



# Scoil Éanna COVID-19 Response Plan – V4

## 1. Introduction

This COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Scoil Éanna. The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for the school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of COVID -19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change. The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

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

1. Introduction
2. What is the School COVID -19 Response Plan?
3. COVID-19 School Policy Statement
4. Planning and Preparing for Return to School
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  - 4.2 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
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6. Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

7. Hygiene and Cleaning in School

8. Dealing with a Suspected Case

9. Special Education Needs

10. Staff Duties

11. Absence Management

12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

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

## **2. What is the School COVID-19 Response Plan?**

Our 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 our school environment. The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for our school to meet the Government's 'Work Safely Protocol', to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in our 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 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, staff, pupils and parents. The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the continued success of this plan. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document.

## **3. Scoil Éanna COVID-19 Policy Statement**

Scoil Éanna COVID-19 policy statement outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy is signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others. (see Appendix 1)



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

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government. Details for the reopening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

### **4.1 Induction Training**

All new 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.

### **4.2 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a Return to Work (RTW) form, which is available electronically or from the principal. A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work.

### **4.3 Lead Worker Representative (LWR)**

**Lead Worker Representative: Deirdre McDonald. DLWR : Éadaoin Woods**

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.

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

#### **4.3.1 Role of the Lead Worker Representative (LWR)**

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role. The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows



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

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.

#### **4.4 Display Signage**

The school will display signage outlining the need for social distancing, the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.



Signage is displayed in prominent areas such as at the front entrance, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

#### **4.5 Making Changes to School Layout**

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key infection prevention control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Classrooms have been reconfigured and all unnecessary furniture/shelves have been removed from classrooms to allow as much space as possible to accommodate physical distancing.

#### **4.6 Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. In Scoil Éanna we have reviewed emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures have been documented. A COVID-19 Risk Assessment has been compiled, this considers any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan.

#### **4.7 Access to School and Contact Log**

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

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

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. The school maintains a detailed contact tracing log of visitors to the school. The school has provided a detailed log of staff and pupils to HSE.

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

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2020-07/Data%20Protection%20implications%20of%20the%20Return%20to%20Work%20Safely%20Protocol.pdf>

All school records and data are maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. We are aware that the responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school in their role as data controller.



## 5. Control Measures – To prevent Introduction and Spread of Covid-19 in Schools

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

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

*Staff should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.*

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

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms;

- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and pupils 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, to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/ confirmed case of Covid-19.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff and pupils are advised to consult and follow latest Government advices in relation to foreign travel.
- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details at Section 8**);
- 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;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;





- Visitors to the school during the day are by prior arrangement and we be received at reception only;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.
- Staggered entry and exit system to reduce congestion

### 5.1 Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms of coronavirus (which include the DELTA variant).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal
- Fatigue
- Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

- sore throat
- headaches
- runny or stuffy noses
- feeling sick or vomiting
- diarrhoea

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of [cold](#) and [flu](#).

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), [self-isolate](#) (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need [a free COVID-19 test](#).

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE [Website](#). Symptoms may be subject to change so regular review of the HSE Website is advised. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a [COVID-19 walk-in test centre](#).



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.

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

### **COVID-19 Tracker App**

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that will:

- alert you if you have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
- give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms

You can download the free app from [Apple's AppStore](#) or the [GooglePlay store](#)

**Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis.** Public Health information on [close contacts, casual contacts and testing](#) is available from the HSE website.

### **5.2 Respiratory Hygiene**

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

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

### **5.3 Hand Hygiene**

Staff and pupils will be made aware of the importance of hand hygiene as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Scoil Éanna promotes good hand hygiene and we display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

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

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

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





Children have access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside, after using the toilet, after sneezing, before eating or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Hand sanitiser dispensers are deployed at exit and entry points of school/classrooms and care is taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Warm water is available for hand washing and a soap that emulsifies easily is used at wash hand basins.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets and staffroom/food preparation areas.

Hand washing facilities are maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels are checked and topped up regularly.

Laminated posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls near to washing facilities.

Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean). Hands are sanitised when entering school, after break, before/after using equipment, moving out of the classroom for activities etc.

Alcohol based hand rubs are in use.

When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care is taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic. Alcohol-based sanitiser is not stored or used near heat or naked flame

Young children have sanitiser gel administered by staff.

Hand sanitiser in use has 70% alcohol and is effective against Coronavirus.

#### Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.



## 5.4 Physical Distancing

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

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

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

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

### Increasing Separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout and referenced at Section 4.5 above has been used to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom we have:

1. Reconfigured class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilised and reconfigured all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

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

### Decreasing Interaction

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in our school depends greatly on our setting and we use a common-sense approach in recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils. Where possible a distance of 1m is maintained between desks or between individual pupils. We recognise 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 school for all pupils.

Where possible work stations are allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared. We are aware that 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, this is carried out to the extent that this is practical.

Class Pods, are at least (1m distance) apart within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.



Generally speaking, the objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles) as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible. The aim of the system within the school is that class grouping mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. The Pods within those Class Bubbles is an additional measure, to limit the extent of close contact within the Class Bubble. Pod sizes will be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context.

To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff will consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times. Different Class Bubbles will have staggered breaks and Class Bubbles will have separated play areas.

Sharing educational material between Pods will be avoided/minimised where possible and materials will be cleaned/quarantined between use.

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

***Additional measures to decrease interaction include:***

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

Children go directly to their classroom on arrival via a one-way system and through the classroom external door.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) is discouraged.

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

Staff and pupils will avoid sharing of personal items.

Pupils will 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 will be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

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

School drop off/collection is staggered to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.:

**Families whose surnames begin with A-M/Mc 9:00-9:10am      N-Z 9:10-9:20am.**

The 2:40 afternoon pick up in the carpark will also be staggered in the following way:

**Children who are walking leave class @ 2:33pm**

**Families who travel by car leave @ 2:35pm**

**Children travelling by bus go to buses @ 2:40pm**



Crèche children will be collected @ 2:40pm

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

Each class bubble will have a separate designated play area

Every effort 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.

Consideration has been given to avoid congregating on arrival at school. Children go directly to their classroom on arrival and the above staggered arrival times alleviate this congestion.

### 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.

Seating in the staffroom is placed at the recommended 2m distance and a maximum of 5 staff members are permitted in the staffroom. Face coverings are to be worn when not eating, staff are to use the same seat daily and all contact surfaces are to be wiped down after use.

Physical distancing is 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.

A no hand shaking protocol has been implemented.

All efforts are made to minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day.

Staff may rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimised where possible.

### Yard/Supervision

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

Staggered play time/outdoor activities are in place to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits. Each class uses their own external door to enter/exit the building.

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

Staggered break times and outdoor access are in place.

Children perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

Equipment sharing is kept to a minimum and shared equipment is cleaned between uses.



### 5.5 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](#).

### 5.6 Use of PPE in Schools

The Department has published "[Guidance to Primary and Special Schools on PPE consumables and equipment](#)" on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

This provides schools with the information needed on the appropriate quantities of PPE consumables and equipment to support the safe and sustainable operations of schools.

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. The Department has accepted this recommendation. Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. (Please see note re medical grade masks on page 15)

Workers should be trained in the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE. Posters are on display in the school building in line with the above training.

The HPSC has produced posters and videos on the correct donning and doffing of PPE available on the HPSC and HSA websites [https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19\\_coronavirus\\_information\\_and\\_resources/covid-19\\_business\\_supports/business\\_supports/hse-hpsc\\_posters\\_and\\_videos/](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/covid-19_business_supports/business_supports/hse-hpsc_posters_and_videos/)

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

- Performing intimate care
- 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 in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category



- Administering first aid

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

### **Reception Areas**

Both the reception area and the principal's office have 'half doors' to facilitate communication whilst still maintaining 2m social distance.

### **Face Coverings/Masks**

The wearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they are used in Scoil Éanna in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face coverings coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.

In certain situations, the use of clear visors may be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance

[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.](#)

All staff wearing face coverings are reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.





