**FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

Schools are asked to note the following **important update** to the travel advice provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

**The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all but essential travel to Italy, due to an ongoing outbreak of coronavirus (Covid-19) and in line with various controls and restrictions imposed by the Italian authorities on 9 March.**

The Coronavirus (COVID – 19) outbreak is a developing issue which is being closely monitored by governments worldwide, including the Northern Ireland Executive.  The Department of Education is closely involved in that process in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency.

A number of schools have expressed concerns in relation to whether or not to proceed with plans for scheduled ski trips.  The FCO is responsible for providing Government advice to all parts of the United Kingdom on travel abroad, and schools should continue to check the most up-to-date FCO **advice which is available at:** [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

Schools should contact the travel agency through which they booked their ski trips and seek their advice and guidance on this matter. If you’re returning to the UK from Italy, [consult the latest  advice from the Department of Health and Social Care](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#returning-travellers) on actions to take.

Advice and guidance for the public and educational settings on COVID-19 is provided by the Public Health Agency and GOV.UK. In relation to educational settings, GOV.UK has published guidance for schools, employers and the travel industry on how to handle suspected cases.  The guidance (link attached below) also covers pupils, students and staff returning from school trips in specified areas.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19>

Advice is also available via the Public Health Agency:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus>