

Preparation for the opening of schools Autumn 2020

This checklist provides the key steps which must be factored into the planning of the opening of schools at the start of the Autumn term 2020. **The NASUWT expects that all steps will be completed prior to opening the school to pupils.**

The checklist takes account of Department of Education and Public Health Agency guidance on planning for opening of schools and will be amended as appropriate in the context of any changes to this guidance.

The checklist covers:

A – Key issues which need to be considered in the plans for opening;

B – Useful Guidance – links to guidance referenced in this checklist and to sources of information which may be useful in planning for opening of the school.

Employers are required by health and safety legislation to, 'so far as is reasonably practicable', protect the health and safety of employees by removing or reducing workplace risks. This applies to COVID-19 in the same way as it would to any other hazard.

Employers should remember that just because schools may be opening to pupils, this does not mean that there are no longer risks associated with COVID-19. The virus can and does cause fatalities in all groups of people, and this should be the guiding issue on the arrangements employers make for the opening of schools.

Section A – Key issues which need to be considered in the plans for opening

PREMISES PREPARATION:

- Flushing the water system in accordance with the school's legionella risk assessment and policy.
- Checking that there are no leaks in the water system and that there is provision of hot water.
- Ensuring the safety and quality of the water by:
 - disinfecting the water system by raising the temperature of the heating of the system; or
 - in schools which have cooling towers/wet AC systems, microbiologically testing the water and receiving a positive clearance.
- Testing the fire alarms/smoke alarms/panic and accessible-toilet alarms.

CHECKING:

- fire-door mechanisms, including the safe storage and use of flammable liquids with specific reference to the hand sanitiser stocks;
- gas supply;
- kitchen equipment;

- ventilation/air conditioning systems** (the specific type of system should be checked in accordance with Government and Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI) guidance, as some types are subject to restrictions in the context of COVID-19);
- key holder information;**
- fixed wiring** (if the scheduled tests required in the Electricity at Work Risk Assessment have not taken place);
- emergency lighting;**
- inspection of lifts** (if the scheduled tests required by the regulations have not taken place in the last six months);
- inspection of all known asbestos sites** (which may have been damaged by rodent activity during the closure);
- inspection for rodent activity and/or infestations** (for which pest control may be required);
- cleaning of the premises** (if the premises are accessed within five days of the first day of the term, then any areas accessed must have a deep clean of touch surfaces);
- servicing of reprographic and other equipment** (in accordance with the manufacturer's/provider's requirements).

STAFFING ISSUES:

- Assessment of the availability of staff for all activities during the school day, including lunchtime and break supervision and cleaning, and to provide support for pupils with special or additional needs, taking into account:**
 - staff who have underlying medical conditions*;
 - staff who are self-isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms or diagnosis*;
 - staff who may be considered vulnerable, such as staff who are pregnant and staff with a disability and those from a BAME background, who are disproportionately at risk from the virus*;
 - staff on maternity or any other form of authorised leave, who will not be available for work;
 - the availability of supply staff to cover any vacancies or long-term absences;
 - the availability of appropriately trained cleaning staff to undertake the additional cleaning, including throughout the day.

* All of the staff these staff will need individual risk assessments, as part of the planning for opening, concluded before any return to the workplace.
- Support for staff returning from home working, particularly those whose mental health has been affected during lockdown.**

TEACHING AND LEARNING:

- Defining the expectations about teaching and learning, including:**
 - how the number of pupils in school will be managed to ensure that appropriate distancing, groups and 'bubbles' are maintained in accordance with Department of Education (DE) Guidance. Account should also be taken of:

- the ability of pupils to maintain distancing, groups/bubbles;
- arrangements for staff and pupils during breaks and lunchtimes, including supervision of pupils in the context of distancing, groups/bubbles;
- any subject-specific requirements, e.g practical lessons and PE, ensuring they have been specifically risk assessed.
- the extent to which existing planning, schemes of work and programmes of study will need to be adapted to take account of:
 - the number of pupils in groups/bubbles;
 - the availability and the suitability of materials and resources for working with pupils, given the heightened cleaning and hygiene requirements;
 - provision for pupils who may need to self-isolate;
 - those pupils with special/additional educational support needs;
 - the management of staggered start and finish times.
- the support, time and resources that will need to be made available to teachers and other staff to make any necessary preparations in respect of the above;
- availability of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and access to soap and water, and arrangements for the regular cleaning of touch surfaces throughout the day.