Information is provided below on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis additional disposable face coverings are available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

### **Medical Grade Masks**

Scoil Éanna provides medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and SEN teachers.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

### **Gloves**

It may be necessary for pupils/staff to use disposable gloves for cleaning, intimate care settings and when administering first aid. 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.

### **Aprons**

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to dealing with suspected cases in the isolation area or when cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 was present.

## **6. Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

### *Choir/Music Performance*

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

### *Sport Activities*

We refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sport-protocols/>



## *Shared Equipment*

### Toys

All toys are cleaned on a regular basis. This removes dust and dirt that can harbour germs.

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

Where possible we choose toys that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary).

Cloth or soft toys should be machine washable.

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

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

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

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

### Cleaning Procedure for Toys

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

**Art** – Where possible pupils are encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

**Electronics** – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards are cleaned between use.



**Musical Equipment/Instruments** – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

**Library Policy** – Where practical pupils should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

**Shared Sports Equipment** – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

## **7. Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools**

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

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and is covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate.

**Particular care should be taken of the hygiene arrangements for hand washing and toilet facilities.**

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

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.**

Collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility takes place daily.

Staff must provide, 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 is 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.
- Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.



- Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).
- Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.
- If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a staffroom, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas will be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

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

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how Scoil Éanna will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building – room at top of corridor. If more than one pupil displays signs during the school day, the outside classroom will be used as an isolation area. If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at work in Scoil Éanna the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately
- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times
- A specific isolation area has been assigned within the school and all staff have been made aware of its location.
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m, a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided



- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff confidentiality is essential at all times. 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 (see section 5.1).

## **9. 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 are assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

#### *Equipment*

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

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

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



- First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
- Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
- Rinse with water and dry.

## **10. 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.
- New staff 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.
- Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
- 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.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- 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

## **11. Absence Management**

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

## **12. 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 individual staff members 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).

The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

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. Spectrum. Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.

### Plan Evaluation

This COVID-19 Response Plan has been reviewed and amended as deemed necessary in line with the Department of Education COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary Schools V4 August 2021.

Plan ratified by the Board of Management on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

Signed

Chairperson BoM

Signed

Principal

Date 12/10/2021



## Addendum – January 2022

Face coverings for children in Primary schools 30.11.2021

NPHET has recommended the wearing of face masks/coverings by children aged nine years and above on public transport, in retail and other indoor public settings as already required for children aged 13 years and over.

They have recommended that this is introduced for children in 3<sup>rd</sup> class and above in primary schools. They have advised that this measure is being introduced on a temporary basis and is subject to review in mid-February 2022.

### Guidance on face masks/coverings in Primary schools

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

#### Wearing of face masks/coverings

Pupils from third class and up in primary schools are required to wear a face mask/covering.

The exemptions to this are set out below.

#### Face masks/coverings

Face masks/coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face mask/covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Face masks/coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

Face masks/coverings must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.

#### Visors

Face masks/coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a face mask/covering cannot be worn clear visors must be considered.

#### Exemptions

A medical certificate to certify that a person falls into a category listed below must be provided to the school on behalf of, any person (pupil) who claims that they are covered by the exemptions below:

- any pupil with difficulty breathing or other relevant medical conditions
- any pupil who is unable to remove the cloth face-covering or visor without assistance
- any pupil who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the cloth face covering or visor, for example pupils with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.



#### Directions for effective use of face masks/coverings

- Information will be provided by schools on the proper use, removal, and washing of facecoverings. Advice on how to use face coverings properly can be found here <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>
- All pupils should be reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.
- Face masks/coverings should be stored in a designated space, for example, in an individually labelled container or bag.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
- Face masks/coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

#### Provision of face masks

Parents will be advised that they obtain face masks for their children which fit properly and are comfortable for the child to wear. In the event that a child forgets, loses or damages their masks during the course of the school day, then the school will have a sufficient supply to replace the mask for the child in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

#### Face coverings for staff

With the increase in Omicron cases nationwide all school staff will be supplied with **FFP2** grade masks.

