

Scoil Réalta na Maidine

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Scoil Réalta na Maidine

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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie, www.education.ie or agreements with education partners as appropriate for primary schools.

Introduction

The Minister for Education published “*The Roadmap for the Full Return to School*” on the 27th July. It sets out what the operation of schools will look like and the range of supports which will be available in a Covid-19 context.

It has been developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the “Return to Work Safely Protocols” developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Each workplace is required to have a Covid-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. This document sets out the information that primary schools need to implement a School Covid-19 Response Plan, including a Covid-19 policy, lead worker representative and process to deal with a suspected case of Covid-19. The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of Covid-19 in primary schools. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of Covid-19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of pupils and society as a whole.

This Covid-19 Response Plan for Scoil Réalta na Maidine focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in our school to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection into the school while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. This plan is supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities.

One of the key challenges is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. This document

identifies the steps our school will take to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school and the steps that will be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself.

1) COVID-19 Response Plan

This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff, Return to School Committee and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for the school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education plan for school reopening and to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 in the school environment.

It is important that the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to pupils, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the pupils in the school. The Covid-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice as appropriate for primary schools.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and sustainable return to work, and reopening of schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM, staff, pupils and parents.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

2) School COVID-19 Policy

A Covid-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. Our policy is signed by the chairperson of the BOM and has been brought to the attention of the staff, pupils, parents and others. The Covid-19 Policy is available on the school website, www.scoilrealta.ie

3) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The BOM aims to facilitate the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Details for the safe reopening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

As required Scoil Réalta na Maidine has processes in place to include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates (the principal and secretary monitor DES website for changes to recommendations and guidelines)
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required (by email)
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form
- Identified a Lead Worker representative
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of Covid-19
- Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school, taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment
- Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school
- Reviewed the school building to check the following:
 - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease
 - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again
 - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed

4.1) Induction Training

All staff are required to undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- Covid-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school
- Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities. If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the Covid-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal, who is supported in this role by the BOM.

4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available online or from the principal.

A RTW form must be completed and returned at least **3 days** before returning to work.

Induction Training is completed by staff prior to returning to work and are made aware of additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

There are some school staff who may be unable to return to school. Current public health guidelines have identified these people as being in groups who are defined as being at **very high risk**. This will be updated in line with public health advice.

The list of people in very high-risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Details of the arrangements that will apply for these staff, which will be in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, will be updated by the Department of Education following consultation with management bodies and unions, Circular 0049/2020.

4.3) Lead Worker Representative

The Protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR). The LWR will work in collaboration with the principal and Board of Management to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around Covid-19 in the workplace.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in our school. The process for appointment of the lead worker representative in schools has been agreed centrally between the Department of Education and the education partners. All staff in our school were given the opportunity to volunteer for the role.

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against the spread of Covid-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared responsibility in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker who will engage with the principal/BOM.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to Covid-19
- Keep up to date with the latest Covid-19 public health advice
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress Covid-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice

- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them
- Consult with the school management on the school's Covid-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing Covid-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to Covid-19 in the workplace
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to Covid-19 in the workplace

The school has one Lead Worker Representative and one Deputy Lead Worker Representative. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent.

<i>Name(s) of lead worker representative:</i>	<i>Contact details:</i>
Siobhán Mahony	0876229900
Joan Byrne (Deputy)	0879691311

All staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors have a responsibility both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

4.4) Signage

Signage outlining the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene is displayed throughout the school. The Department has provide printed posters to the school, with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette, etc.

4.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of Covid-19. It was necessary for us to reconfigure classes and classrooms in order to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening. We now have 8 mainstream classrooms and have placed 3rd to 6th classes in the larger classrooms. Junior Infants to 2nd classes are not bound to 1m distancing at present. Our 2 special classrooms have adequate space for individual work stations.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

Covid-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment..

Absolute Safety Matters conducted a Risk Assessment and all recommendations have been implemented.

The school Safety Statement has been updated to include Covid-19 procedures.

All changes to the school's current risk assessments have been documented and incorporated into the school Safety Statement.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in the school. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, staff will call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location (V31R297) and type of medical incident.

4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit the school to support us as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the school. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts.

All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

4) Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

One of the key messages to manage the risks of Covid-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-student and must be managed in all settings.

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents and visitors as far as possible within the school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements. *Staff should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.*

We aim to minimise the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into our school:

Promote awareness of Covid-19 symptoms;

- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and pupils not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact for person with Covid-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of Covid-19 in school;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

5.1) **Know the Symptoms of COVID-19**

In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- ✓ High temperature
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

5.2) **Respiratory Hygiene**

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin. By following good

respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

5.3) **Hand Hygiene**

Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Our school promotes good hygiene and has displayed posters throughout the school on how to wash your hands. We follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins is managed by staff so as to avoid congregation of people waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.

There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Hand sanitiser dispensers are fixed at exit and entry points of the school. All classrooms have hand sanitiser dispensers placed in clearly visible locations.

Warm water is available in all bathrooms to facilitate correct hand washing procedures.

Wash hand basins, warm running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets and in the staffroom.

Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and paper towels should be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

Hot air dryers have been replaced by paper towels.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing have been placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities.

Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outdoors

- When their hands are physically dirty
- When they cough or sneeze

5.4) **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing will be applied in our school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. Care will be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and if possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level as far as possible. Staff are required to wear a medical grade mask (EN16483) at all times when in the school building.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, we have:

1. Reconfigured class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilised and reconfigured all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing
3. Removed all unnecessary furniture and clutter
4. Kept teacher's desks at least 1m away from pupil desks

Decreasing interaction

In primary schools a distance of 1m is recommended between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore, achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary schools is not a pre-requisite but nonetheless we make every effort to maintain distance as far as is practical and possible.

