

## **Covid-19 School Response Plan - Newbridge Educate Together N.S.**

All schools need to have a Covid-19 Response Plan in place in order to reopen safely in the new school year.

This plan will be worked on by the Department with the education partners over the summer and will be available to schools in time to plan to reopen safely for the 2020/21 school year.

This document has been prepared on the basis of current public health advice and will continue to be updated as further public health advice is received

## **Introduction**

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Newbridge Educate Together N.S.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

This document aims to provide details of:

1. Covid-19 School Policy
2. Planning and Preparation for Return to School
3. Return to Work safely; Procedure to Return to Work (RTW) and Lead Worker Representatives
4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
5. Control Measures
6. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
7. Special Educational Needs
8. Staff Duties
9. Covid-19 related absence management
10. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, 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.

**Note:** The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from [www.Gov.ie](http://www.Gov.ie), [www.dbei.ie](http://www.dbei.ie), [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie), [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie), [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie); [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie);

## 1. NETNS COVID-19 Policy -

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

### **Covid-19 Policy Statement**

NETNS is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID- 19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- Continue to monitor our Covid-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- Provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- Display information on the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 and correct hand hygiene
- Agree with staff, Lead Worker Representatives who are easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- Inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- Adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills
- Keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- Ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- Implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- Provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- Implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice

All staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues, and suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representatives

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School**

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

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

### **School Building**

Before re-opening schools in the new school year schools are reminded 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.

### **Signage**

NETNS will display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

Schools do not need to do this now as the posters may be updated during and further information will issue on signage closer to the planned reopening.

### **Covid-19 Agreement**

Parents, staff and pupils are required to sign the Covid-19 Agreement to encourage and support the implementation of the schools new policies and procedures - **Appendix 5**

### **Induction Training**

All staff will 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. Training to be found [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

### 3. Return to Work safely and Lead Worker Representative

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 the School Leadership.

#### **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 electronically or from the office. This must be returned to the Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 2**.

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide: details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

**Note: Induction Training for staff will be developed by the DES and made available for all staff**

#### **People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable)**

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk.

The HSE has set out these groups, which include people, who:

- Are over 70 years of age - even if you're 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
- Severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- Have a condition that means you 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 you 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 and see circular 0049/2020*

### **Lead Worker Representative**

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management/ Education and Training Board 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(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.

The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows:

- 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 the school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19 public health advice
- 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 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 school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing Covid-19 while in the school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area.
- Following any incident, assess with 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.

Lead Worker Representatives:

Kim Moran - 0873623462

Jennifer Mullally - 0860776161

Elaine Marquardt - 0872876830

All staff, parent(s)/guardian(s), contractors and visitors have a responsibility as both 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. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**

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

It is important that schools review their emergency procedures involving fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures should be documented.

Schools should also review their existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments should also be documented.

See Risk Assessment and Child Safe Guarding Statement - **Appendix 3**.

#### **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 schools and centres for education to support them 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 workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found here:

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/news-media/data-protection-implications-return-work-safely-protocol>

All school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school in their role as data controller.

## **5. 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.

***ALL 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.***

#### ***How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Schools:***

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms (*details at Section 5.1*);

- ❖ Advise staff and pupils to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test
- ❖ Advise staff and pupils not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - ❖ □ if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - ❖ □ if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - ❖ □ If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel. □ Advise staff and pupils to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;
- ❖ 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 (*details at Section 8*);

- ❖ 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 and should be received at a specific contact point;
- ❖ 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***

### **Hand 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.

- 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
- Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame

### **Respiratory Hygiene**

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

Schools should promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

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 needs to be managed 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 can be deployed more readily at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water should be used.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities should be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

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

Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing should be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and can be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve.

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

Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs can be used too.

When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.

### **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.

The Department has arranged for a drawdown framework to be established to enable schools purchase hand-sanitisers and any other necessary PPE supplies for use in the school. The procurement process for this framework is at an advanced stage and it is intended that these materials will be available for drawdown in early August. Further guidelines will be issued shortly. The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with hand sanitising and PPE requirements in schools.

