

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



To: All School Principals of Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools

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Dear School Principal

PROVISION OF DIGITAL DEVICES TO DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

I announced yesterday my intention to provide additional digital devices to school children.

During the current Covid-19 pandemic, schools have been closed except for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Teachers have continued educating pupils through remote learning.

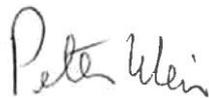
There are thousands of pupils who are being educated through remote learning, together with excellent examples of many schools and pre-schools maintaining regular contact with parents, children and young people. We are lucky to have a very safe and well-resourced technology infra-structure in Northern Ireland, which all of our young people benefit from through their schools. However, I am aware though that some young people do not have sufficient access to technology that supports their learning, now they are out of their normal school setting.

I have now agreed a process to lend digital devices including laptops and tablets to those children who would benefit most in terms of supporting their learning. The first stage of this initiative involves the prioritisation of existing school stock which will begin this week. Once this step has been completed and devices have been distributed to pupils, schools will work with the Education Authority to identify how many new laptops are required. We anticipate having around 3,000 new laptops available in the coming weeks and, if needed, will purchase more.

I am committed to doing all I can to support those who will, in the incoming year, be studying for GCSEs, A Levels and those children going into P7. Therefore priority will be given to pupils in these circumstances and also those who are considered vulnerable and in disadvantaged groups including those entitled to a free school meal and newcomer children.

A copy of the criteria that will be applied is attached for information and is also available on the C2K Exchange.

Any queries should be addressed to your link officer or if technical, to the C2K Service Desk.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Weir". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Peter Weir MLA
Minister of Education