



St. Mary's P.S. & S.S.

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COVID-19 Response Plan

1. Introduction

A revision of the COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools is necessary to ensure that it is in compliance with the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the 'Work Safely Protocol' which has been 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).

The 'Work Safely Protocol' is a revised version of the 'Return to Work Safely Protocol' and contains many of the elements and features of the original guidance but is updated to reflect the latest advice issued by Government and National Health Emergency Team (NPHET) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. This document sets out the information that primary schools need to review their school COVID-19 Response Plan, including a COVID-19 policy, lead worker representative and process to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in primary and special schools. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of pupils and society as a whole.

This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in primary and special schools to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection into schools while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The

documentation and templates in this booklet are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities. That report is available [here](#).

Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face coverings in educational settings was received on the 6th August 2020. This advice is available [here](#).

One of the key challenges is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. This document identifies the steps schools can take to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school and the steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself.

The Department has worked intensively with the education partners to develop consistent plans, advice, protocols and guidance for schools, including the School COVID-19 Response plan. There is a suite of documentation available to support schools to continue to operate safely and fully including guidance on learning, school programmes and wellbeing for the 2020/21 school year. There is also information on funding, staffing and resources to schools to support COVID-19 measures. Schools are advised to familiarise themselves with these documents. All of the documents will be available at gov.ie/backtoschool

2. What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

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

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

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

In line with the Work Safely Protocol, the key to maintaining a safe school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM/ETB, staff, pupils and parents.

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

3. School COVID-19 Policy

St. Mary's CBS COVID-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus.

School profile

- 204 pupils
- 1 Administrative Principal
- 8 mainstream class teachers
- 2 special class teachers
- 6 Special Education Teachers (1 shared from another school 2 days per week)
- 8 Special Needs Assistants
- 1 Full-time Secretary
- 1 part-time Cleaner
- 1 part time Caretaker

Classrooms in the school (x10) are of varying sizes. Classrooms (x8) in the older part of the school share two communal toilet areas which comprise of 5 cubicles and adequate urinals. These toilet areas have hot water. These classrooms each have a sink with cold water. Two learning support rooms also share these toilets.

Classrooms (x8) in the newer part of the school have their own designated toilet area adjacent to the classroom. These have cold water in the toilet area but hot water in the classrooms. Four learning support rooms also share these toilets.

Members of staff or adult visitors use the staff toilets which are located on both floors at the town end of the school. Each of these have hot water facilities.

Additional challenges

A large number of pupils share the corridors so a one way system is being implemented

Traffic is a major issue outside of school

Assumptions

School will re-open on the following phased basis:

Monday 22nd February – Early Intervention Classes

Monday 1st March – 1st and 2nd classes

Monday 15th March – 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th Classes (Subject to review and confirmation from DES)

We endeavour to retain usual school hours with a plan in place for staggered start and end times – more details further in the policy

9.00am – 1.40pm – Early Intervention classes

8.50 am – 2.30pm First to Sixth – surnames beginning A-L

9.00am – 2.40 pm First to Sixth - surnames beginning M-Z

Drop off and collection times

Unfortunately it will not be possible for parents/guardians to come on to the school grounds. To minimize the risks, and to help us to maintain social distancing, the children may not come onto the school grounds before their designated time and the school doors open.

Morning

All class teachers will be in their classrooms by 8.50am. Parents are asked to “drop and go” outside the school. We would ask parents of older children to drop their child a little further away from the school entrance, where possible, thereby facilitating families of younger children. We would also encourage those who can to walk or cycle to school, thereby reducing traffic volume at the school entrance. **No parking will be allowed directly outside of the school and especially at the school gates. Parents are not permitted to remain standing outside the school. Parents are asked to maintain a social distance outside the gate as they drop and collect their children.** Parents are asked to remain in their car until the boys have been released from school.

Children will go directly to their classrooms on arrival. Staff members will be available outside and inside the building to receive the children and help them to their classrooms.

We will use staggered arrival times each morning.

