



## DE COVID GUIDANCE FOLLOWING CHANGE OF HEALTH PROTECTION RESTRICTIONS

On 14 February 2022 the Minister of Health informed the Assembly of his decision to move the remaining COVID restrictions into guidance. The vast majority of the DE guidance is not impacted by this and remains unchanged at this point.

The position on face coverings, based on public health advice, remains that it is strongly recommended that post-primary pupils wear a face covering at all times when inside school buildings, including classrooms, corridors and confined communal spaces such as toilet areas.

You will be aware that by 28 February other UK jurisdictions will have eased their requirements for post-primary pupils to wear face coverings in schools. While our case numbers are still high, they are moving in the right direction, and the Minister wishes to be in a similar position here as soon as possible. To ensure that the removal of face coverings from guidance is not delayed the Department will continue to actively engage with Health colleagues to seek their most up to date advice, to inform the Minister's decision on this issue. Officials will also continue to engage with practitioners and unions ahead of any change to guidance.

Until any such changes are agreed, schools and educational settings should continue to implement the current DE COVID guidance.

Thank you for your continuing commitment in these very challenging times.

**DE Restart Team**

**17 February 2022**