



Dear School Steward,

I set out below the text of an email that has been issued to all members for whom we have an email address on our system.

As some members will not have received it I would ask that you place this notice on your ASTI noticeboard.

Covid-19 related issues

ASTI continues to represent the interests of members and is in regular contact with Department of Education and Public Health Officials. We successfully ensured that the testing and tracing system in place for second-level schools has been maintained and we will insist that it is not withdrawn until it is appropriate to do so. We are pursuing enhanced provision of CO2 monitors for every classroom and the provision of HEPA filters and air purification systems. It is also important that vaccine boosters are offered to all members of the school community in a timely fashion.

Ventilation and Heating

ASTI has been in receipt of queries from members regarding ventilation and heating in schools.

The Department of Education has issued a suite of guidance documents to assist schools in dealing with ventilation issues. These include guidance on steps to be taken to improve ventilation, the deployment of CO2 monitors and room air cleaner guidance.

The information can be accessed here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad236-guidance-on-ventilation-in-schools/>

These guidance documents provide practical steps for the deployment of good ventilation practices in schools and the provision of air cleaners when necessary.

It is acknowledged that many schools have difficulties regulating the achievement of appropriate temperature levels while maintaining sufficient ventilation.

The issue of room temperature is not a guideline but is covered in Law through Statutory Instrument No. 299/2007 - Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 Section 7 which states that an employer shall ensure:

(c) for other sedentary work, at every workstation where a substantial proportion of the work is done sitting and does not involve serious physical effort, a minimum temperature of



16°C is, so far as is reasonably practicable, achieved and maintained after the first hour's work

Members are advised, acting through their Lead Worker Representative or School Steward, as appropriate, to raise any difficulties they may be experiencing regarding heating or ventilation in schools with school management so that appropriate remediation measures can be put in place.

Restricted Movements:

Notwithstanding recent controversy on the question, ASTI has made it clear that any arrangements that would seek to exempt teachers from the requirement to restrict their movements for five days when they are household close contacts would be unacceptable. Teachers who are household close contacts, are fully vaccinated and showing no symptoms, should now restrict their movements until they have had three negative antigen test results within five days.

Close contacts will receive a text from the HSE inviting them to their website to upload their contact details. They will also receive a text regarding the antigen tests. Antigen tests will be posted to home addresses and one should take the first test on the day they are received. The follow up tests should be taken at two-day intervals.

ASTI has also been in receipt of queries regarding the working arrangements to be put in place where a teacher is required to restrict their movements for five days because a household member has contracted Covid-19.

The relevant arrangements set out in Circular 0021/2021 provides as follows:

4.4 Alternative Working Arrangements

4.4.1 An employee who is medically fit for work and has been advised to restrict his/her movements, or an employee at very high risk of serious illness from contracting COVID-19 is available to work remotely.

4.4.2 The work assigned to the employee should be determined by the employer, in consultation with the employee, and may include relevant duties that support the work of the school in developing and delivering its programmes of teaching and learning for pupils/students

4.4.3 For teachers, these duties may include:

- *Liaising closely with and supporting the work of the substitute teacher(s) who becomes responsible for the teaching duties of the teacher on special leave with pay.*
- *Supporting and engaging, using online technology, the work and progress of very high risk or extremely vulnerable pupils/students who are unable to attend school.*
- *Participating in staff meetings, team/subject planning meetings and all other normal meetings using online technology.*



- *Participating in relevant professional development through online media.*
- *Developing aspects of the school's teaching resources or teaching plans.*
- *Reviewing and developing whole-school policies, in line with the school's priorities and in light of the current context.*
- *Undertaking administrative or other tasks associated with a post of responsibility (provided they hold the post of responsibility in line with relevant Department of Education publications) to the greatest extent possible using online technology.*

Blended Teaching and Learning:

Regarding situations whereby support for students who cannot attend school for a period of time due to Covid-19 related reasons is being considered, it should be noted that such provision is discretionary. A teacher is not required to teach the student remotely. Schools may use their existing allocated teaching resources to assign other teachers within the school to meet the needs of students who are at home due to Covid-19.

Best regards
Kieran Christie
General Secretary