Children whose surname begins with letters A-L will enter at 8.50am

Children whose surname begins with letters M-Z will enter at 9.00am

Please note - Children who use the bus may enter on arrival irrespective of their name

Afternoon

Children whose surname begins with letters A-L will leave at 2.30pm

Children whose surname begins with letters M-Z will leave at 2.40pm

Please note - Children who use the bus will leave when the bus arrives irrespective of their name

Summarised Timetable for Drop off and Pick up

8.50 am All staff to be on site to support arrival of pupils

8.50 - 9.00am – Arrival of pupils – Stop, Drop, Go system. No adults to enter the school yard. Children to go straight to their classrooms on arrival.

2.30pm – 2.40pm – Stop, pick up, go

Break times

The DES guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. In order to minimise contact between children from different classrooms the following will apply;

- The yard will be separated into different areas for use by each class bubble.
- Any equipment for use in the yard will be designated for use by the bubble alone and as far as practical there will be minimal sharing of equipment. If this occurs all shared equipment to be cleaned between uses by different people.

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

For break time:

- First Class to Third class will play from 10.50am – 11.00am
- Fourth Class to Sixth class will play from 11.05am – 11.15am

For lunch time:

- First Class to Third class will play from 12.45pm – 1.00pm and return to their class to eat from 1.05pm to 1.20pm
- Fourth Class to Sixth class will eat from 12.45pm – 1.00pm and play from 1.05pm to 1.20pm

N.B. Staff break times will reflect this also, in order to limit the number of teachers in the staff room at any one time

Changes to Classroom and School Layout and to School Routines

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. 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 interactions within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

The children and their teachers will work in Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until the children go home at the end of the day.

Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants

Staff members (particularly Special Educational Teachers) can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimized where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning 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 as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble.

- 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.

- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different pupils or small groups attending.
- Each learning support teacher will be assigned to a year group and will work solely with that group except in exceptional circumstances – one SET for 1st, one for 2nd, etc.
- As a rule each member of the SET will work only with one assigned class group except in exceptional circumstances
- As a rule each SNA will only work with a maximum of two assigned class groups and when rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

First to Second Class

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

Third to Sixth Class

Children from Third Class to Sixth Class will be arranged in the classroom in order to achieve appropriate social distancing in so far as possible. To facilitate this all unnecessary furniture will be removed from these classrooms to create as much space as possible. This

Additional Measures to Limit Interactions

Children will go straight to their classrooms from the yard and will not congregate in the corridors or hallways.

While we will all be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

Doors and windows

Where practical, all internal doors (Classrooms) will be left open to minimize hand contact with common 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.

Cloakrooms and toilets

All children will use their own designated toilet areas ONLY. A timetable for toilet use has been devised and pupils will not be permitted to use toilets outside of these times unless in

exceptional circumstances or prearranged with parents. Works will be carried out prior to opening to ensure that hand sanitisers are located at key points around the school building entry to all classrooms and toilets, entry to the school building. Hot water will be available in the toilet area of the old section of the school and in the classrooms in the new section of the school.

Lunches

Parents must make sure that children bring their lunches to school. This will avoid adults having to come to the school gate during the day. Please remind your child not to share their food or drinks with other children. Children will eat their lunches at their desks, as per our usual practice. While the class teacher will have antibacterial wipes available, pupils are encouraged to bring and keep their own – to avoid any spread.

In the event that your child has forgotten an item please ring the office and drop the item to the school office.

Books, copies, pencils etc

Children should use their own books, pen, pencils, etc and should not share with other pupils.

Uniforms/Tracksuits

There is no guidance or advice provided by NPHET presently to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this may not be practical for most families.

We will follow our usual practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn from every day except for PE days, when the PE tracksuit will be worn. PE day will vary from class to class.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **for school related activities only**. Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc. They should be washed as often as possible.

Office

A contactless payment system is now available to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled. The office is no longer open for visitors. If you wish to leave a message for a member of staff please do so by ringing the secretary on 052-6121594. It is not appropriate to

attempt to communicate with the secretary on her entry/exit from work. Visits to the school should be planned in advance by contacting the secretary. All visitors should enter via the main door and wait in the foyer. Under no circumstances should visitors enter the school without prior approval.

