

Covid-19 School Response Plan

St.Patrick's NS Diswellstown



This document has been prepared on the basis of current Public Health Advice and guidance from the Department of Education. It is a working document and will continue to be updated in line with Public Health Advice.

Updated February 2021

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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 St. Patrick's N.S.

The Minister for Education has published "*The Roadmap for the Full Return to School*" on the 27th July. It sets out what the operation of schools will look like and the range of supports which will be available in a COVID-19 context. It has been developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the "Return to Work Safely Protocols" developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. 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, including a COVID-19 policy, lead worker representative and process to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19. 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).

This COVID-19 response plan is a live working document and has been reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie; as appropriate for primary and special schools

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 developmental needs of the children in the school. The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

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**
- 3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
- 4. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
- 5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
- 6. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
- 7. Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19**
- 8. Control Measures**
- 9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
- 10. Special Education Needs**
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- 12. Covid related absence management**
- 13. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

1. St.Patrick's NS 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 on the school website www.stpatricksns.ie.

COVID-19 Policy Statement

St. Patrick's N.S. 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 staff and BoM.
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school

We have:

- displayed information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agreed with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- informed all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapted the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- ensured staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- provided instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implemented cleaning in line with Department of Education 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 Representatives, Claire O' Reilly and Alan Thynne, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

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 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. The following will be put in place prior to the return to school:

- a. School Buildings** Before re-opening , in March 2021 the school will check the following:
 - that the water system has been flushed at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
 - that school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
 - that bin collections, cleaning service and other essential services have resumed
- b. Signage:** The school will check signage displayed outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- c. Public Health Advice:** The school will keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates; Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required.
- d. Training for staff:** All staff will be reminded of the training materials provided by the Department of Education
- e. Return to Work Form:** All staff will be given access to the Return to Work (RTW) form
- f. Lead Worker Representative and Associate Lead Worker Representative:** *Claire O' Reilly and Alan Thynne* have been appointed to these roles.
- g. School/classroom layout:** Changes to the school or classroom layout necessary to support physical distancing have been made. Unnecessary clutter has been removed and stored to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
- h. Health and Safety Risk Assessment:** A Covid 19 Risk Assessment has been prepared
- i. Visitors to school:** Arrangements have been put in place to limit access to the school to necessary visitors (since reopening at the start of the new school year). A record of visitors to the school will continue to be maintained.

3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (School) [RTW(s)]** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace. Staff will be requested to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged (verbally or in writing) following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

At the start of the new school year, on receipt of the completed form the Principal provided: 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 developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders was made available prior to commencement of the 2020/21 school year.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd7fb-induction-training-for-reopening-schools/>

4. 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/Associate Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

The role of the worker representatives 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 school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as regular hand washing and maintenance of good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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 of Lead Worker representative:	Name of Associate Lead Worker Representative:
Claire O'Reilly	Alan Thynne

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.

5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. This Policy Statement and Risk Assessment identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in the school setting. Review of emergency procedures involving fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the COVID-19 is underway.

The school has completed a Risk Assessment to consider any new risks that arise due to COVID-19.

6. 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 (adapted area at the main door of the school)

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/>

Advice for parents is available at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. St. Patrick's N.S. will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

7. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

a. *Wash your Hands Frequently*

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 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*

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 (see Control Measures for further details)

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:

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

- have a serious heart condition and are also 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.

8. 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 have been separated into staff measures, parent measures and pupil measures. They were circulated before the school reopened on August 27th.

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. To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

· 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;

b. 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. This form has been updated as per **Departmental advice 2/21**.

c. Induction Training for Return to School

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.

Note: Induction Training for reopening schools in the new school year is available at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd7fb-induction-training-for-reopening-schools/>

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 are available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters are 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.

It is advised that:

- 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.
- New mixer taps and paper towel dispensers and pedal bins have been installed in every classroom and staff toilet.
- There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.
- Hand sanitiser dispensers are available at exit and entry points of schools and each classroom has a supply of hand sanitiser.
- **Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame**

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.

- on entry/exit of the building for any purpose

e. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

According to current occupational and public health guidance, children under 13 are not required to wear PPE. Staff have been advised to do so, where a distance of 2m cannot be maintained. 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
- Administering first aid
- 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 wearing of a visor **as an addition** to a facial covering may be considered by staff.

PPE for staff use is purchased by the school, using PPE grant and a weekly ordering/distribution system is in place.

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.

f. Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school have been 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 have access to cleaning products and are 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 is a regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

Shower facilities are 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 provide and clean their own crockery and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

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

The room should be cleaned as soon as practically possible.

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

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

People assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their faces while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and plastic aprons.

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

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

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

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

h. Access to the school building /contact log

Access to the school facility is in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians is 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 is maintained. The school maintains a log of staff and students' contacts on Aladdin.

i. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St. Patrick's N.S. Non-serious incidents will be dealt with by staff on duty on the yard or in the classroom.

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

Contact the Principal/Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal 1 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

j. 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. A teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupils.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

In order to increase separation teachers have:

Reconfigured class spaces to maximise physical distancing

Utilised and reconfigured all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

Decreasing interaction

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a primary or special 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 schools a distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils where possible. 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 prerequisite to reopening a primary 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, 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 a class mixes only with that 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 should where possible have separate breaks and meal times or separate areas at break times (or this could be different class years)

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

Staff members e.g. Special Education Teachers (SET), Special Needs Assistants (SNA) 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.

Pupils should be encouraged 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 and hand hygiene encouraged.

Ventilation

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 be arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.

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

Arrangements should be made to maintain a distance of 2m between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff.

Aim of any arrangements is to avoid the congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected.

Staggered drop offs/collections: 2x Staggered drop off/4x staggered pick up times (2x infant hour, 2x full day) are in place. These arrangements are available to view on the school website

<http://www.stpatricksns.ie/> (Covid 19: Parents Information Section). On arrival, children line up on coloured feet markers (1m apart) at their designated morning door

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 are held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

Implement no hand shaking policy.

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

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

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.

In order to further reduce risk we will:

- Adjust play time/outdoor activities to minimise crowding at the entrance and exit points of the building .
- Keep consistent groups when pupils play together outdoors. Classes play on yard with their class bubbles only. Yard areas are 'zoned' by coloured markers on the ground, at each break.
- Stagger break times and outdoor access.
- Encourage children to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.
- Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

School staff are encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines

how St. Patrick's N.S. will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area and back-up isolation area have been identified within the school building. If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St. Patrick's N.S. the following procedures will be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately;
- The person will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route. The person accompanying will keep at least 2m away from the symptomatic person and also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person at all times;
- The isolation area is not a room but is 2m away from others.
- As the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne, 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 will wear a face covering or mask. Gloves will not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- A mask will be provided for the person presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- The person presenting with symptoms will be facilitated to remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go home.
- A staff member who becomes ill will be facilitated to call his/her doctor.
- The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover his/ her mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when he/she coughs or sneezes and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, transport home by a family member will be arranged for him /her as soon as possible and he/ she will be advised to inform his/ her general practitioner by phone of his/ her symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If the person is too unwell to go home advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect;

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.

10. Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with 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 require 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 provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions and warm water.

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.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- 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.
- 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 as part of mass or serial testing as

advised by Public Health

- 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 in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education and Skills (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.

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*'.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to 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. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experienced mental health professionals. 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 is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are 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. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.