

## **Covid-19 School Response Plan Primary and Special Schools DRAFT**

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

This is a **draft Covid-19 School Response Plan** that has been prepared to demonstrate to schools the nature of a Covid-19 Response Plan. This DRAFT plan was worked on by the Department with the education partners over the summer of 2020 and will enable our school to reopen safely for the 2021/22 school year.

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

## 1. 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 Scoil Mhuire N.S. **Return to School Draft Plan**

**This plan has been developed by key personnel in Scoil Mhuire NS in accordance with advice from the relevant authorities (DES, HSE, NPHE). The Plan was ratified by the school's Board of Management on August 18<sup>th</sup> 2020. It is a *live document* that will be reviewed regularly & amended as required, to ensure compliance with best practice & the most up-to-date advice. The most recent 'live' version of the plan will be available to view on the school website ([www.scoilmhuirenavan.com](http://www.scoilmhuirenavan.com)) under the Covid 19 tab.**

### Underlying Principles

- The school has a responsibility to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
- It is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

In order to maintain a safe, secure workplace & learning environment, the only adults permitted to enter the school buildings are members of staff or persons engaged in essential work on behalf of the Board of Management. **Parents/Guardians must remain outside the gates between the two buildings while dropping off or collecting children.**

### Assumptions

- All children return to school on September 1st and classes operate within a bubble system.
- Within each class from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, the children will be further divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all classrooms & support rooms.

Pupils can enter the school building from 9 am to 9.15 am. They will go straight to their classrooms where the teacher will already be. Pupils must use the Hand Sanitiser on their way in to the classroom.

### Timetables

1. **Starting time for all children will remain 9:15am. Formal instruction begins at 9:15. In order to maintain social distancing, we request that parents & pupils stagger their arrival time between 9 am & 9:15am daily.**

Afternoon dismissal times : 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Class @ 2.40pm via gate between schools & door beside Boys' toilets and 3<sup>rd</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Class at 2.45 pm with teacher. In the Junior School 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class go out the front door at 2.40pm to assigned gate with teacher.

**Entry and Exit Points for Specific Classes.**

These apply from morning reception time to evening dismissal time, including all break times.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Teacher(s)</b>	<b>Rm.</b>	<b>Gate</b>	<b>School Entry &amp; Exit Point</b>
<b>Jun. Inf</b>	<b>Ms. Flynn</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Big gate.</b>	<b>Door at Room 8 entry.</b>
<b>Sen. Inf</b>	<b>Ms. Price</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Room 8 entry.</b>
<b>Rang 1</b>	<b>Ms. O'Connor</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Disabled Bathroom.</b>
<b>Rang 2</b>	<b>Ms. Gallagher</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Disabled Bathroom.</b>
<b>Rang 3</b>	<b>Ms. Barry</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Disabled Bathroom.</b>
<b>Rang 4</b>	<b>Ms Fox</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Boys' Toilets in Sen Yard.</b>
<b>Rang 5</b>	<b>Ms. McAteer</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Big gate</b>	<b>Door at Girls' Toilets in Sen Yard.</b>
<b>Rang 6</b>	<b>Ms. Boyle</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>No Gate.</b>	<b>Entrance to School at Principal's Office.</b>
<b>Room 7 &amp; 8.</b>	<b>Ms. Murray and Ms. Jackson</b>	<b>7 &amp; 8</b>	<b>Front Door in J/Sch.</b>	<b>Junior Sch Front Door.</b>

<b>Group 1 (Jun Inf – Rang 2)</b>	<b>Group 2 (2nd Class – 6<sup>th</sup> Class)</b>
<b>9:00 – 9:15: Pupils arrive &amp; proceed directly to their lines in the yard via designated gate, route &amp; entrance</b>	<b>9:00 – 9:15: Pupils arrive &amp; proceed directly to their lines in the yard via designated gate, route &amp; entrance</b>
<b>9.15 – Formal instruction begins</b>	<b>9.15 – Formal instruction begins</b>
<b>11.00 – Break time</b>	<b>11.00 – Break time</b>
<b>11.15 – Class resumes</b>	<b>11.15 – Class resumes</b>
<b>12.50 – Lunch time</b>	<b>12.50 – Lunch time</b>
<b>1.15 – Class resumes</b>	<b>1.15 – Class resumes</b>
<b>1.45 – Infant classes finish</b>	<b>2.40 – Classes finish for 4<sup>th</sup> &amp; 5<sup>th</sup></b>

<p><b>2.40- Classes finish for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Classes</b></p>	<p><b>Classes.</b></p> <p><b>2.45 : Classes finish for 3<sup>rd</sup> &amp; 6<sup>th</sup> Classes.</b></p>
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**Notes: Children must remain outside gates until 9.00am. *Children only* enter the school buildings in the mornings. At dismissal time the afternoon, parents/guardians may collect children outside the school buildings. If they cannot stay in their cars, they are asked to stand a social distance apart outside the exit points. *\*(Separate, special arrangements will be put in place for our Junior Infants and their parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. The Junior Infants will finish at 12.30pm for the first three weeks).***

### **Arrival at school**

*Pupils should arrive between 9.00 & 9:15 each morning.*

*To help with reducing the amount of traffic around the school gates, children are asked to walk/cycle/scoot to school, if it is at all possible.*

- We ask for co-operation with these times as it will mean that the numbers congregating on school grounds at any one time will be minimised.
- Other staff members (including Special Education Teachers, SNAs and the Principal) will be available outside and inside the building to receive the children and to direct them to their classrooms.
- If a child appears unwell on entering the classroom, the principal will contact the parent and ask the parent to take the child home immediately. This must be done in the interests of safety & protection of other pupils & staff.
- No adults, other than staff members, should enter the school buildings in the mornings.
- Messages for teachers can be sent to the school email, class email or by phoning the school office (046)9021483..

### **End of School Day**

- Adults who are collecting their children from school at the end of the day, should wait outside the school gates while maintaining social distancing at all times.
- **This system will apply rain, hail or shine, so please make sure that your child comes to school prepared for the weather!**
- When the school day for a particular class is over, the following arrangements will apply:
  - Junior and Senior Infants: the class teacher will bring the children to the collection point (school gates) and will release the children into the care of the adult who is there to collect them. *All Junior Infants will be brought to the collection point at 12.30 each day for the first three weeks.* Adults to congregate maintaining social distancing.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Class: the class teacher will bring the children to the school exits and they will proceed on their own from there. Adults who are not waiting in cars must congregate at the exit point, maintaining social distancing.

### **Collection of Children during the School Day**

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply

- When the adult arrives at the school, they should either phone the office or use the intercom at the front door of the school to alert the office that they have arrived
- The child will be brought from their class to the adult, at the front door, by a member of staff
- The adult who is collecting will be asked to sign the child out
- No adult should enter the school building, unless invited to do so

### Other Responsibilities for Parents:

- Parents must ensure that every child has his/her own hand sanitiser, wipes and packet of tissues. These are considered essential items which should be labelled & kept in the child's school bag. These items must be replaced when empty.
- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies etc. are clearly labelled with the child's name as equipment cannot be shared.
- Parents must ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers prior to returning to school.
- Parents must ensure that all **books/writing equipment/lunch boxes/water bottles** are sanitised using alcohol wipes on completion of homework before being placed in the child's school bag.
- **Water bottles are to be filled before coming to school every morning.**
- Where practicable, pencils to be pared at home and copies ruled.
- Children are to go to the bathroom before they leave home for school daily.
- Children are to wash their hands before leaving for school.

### Lunches

Parents/guardians are asked to make sure that children who bring their own lunches and who are not part of the School Meals Programme bring their own lunches to school to avoid adults having to come to the school during the day. Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children. Children will eat their lunches at their desks, as per our usual practice.

Please see the school's Healthy Eating Policy for more information/suggestions about school lunches. This policy is posted on the school website [www.scoilmhuirenavan.com](http://www.scoilmhuirenavan.com).

### School Uniform:

- Children's uniforms (including tracksuits) must be clean and washed regularly, as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.
- As per policy, the full school uniform should be worn every day, except for PE day, when the school track suit should be worn. The class teacher will inform pupils & parents about *other* days when the track suit should be worn.
- ***It is more important than ever that all clothing be clearly labelled, as a "Lost and Found" box cannot be facilitated. Unidentified/unclaimed lost property will be disposed of promptly.***
- As a school, we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **only for school related activities.** Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school. They should not be worn during after-school activities.
- ***It may be advisable that pupils have a 'spare' uniform. As our uniform is not crested, generic uniforms are available widely at a very reasonable cost.***

### **Children who should not attend school**

In accordance with DES & HSE guidelines, children in the following categories, should not attend school –

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell or presenting with a high temperature

**Children in High Risk Groups:** Parents should seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in a high-risk group. They must make an informed decision if it is safe for their child to return to school. They should inform the principal of the advice given. If there are any parents out there who have concerns about their child's health, please contact the Principal by email or telephone.

### **Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school**

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher [SET], where relevant) will provide suggested activities to support the child's learning at home to the parents/guardians.

