

It was back to school this week for many of our little citizens and for some it was their first day at “big” school. My social media sites were full of my friends posting absolutely adorable pictures of their children in their brand spanking new school uniform, chests puffed out with pride that finally they had reached a little milestone in their four whole years of life. Meanwhile on the other side of the camera mums and dads were internally crying “when did this happen, I am not ready for my baby to go to school yet”. And so it will begin. They will come home from school and start saying sentences that start with the word “actually” and ask questions that are perfectly logical for a four year old but totally perplexing for a grown up!

However once the mixture of pride, sorrow, excitement and sadness quells what also happens at the start of each school year is the debate as to whether we begin school for children too early, what and how they learn and what children, particularly girls, do for PE at school with there being a real movement to get dance and Zumba into the PE curriculum. School sport is not within my ministerial remit but I basically agree with those who think if it gets girls moving and keeps them fit then what is the harm.

So by the time I return home from Westminster this week many of the little ones in my neighbourhood will have completed their first week at school. I hope their uniforms are not yet destroyed from playground exuberances and that their parents have recovered from the genuine sadness that I know many of them feel about how quickly they’ve grown up. But most of all I hope they had a good week learning and making new friends and looking forward to the following week because at the end of the day what happened this week will determine their lust for education, an institution they will spend their next 14 years within.