

## FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



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Dear Principal

Firstly I want to pay tribute to you and your staff for the considerable leadership you have all shown in extremely difficult circumstances. I recognise and appreciate all that you and your teaching and non-teaching staff are doing to support our key workers at this time.

Schools are stepping up to the challenge of providing supervised learning centres for children of key workers yet regrettably all the evidence suggests that the need for this essential service to our community will very likely increase in the weeks ahead.

I am also aware and very much appreciate that in addition to their efforts in supporting the children of key workers, schools are utilising their existing digital communication mediums to provide online resources and support for remote learning in the home.

Over the past week since this service has been launched we have seen an average of around 1000 children supported every day in a school setting but sadly I am concerned that this number will grow over the next few weeks until we get the COVID-19 virus under control.

In order to ensure that key workers can easily ascertain which schools are open and available to support their child I have decided that from today I will publish a list of the schools that are open on the Department of Education website.

In addition the Education Authority (EA) have set up a COVID-19 helpline number (028 3836 8186) which has two dedicated lines, one for key workers looking to place their child and one for principals to obtain advice on key worker arrangements. The EA website (<https://www.eani.org.uk/key-workers>) has also been updated to include an online form that key workers can complete to nominate a placement for their child.

Transparency of available schools to key workers is fundamental to support them in the outstanding front line work that they are doing for us all. The list of schools open will be

based on the information provided by the survey which you complete every day. Completion of this survey is essential to ensure up-to-date information is available to parents and to my Department and employing authorities so thank you for taking the time each day to complete it.

I recognise and fully acknowledge that this situation is very difficult for you, your teaching and non-teaching staff and indeed all your families, and I thank you for playing an indispensable and crucial part in supporting our society in efforts to defeat this virus.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Weir".

**Peter Weir MLA**

**Minister of Education**