### **Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class**

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19

- The parents of all children in the class will be notified
- All families in the school will be notified that there has been a suspected or confirmed case in the school
- Public health advice will be sought and followed

**Use of Face masks:** It is currently not recommended in Ireland for children under 13 to wear face masks as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of the coronavirus. If this advice changes, we will inform parents/guardians accordingly.

If a parent wishes their child to wear a mask or visor, this will be permitted.

### **Personal Equipment**

- It is requested that all children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment.
- It is further requested that *all items* are clearly labelled with the child's name for ease of identification.
- For children in Junior and Senior Infants, the school will provide a pouch or container which will hold each child's pencils, crayons, etc., and which will be labelled with their name. These will not be shared.

### **Shared Equipment**

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

## **Children's learning spaces**

The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

### **Junior Infants to Second Class**

It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors so there is currently no requirement for children from Junior Infants to Second Class to maintain a physical distance within their Class Bubble.

### **Third Class to Sixth Class**

Children from Third Class to Sixth Class will be arranged in Pods within their Class Bubbles, with a maximum of 6 pupils per Pod. As far as possible, each Pod will be at least 1 metre distance from the next Pod.

- Only resources which can be easily cleaned will be used. Toys and materials which are difficult to clean (e.g. dress up clothes or soft toys) will not be used during this temporary Covid-19 emergency.
- Pupils will hand sanitise before and after using any materials.
- Pupils will not be allowed to share materials/resources.
- Additional time will be spent by the hygiene staff in cleaning the school.

### **Doors and Windows**

Where practical, all internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common & frequently touched surfaces.

To ensure that classrooms are well ventilated, windows will be kept open as often as possible, and will be opened while children are taking breaks in the playground.

Windows should be opened when children are singing as a group, or when they are playing musical instruments. **Tin whistles will not be used for the time being.**

### **Office**

We have an online payment system, that minimises the amount of cash that needs to be handled. Parents/Guardians are asked to co-operate in helping to keep school staff safe by arranging for online payments through the school office.

Children will not be sent to the Secretary's Office or to other rooms to deliver messages.

As far as possible, staff members will not enter the Office and will speak with the Secretary at the Foyer/ Reception area.

### **Photocopying**

Any staff member who uses the photocopier should clean it down after use with the wipes provided. Staff are requested to use the same photocopier as often as possible.

## **Yard**

Each class bubble will have access to the yard during their allotted break times.

The yard will be divided into separate sections for each class bubble.

Yards will be supervised by class teachers, SETs and SNAs working within those bubbles.

## **Special Education Support**

In keeping with our Special Education policy, support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble.

- In-class Support: Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- Withdrawal Support: Where children receive support in one of the SET rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending

## **PPE**

Staff *may* wear face coverings & other PPE, in accordance with current HSE/NPHET/DES advice. Staff who are attending to particular care needs, dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases or who are administering first aid *will* wear appropriate PPE including gloves, face masks and face shields.

## **Teacher Absence and Substitution**

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, SET staff *may* be re-deployed to teach the class. *It is not appropriate for any class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes.* Therefore, if all other options have been exhausted, it *may* not be possible for the class to attend school on that day. In such a scenario, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

## **Substitute Teachers and SNAs**

A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/SNA. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace Form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction Training.

## **PE**

Weather permitting, PE will take place outdoors. To the greatest extent possible, PE will take place without the use of shared equipment, for the time being.

## **Extra-curricular Activities**

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored. However, it would not be recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time. Further updates will be provided in September.

## **Parent/ Teacher Meetings**

Parent/Teacher Meetings may take place via phone/ Zoom or be postponed. We will assess the situation closer to the time.

## **Staffroom**



All staff members should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not engaged in teaching e.g. when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. Face coverings should be worn.

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

Staff members can bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school if they wish avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible. The dishwasher will be operated twice daily and this should provide adequate sanitising.

### **Hygiene and Cleaning**

Multiple hand sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at each entrance, in each classroom, support room etc.

All pupil bathrooms are equipped with soap dispensers, hand driers & handwashing instructions.

Hand hygiene, coughing & sneezing etiquette will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.

In accordance with the DES guidelines, as well as the usual cleaning, particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, light switches, handrails, 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. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the classroom. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

### **Distance Learning**

We are aware that we *may* need to revert to Distance Learning in the event of a further shutdown.

All pupils (in all classes) are registered on the SeeSaw Distance Learning App. Pupils will receive tuition on the use of SeeSaw & will be expected to submit work regularly via this platform. Teachers may also set homework to be submitted via the relevant class email address.

### **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

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’.

A free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staff members are encouraged to make use of the service if & when the need arises.