Photocopying

Any staff member who uses the photocopier should clean it down after use with the wipes provided.

ICTs

A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common ICTs. Devices should be cleaned after use and before they are returned to the charging trolley. The computer room will not be use for the moment

Visiting Teachers/Coaches

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities such as Dancing, Coaching for games, Safe Cycling course, etc. will be explored. However, it is not recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time, for example, during music lessons. Such activities will be discontinued until it is deemed safe to do so.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher and substitute 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.

Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Staff members and pupils may take additional breaks outside during the school day. PE lessons will not be permitted inside.

Parent/ Teacher Meetings

Parent/Teacher Meetings will take place via phone or other platforms as appropriate

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. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, face coverings should be worn.

Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing. As a rule staff meetings be discontinued and will only take place on a needs basis.

Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible. Staff are discouraged from using microwaves etc. At breaktime, staff should use the staffroom when their class is outside. At lunchtime, staff should use the staffroom while their class are eating.

Teaching and Learning

As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since Christmas. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families and teachers.

Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning for the remainder of the 2020/2021 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

We will ensure that all families have correct Seesaw log in details when they return again but hope that we will not need to use them for any further closures.

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot Attend School

If a child is in the very high risk category and is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, a designated teacher will provide work to support the child's learning at home and this will be shared with parents/guardians via Seesaw.

The majority of parents have already provided an email address at which the school can contact them to support Home Learning. We ask all parents to inform the school of any changes in email address as this will be used as a main form of communication. This will be especially important if the school, or parts of the school have to close due to HSE advice.

Signage

St. Mary's CBS will display signage provided by the Department, with age appropriate key health messages outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID- 19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

St. Mary's CBS will display the posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

Use of PPE in Schools

Staff members are not required to wear PPE. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. This might include roles such as:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in very high-risk groups or may be living with those who are in the very high-risk category.
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with additional needs.

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

Masks

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

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

Staff will be required to wear face coverings at all times when physical distancing is not possible. It is permitted for staff to remove face coverings when 2m physically distancing is possible.

The use of a visor as an alternative may be considered where there is a concern regarding prolonged close contact and exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets. However, masks are preferable.

Gloves

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

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

Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

The school will be cleaned ***at least once per day***. Additional cleaning if available will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

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

Staff will 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. Each classroom will be supplied with a ‘COVID’ bin where items used in the cleaning process will be disposed of.

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

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

The room will be cleaned as soon as practicably possible. Once the room is vacated the room will not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. A fogging machine will be available to sanitise classrooms and toilet areas during the day. The Covid Isolation Room will be cleaned thoroughly after use. The principal is responsible for assuring this is done.

Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

Choir/Music Performance

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration will be given at a later date to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained. In the short term such activities will cease during school time.

Sport Activities

Schools will refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. In the short term such activities will cease during school time.

Shared Equipment

Toys - All toys will be cleaned on a regular basis for example weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs. Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with bodily fluids will be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal. All play equipment will be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they will be discarded.

Clean toys and equipment will be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions will always be followed. At this time soft modelling materials and play dough where used will be for individual use only. Staff will have the option of using antibacterial spray and/or the fogging machine to assist with the cleaning of toys.

Art – Where possible pupils will be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies. Sharing art supplies will be discouraged.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards will be cleaned between use and consideration could be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – Musical instruments will not be shared between pupils and in exceptional circumstances, if sharing is required, the instruments will be cleaned between uses.

Library Policy – Where practical pupils will have their own books. Textbooks that are shared will be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household

cleaning agent between uses. Pupils will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Teachers should minimise equipment sharing and must clean shared equipment between use by different people using antibacterial spray, wipes and/or fogging machine.

2) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

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

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

Before reopening schools for the 2020/21 school year, St. Mary's CBS will have a process in place to include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates.
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required.
- Ensure that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education
- Provide staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form
- Identify a Lead Worker representative (Marie Stewart)
- Display posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19

- Make the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing
- Remove unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Update the health and safety risk assessment
- Make necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school
- Review the school buildings
- Undertake induction training with all staff

N.B. Please note any pupil breaking rules/procedures put in place in our COVID 19 Response plan, will be dealt with according to our Code of behaviour - e.g. verbal warning, sanction etc. An induction period of one week will be implemented however; anyone *deliberately* spitting/coughing in another person's face or other such actions will face more serious sanctions e.g. suspension.

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a Return to Work (RTW) form. - <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeU-pK2MMJ7xov3N5Vw9CxyQ4N9YnYqcPVF4OAipvbeYJhoeg/viewform>

Staff will be required to confirm (verbally or in writing) that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays

Lead Worker Representative

The Protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) for staff. Staff have been provided with further information in relation to this. The LWR is Marie Stewart.

Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. St. Mary's CBS have reviewed our emergency procedures and risk assessment to consider any new risks that arise to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in schools. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, schools will, in the first instance, contact the parents/guardians to explain what has happened. We will then call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident should this be necessary.

Access to School and Contact Log

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

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

The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all. Please see our parent staff communication policy for further details.

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 will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts where it is required.

Sec 5 - Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

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

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

reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

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

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms

- 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;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser
- Visitors to the school during the day will be by prior arrangement and will be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) will be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

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

- ✓ High temperature
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties

- ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

Respiratory Hygiene

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

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

5.3 Hand Hygiene

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

Schools will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

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

Water and soap are available in all of the classrooms and bathrooms. Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message

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

Frequency of hand hygiene

Pupils and staff will perform hand hygiene

- On arrival at school
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outdoors
- When their hands are physically dirty – after activities that are likely to soil hands e.g. playing outside or sporting activities, as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands
- When they cough or sneeze

5.4 Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in primary 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 will be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times. It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

However, where possible staff will maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They will also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

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

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, St. Mary's CBS will:

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

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

Decreasing interaction

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

In primary a distance of 1m will be maintained between desks. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary or special schools, is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary or special school for all pupils.

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

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

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas. Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) will be discouraged. Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resources) it will be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource. Staff and pupils will avoid sharing of personal items.

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

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device will be cleaned regularly 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.

The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils will be arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.

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

Arrangements will 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 congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected.

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.

A no hand shaking policy has been implemented.

Minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day. Staff can rotate between areas/classes, but this will be minimized where possible.

Corridors

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

Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

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

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building – a room adjacent to the school office.

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

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.

- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2m away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person at all times. Once the parent arrives to the gate the child will be escorted to the gate to be brought home.
- Remember that the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room;
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a pupil will wear a face covering or mask. Gloves will not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she will wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self- isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor.
- The individual will avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice will 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 will 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;
- 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 will be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

- The school will complete the return to school questionnaire following absence as a result of Covid 19 symptoms

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 will therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians will have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children will not attend school. Similarly staff will 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 will be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

Staff Duties

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

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must 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 will adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

COVID-19 related Absence Management

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

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

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

As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.



St. Mary's C.B.S.

Irishtown, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary

Tel: 0526121594 Email: stmaryscbsns@yahoo.ie Roll No: 16728Q

APPENDIX 1

COVID-19 Policy Statement

St. Mary's CBS 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:

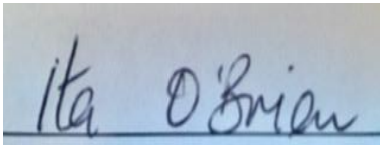
- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct handwashing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- 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 advice

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

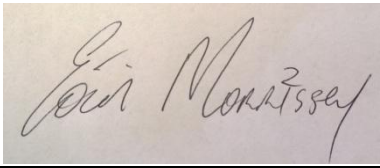
Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ita O'Brien".

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 19th February, 2021

Signed:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Morrissey".

Principal

Date: 19th February, 2021