## **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in primary and special school settings 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 should 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 where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.**

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

### *Increasing separation*

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout is used by NETNS to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, NETNS should:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

To support primary schools and special schools in the implementation of physical distancing in the classroom, the Department has developed a suite of illustrative classroom layouts of potential options (including arrangements for special classes) which are in accordance with the public health advice, and assumes

- Room is clear of any unnecessary furniture/shelves etc. on the walls
- A variety of classroom sizes.

**The teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.**

### *Decreasing interaction*

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a primary or special school will depend on the school setting and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils.

In primary and special schools a distance of 1m should be maintained 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 or special schools, is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary or special school for all pupils.

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

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, chosen by the teacher, to the extent that this is practical.

If the 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 should 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 should consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.  
Different Class Bubbles will have separate breaks and separate areas at break  
Sharing educational material between Pods should be avoided/minimised where possible.

Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble should 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) should be discouraged.

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

Staff and pupils should 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 regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

***Ventilation - new section***

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice '*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*' The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

## **Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school**

### ***School drop off/collection***

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils should include a physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible.

All adults should maintain a distance of 2m between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff.

Parents will be asked to stay in/by their car. The aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected.

See also **Arrivals Appendix 4**

### ***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, as much as distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.

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

Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

A no hand shaking policy is implemented.

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

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

Each corridor has their own photocopier, therefore staff should only use the photocopier on their own corridor (children are NOT permitted to go to the photocopiers at any time).

### *Corridors and Stairwells*

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.

### *Yard/Supervision*

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

play time/outdoor activities will be adjusted to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary play together outdoors, but in so far as is possible, each class will have their own yard area in which to play. Yard times and outdoor access will be staggered by corridors.

Children should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

Equipment sharing and clean will be minimised. Any shared equipment will be cleaned by the previous teacher between uses by different people.

### **PPE use in schools**

PPE will not be required to be worn within schools 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.

### **Medical Grade Masks**



Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN16483 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

The use of a visor as an alternative may be considered where there is a concern regarding prolonged close contact and exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets. Advice on how to properly use face coverings can be found here:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/HSE%20Face%20Covering%20Guidelines%20Poster.pdf>

### **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

### ***Impact of Covid-19 on certain school activities***

#### *Shared Equipment*

#### Toys

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

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

When purchasing toys choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary). If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable.

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

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

Clean toys and equipment should 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. 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 will be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

**Library Policy** - Where practical pupils will have their own books that will remain in school.

**Textbooks** - some text books will remain in school and some will remain at home. Home school books must NOT be brought into school and similarly school text books will NOT go home. Homework when it starts will revert back to Google Classroom - further information will follow

## **6. 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 NETNS will deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building - "Meeting Room" The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19 has been considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases has been put in place.

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 should be contacted immediately;
- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, 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;
- The isolation area is a room and is 2m away from others in the room;
- 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;
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;

- A mask will be provided for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- 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; I
- 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.

## **7. Special Educational Needs**

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be 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 it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is made, detailing when, how and by whom is the

equipment cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

The following points can guide the development of such cleaning schedule:

- 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.

## **8. 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 cooperation 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 sign the Covid-19 Agreement
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, 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.
- Coordinate 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.
- School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contact tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting
- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - □ if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - □ If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- · Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school
- · Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

## **9. 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.

## 10. 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.

### Resources:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/>

**Appendix 1 - Covid Policy Statement**

**Appendix 2 - Pre-Return to work Form**

**Appendix 3 - Risk Assessment (final meeting on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> of August 2020)**

**Appendix 4 - Arrivals**

**Appendix 5 - Covid-19 Agreement**

**Appendix 6 - Checklist for School Management**

**Appendix 7 - Checklist for dealing with a suspected case**

**Appendix 8 - Checklist for Lead Worker Representatives**

**Appendix 9 - Checklist for Cleaning**