### **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following are the procedures that will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.
- The Senior School Hall and the Glass Room in the Junior School’ will be the designated isolation areas. Seating will be two metres apart. Supervision will be provided by a member of the school staff, at a safe distance.
- A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms, if one is available. S/he should wear the mask if in a common area with other people, in the isolation area & while exiting the premises
- An assessment will be made as to whether the child who is displaying symptoms can immediately be brought home by parents, who will call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home
- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bin provided
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP 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, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made 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 shall be followed.

**This Plan is a *live document* that will be reviewed regularly & amended as required to ensure compliance with best practice & the most up-to-date advice from the relevant authorities. The most recent ‘live’ version of the plan will be available to view on the school website [www.scoilmhuirenavan.ie](http://www.scoilmhuirenavan.ie)) under the Covid 19 tab.**

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 Preparing for Return to School**

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);

## 2. Scoil Mhuire 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**

Scoil Mhuire 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 Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan in relation to summer provision
- 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 school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s) Mrs Treasa McAteer & Mr. Gerard Dillon.

This policy was last reviewed in August 2021.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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

### 3. 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.

#### *a. School Buildings*

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

#### *b. Signage*

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The following is a link to the dedicated area of the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website where there are a number of posters, including those appropriate for primary school pupils, located. Irish versions are also available here

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/> Schools can download the posters and display in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets. Schools do not need to do this now as the posters may be updated during the summer and further information will issue on signage closer to planned reopening.

### 4. 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 Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 1**.

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 Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff/**

### 5. 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.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

**Note: The process for appointment of the Lead Worker representative in schools will be agreed centrally between the Department of Education and Skills and the education partners. That process, once agreed, will be circulated to all schools in advance of the re-opening of schools.**

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

- Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- 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 with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

Name(s) of Lead Worker representative:	Contact details
Mrs Treasa McAteer, Mr.Gerard Dillon TBC.	

All staff, parents/guardians, 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.

## 6. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at **Appendix 2**.

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 Summer Provision 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.

## 7. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

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

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This can be achieved through the following measures:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- Advise staff and parents of pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases not to attend school, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- Advise staff and parents of pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID-19 not to attend schools and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Everyone entering the school building should be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point.

Staff, pupils and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. Scoil Mhuire will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

## 8. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

### a. *Wash your Hands F-requently*

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:  
<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

### b. *Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers*

Hand hygiene can also be achieved by the use of a hand sanitisers (when hands are clean).

Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities.

They will be available at entry and exit points and in each classroom.

### c. *Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth*

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

### d. *Physical Distancing*

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace.

**Note: Guidance on the physical distancing requirements will be informed by public health advice for schools and will be updated over the summer period.**

### e. *Practice 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.

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

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

**f. Do**

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

**g. Do Not**

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

**h. 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:

The list of people in very high risk groups 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. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the leave arrangements that will apply will be updated by the Department of Education and Skills.

If the Board/Principal is unsure whether or not staff fall into the very high-risk category, advice will be sought from the Occupational Health Service.

## 9. Control Measures

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/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school .

These control measures are outlined in this document.

The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.



*Staff, in particular, 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.*

The following control measures have been put in place:

**a. Return to Work Form**

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

**b. 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 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.

**Note: Induction Training for reopening schools in the new school year will be developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff/**

**c. Induction Training for Return to School**

The Department has prepared short induction training for schools operating the summer provision this year. It is intended that this training will be updated and become more comprehensive to cover all aspects of the return to school safely protocols. The Induction training for the Summer Provision may be of interest in the context of the kind of training which staff will need to undertake is available at the following link.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/summerprovision/summer-education-programme-2020.html#SchoolBased>

**d. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school facility and should be available in each classroom.

**e. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school facility 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.

Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

The use of a face covering will conceal facial expression and can make communication difficult and as such may not be practical in a school setting. However, the wearing of a visor as an alternative to a facial covering may be considered where there is a concern that physical distancing cannot be maintained, there will be prolonged close contact and/or that exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets is likely.

**f. *Wearing of Gloves:***

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It 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.

**g. *Cleaning***

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, lifts, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.

Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

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

Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or pupils due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas. This shall be reviewed in line with government guidance.

Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

**h. *Access to the school building /contact log***

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

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 students contacts. In addition see visitor contact log at **Appendix 3**.

**i. *First Aid/emergency procedure***

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in **Scoil Mhuire**.

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999

Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident.

## 10. 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 **Scoil Mhuire** will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area should be identified within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 should be considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in **Scoil Mhuire** 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 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times
- Provide a mask 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 and 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
- 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 confidentiality is essential at all times.

## 11. 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. 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. 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
- 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 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

- 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
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

## 12. Covid related absence management

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

## 13. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.