Where possible work stations are allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.

As the risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into Class Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, we have structured movement within the school to minimise contact between classes to the extent that this is practical.

Where a class is divided into Pods, there should be at least 1m distance between individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.

Generally speaking the objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles) as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.

The aim of the system within the school is that class grouping mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. The Pods within those Class Bubbles is an additional measure, to limit the extent of close contact within the Class Bubble.

Pod sizes will be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context.

To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff will consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times. Breaks will be staggered.

Sharing educational material between Pods should be avoided/minimised where possible.

Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble will be limited as much as possible.

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) is discouraged. Alternative non-contact greetings are taught across all class levels.

Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it is organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and pupils avoid sharing of personal items.

Encourage pupils to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned before and after use and hand hygiene encouraged.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils have been arranged to encourage physical distancing.

Walking to school is encouraged.

Arrangements have been made to maintain a physical distance between parents/guardians / school staff.

Parents have been asked to avoid congregating at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected.

Staggered drop off/pick up times are not practical and feasible. We have 5 entrance doors to the school - they will all be used to reduce congestion.

When boys arrive at school they will go immediately to the area in the playground designated for their Class Bubble. On wet days they go directly to their classroom. Supervision is provided from 9am and parents are aware that arrival before this time is unsafe.

Staff

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work.

If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups (e.g. when tending to an injury), as much distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.

Physical distancing will be observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks, etc.

Staff meetings will be held remotely for the present. We will use Google Meet.

Implement no hand shaking policy.

Minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day.

Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimized where possible.

Staff Room

Staff room use is staggered to ensure physical distancing.

Corridors

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.

All pupils and staff walk on the left to avoid any unnecessary physical contact

Yard/Supervision

The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.

Play time/outdoor activities are timetabled to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical, boys will be encouraged to keep to consistent groups.

Break and lunch times are staggered to reduce numbers in each playground.

Boys will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

5.5) **Use of PPE**

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. This might include roles such as:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in very high-risk groups, or may be living with those who are in the very high risk category.

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected Covid-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Masks

Cloth face coverings are not suitable for children under the age of 13 and anyone who:

- Has trouble breathing
- Is unconscious or incapacitated
- Is unable to remove it without help
- Has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering

For staff, medical grade masks (EN16483) are to be worn at all times when in the school building.

The use of a visor as an alternative is not considered adequate.

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for intimate care settings. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves.

Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

5) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

Choir/Music Performance

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and therefore special consideration will be given to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained.

Sport Activities

Our school will refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. As advice may change we will review frequently to ensure that we are following all recommendations.

External Coaches/tutors

External coaches and tutors will not be employed for indoor activities.

Use of School by External Groups

The use of the school premises by external groups is prohibited at present.

Toys

All toys will be cleaned on a regular basis. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.

Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids will be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.

When purchasing toys we will choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary).

If cloth or soft toys are used they must be machine washable.

Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils and those with special educational needs may be inclined to put into their mouths must be capable of being washed and disinfected.

All play equipment will be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they will be discarded.

Clean toys and equipment will be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.

At this time soft modelling materials and play dough, where used, should be for individual use only.

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices
- Rinse the toy in clean water

- Thoroughly dry the toy
- Some hard-plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water that is electronic or wind up should be wiped with a damp cloth and dried
- In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths and toys/equipment that have been soiled with blood or body fluids or toys where a case of Covid-19 has been identified
- If disinfection is required: A chlorine releasing disinfectant should be used diluted to a concentration of 1,000ppm available chlorine. The item should be rinsed and dried thoroughly

Art

Where possible, pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics

Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards will be cleaned pre and post use.

Musical Equipment/Instruments

To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

Library Policy

Where practical, pupils should have their own books. Library books will be distributed to boys on Mondays, collected on Thursdays for re distribution the following Monday. Pupils will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment

We minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

6) Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of Covid-19.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and is covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools

to prevent Covid-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of Covid-19.

Each room in the school must be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area.

There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from classrooms, offices and other areas within the school facility.

Staff must place the cup, cutlery, plate, etc. that they use directly into the dishwasher. Staff emptying the dishwasher must wash their hands before removing items from the dishwasher.

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

The room will be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.

Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

Disinfection only works on things that are clean. When disinfection is required it is always as well as cleaning.

Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine-based product (household bleach).

Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.

If a pupil or staff diagnosed with Covid-19 spent time in a communal area like a staff room, assembly hall, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas will be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

7) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how the school will deal with a suspected case that may arise in our school setting.

Our designated isolation area (Seomra Sláinte) is situated directly beside the emergency exit in the Foyer.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- Isolate the person. A staff member accompanies the person displaying symptoms to the designated isolation area, keeping at least 2m away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person at all times.
- Remember that the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room.
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms (a supply of disposable masks are kept in the isolation area).
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of Covid-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

8) Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances is not practical or appropriate to implement. The focus is therefore on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/Covid-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

Hand hygiene

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school, appliances and aids used are cleaned after use

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water
- Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child, e.g. toileting aids
- If equipment is soiled with body fluids:
 - First clean thoroughly with detergent and water
 - Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant
 - Rinse with water and dry

9) Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. The co-operation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play. In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Co-ordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own

wellbeing.

- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

10) COVID-19 related Absence Management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

11) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An [Occupational Health Strategy](#) is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of *'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'*.

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home). A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed: _____
Chairperson