where a risk assessment of the setting indicates that a higher level of contamination may be present and then the need for additional PPE such as an apron and gloves should be considered. To support the publication of this guidance COSLA published, on 17 April, a Q and A in collaboration with Scottish Government and relevant Trade Unions aimed specifically at those employed by local authorities. Some of the Q and A content is specifically for ELC and school settings. The document is available here: https://www.cosla.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/16750/non-healthcaresettingfaqs17042020-1.pdf. We are now looking to develop specific guidance and supporting Q and A for ELC and school settings on the use of PPE in collaboration with key stakeholders. We anticipate that this will be published shortly.

Where there is need for PPE, the first option for all organisations should be to endeavour to use or develop their existing supply chains. We recognise, however, that there have been supply issues and we are therefore pursuing an approach of active market engagement with current and potential suppliers of PPE and related items, such as sanitiser. We aim, so far as possible, to facilitate the provision of the right items, in the right quantity, in the right place and at the right time. Our Procurement Directorate is in dialogue with a range of companies, domestically and internationally, to mobilise the required supply. We are also carefully triaging all the welcome offers of supply that are coming into the Scottish Government, so that we can rapidly progress the most promising.

I would like to pass on my thanks to you and the wider NASUWT membership for all the work that your members continue to do during this difficult time to ensure that every child has access to learning whether in school/college or from home during Term 4 and into the next academic year.

Yours sincerely,



JOHN SWINNEY

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot



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