

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



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Dear Colleagues

COVID – 19: OUR SCHOOLS NEED YOU

As you are aware and you have heard me say, our society is in the midst of a worldwide crisis and events are changing by the minute.

Our school leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff and boards of governors are playing a critical role in the country's efforts to combat coronavirus by keeping many schools open to ensure provision is available for vulnerable children and for the children of 'key workers' so that services vital for the functioning of society can keep going.

Following the lead of volunteers who have already stepped up to help our vital health services, we in Education want to also play our part. On Friday 27 March, I issued a call to all teachers, staff in DE, the EA, CCMS and the ETI. My Department and I are delighted with the response to date and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have already volunteered.

Today, however, I am widening the call for volunteers to include all members of schools' Boards of Governors, retired teachers, retired classroom assistants and colleagues from the wider educational sector including any current or previous staff within the Catholic Schools Trustee Service, Governing Bodies Association, Controlled Schools Support Council, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta. I am asking for your help in a bid to assist our dedicated teaching staff and non-teaching staff in schools who are carrying out this vital role. **We need you** to provide essential support and assistance.

At this point in time, it is envisaged that volunteers will work with and support teachers and other education professionals, where they require such support, in carrying out the various duties that supervision of these children entails. You will be fully supported in all tasks which you will be asked to undertake and my Department will seek to place you in schools or centres in your local area, where possible.

Many teachers and non-teaching staff have already been assisting greatly, but we need more people who are willing and able to help. Public Health Authority guidance in relation to social distancing will be adhered to at all times.

I cannot stress enough how valuable a contribution you would make, not only to our schools, but to society as a whole.

If you are willing to participate in this very worthwhile and essential work, you should now complete a registration form which can be accessed on our website.

Completed applications should be emailed to: Volunteering@education-ni.gov.uk
Please note, to comply with the UK's current 'Stay at Home' rules you may only carry out those tasks which involve leaving your home if you fulfil **ALL** of the conditions below:

- You are well and have no symptoms like a cough or high temperature and neither does anybody in your household;
- You are under 70;
- You are not pregnant; and
- You do not have any long-term health conditions that make you vulnerable to coronavirus.

Clearance through AccessNI will be required but, in the current circumstances, my Department is working with the Department of Justice to ensure that this can be completed within 24 hours.

Should you volunteer, you will be part of a pool and, depending on a number of factors, it may transpire that you are not ultimately called to participate. If this is the case, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your willingness to be involved and provide support at this crucial time.

I want to thank you all for your dedication and support in these very difficult times.

Yours sincerely



Peter Weir MLA
Minister of Education