Review of the current risk assessments individual pupils may have

These may not be appropriate or may need extending to take account of the new situation relating to the full opening of the school and the provisions of COVID-19 guidance.

Risk assessments of other pupils:

- pupils who have not previously been risk assessed but, when schools are open to all pupils, may pose a risk;
- pupils who need specific care, which cannot be delivered whilst ensuring social distancing;
- potentially violent pupils, especially those with a known risk of spitting and/or requiring physical restraint.

As required under health and safety legislation, all risk assessments should be subject to consultation with staff, the NASUWT and other unions.

Review of the school's pupil behaviour policy to ensure that it covers COVID-19-related incidents

Make provision in the behaviour policy for the school to be able to sanction, up to and including exclusion, pupils who wilfully refuse to adhere to arrangements of distancing, groups and bubbles, and deliberately cough or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk.

Assessment of the availability of school transport, including dedicated transport for pupils with special needs

- Assess the availability of transport and the arrangements being made by the transport providers for compliance with DE Guidance on hygiene and distancing.
- Assess the availability of alternative transport-home arrangements for pupils who develop COVID-19 symptoms while in school and who normally use the dedicated transport for pupils with special needs.

INCIDENCE OF COVID-19:

- A clear procedure setting out the actions to be taken and by whom, following receipt of information of a COVID-19 positive test result of staff and/or pupils.
- A clear procedure for managing effectively notifications to the school of a local area lockdown.

MAINTENANCE AND BUILDING WORK:

- Review of the arrangements for routine maintenance of the premises
Assess how this will be carried out while maintaining social distancing, and consider minimising risk by limiting maintenance to regulatory requirements and emergencies.
- Risk assessment of any capital building works which were suspended during lockdown, which are in progress or scheduled to start when the school reopens
Review contractors' risk assessments in the context of government and public health guidance and the presence of staff and pupils on site.

Section B – Useful Guidance

NASUWT website: www.nasuwt.org.uk.

The NASUWT Guidance on risk assessments: www.nasuwt.org.uk/healthandsafety.

HSENI guidance on Working Safely during the COVID-19 Outbreak:

<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/topic/covid-19-advice-and-guidance-places-work>.

Testing and flushing of the water system and receiving back the written results of the testing and confirmation that the water system is safe: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/l8-legionnaires-disease-control-legionella-bacteria-water-systems-gb-acop-approved-use>.

Testing of the fire alarms: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/managing-fire-safety-workplace>.

Checking of the fixed wiring: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/electricity/index.htm>.

Checking of the emergency lighting: <https://www.eani.org.uk/sites/default/files/2018-10/DCLG%20Educational%20Premises%20-%20Fire%20safety%20risk%20assessment.pdf>.

Inspection of lifts: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l113.pdf>.

Health and Safety Executive guidance: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/covid-19-workplace-safety-guidance>.

Government guidance: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-and-what-they-mean-you>.

Ventilation and heating safety guidance: <https://www.hseni.gov.uk/articles/latest-information-and-advice-hse-gb-workplaces-about-covid-19>.

https://go.cibse.org/l/698403/2020-07-15/2n3qmd/698403/87225/CIBSE_Covid_Ventilation_Guidance_version_3_FINAL.pdf.

DE guidance on opening of schools, transport arrangements, cleaning and how to clean: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/department-education-releases-covid-19-coronavirus>.

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