

January 2021

**To Directors of Education/Children's Services**

Dear Colleague

**COVID-19 – Attendance at schools and colleges**

We are at a critical situation for the country. The percentage of people testing positive for coronavirus (COVID-19) is continuing to increase and the First Minister has announced that everyone should now stay at home and work from home wherever possible. The clear purpose of this lockdown is to substantially reduce contact between people and therefore reduce the infection rate of COVID-19, which is up to 70% more transmissible. We trust that you will agree that all staff, children and young people, wherever possible, should stay at home.

Government guidance is clear that *'schools can only open to in-person learning for children of key workers and vulnerable children, with remote learning for all other children and young people from 11 January to 29 January.'* This will help schools to reduce potential transmission of COVID-19 by minimising the numbers of pupils and staff on site.

It is therefore concerning that the evidence emerging indicates that in some authorities there are higher numbers of young people attending school than anticipated and too many teachers and education staff are being directed to attend their workplace when they could be working from home. The onus is on all employers to continually review and update local arrangements to ensure best compliance with national guidance and to facilitate as many people as possible staying at home.

The NASUWT also expects that every school should have undertaken a health and safety risk assessment to support both the provision of onsite education and the provision of remote education. The conduct of risk assessments is the responsibility of each employer and we ask that you confirm the steps you have taken, as required, to ensure that such assessments have been conducted and the mechanisms are in place to facilitate ongoing review, in light of the increased risks presented by the new strain of coronavirus. As per the national guidance, consideration should be given to any additional mitigations that could be put in place.

The national guidance is clear that:

*'local authorities and schools should ensure that only those staff who are required to support these essential activities are requested to attend in person';*

*'the number of children taking up these places in schools during the strict lockdown period should be kept to the absolute minimum necessary';*

*'if it is possible for children to be at home during this exceptional period, until schools reopen to them, then they should be.'*

The NASUWT asks that you immediately act to communicate with the parents and staff in your schools to encourage them to keep children at home and to stay at home.

I look forward to your full support in this matter and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Dr Patrick Roach  
General Secretary