

31st Jan. 2022

Deputy Patricia Ryan,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: patricia.ryan@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 2964-22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will ensure that the vaccine for children between five and 12 years of age is administered in schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ryan,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

On the 8th of December NIAC recommended COVID-19 vaccination for those aged 5 to 11 years:

- with underlying conditions
- living with a younger child with complex medical needs
- living with a person who is immunocompromised

NIAC also stated that a COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to all other children aged 5 to 11 years because of the:

- favourable benefit risk profile of the vaccine,
- to protect them from severe disease,
- the consequences that can follow infection e.g., multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MISC), long COVID, psychosocial and developmental impacts

In light of this, the HSE decided that it could best operationalise this advice by administering vaccinations to those aged 5 to 11 years primarily through Vaccination Centres. These were designed to be child friendly with a wide range of changes made to ensure this was the case. Parental feedback has been very good to date.

The administration of vaccinations to this age group has progressed as follows:

- We commenced the vaccinations for very high risk children in late December through the paediatric hospitals. This has now expanded to vaccinations in Vaccination Centres.
- On December 28th 2021 the HSE opened the online portal which enabled parents/guardians to register children aged 5 to 11 and deemed to be high risk for their Covid-19 vaccination.
- The portal was then extended to parents/guardians of all children within this age category from January 3rd 2022.

As of yet, the HSE does not plan to vaccinate children between the ages of 5 and 11 in the school setting. We are keeping this under review as we examine ways to increase uptake. This includes running satellite clinics in other towns and use of walk in clinics.

To date over 118,000 parents/guardians have registered their children, of which 95% have been issued an appointment. The vaccination of 5 to 11 year olds has seen just under 94,000 of these children have received their dose one vaccine with over 3,000 of these now being fully vaccinated having received their dose two.

I trust the above information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Damien McCallion". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme