

**COVID-19 Response Plan for  the safe and sustainable  operation of Primary and  Special Schools**

V3 February 2021

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of primary and special schools V3 February 2021

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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new  guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie , www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie;  www.education.ie or agreements with education partners as appropriate for primary and  special schools.

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COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of primary and special schools V3 February 2021

**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.

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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**

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**2) What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?**

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management  (BOM)/Education Training Board (ETB) 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**

A COVID-19 policy outlines the ongoing commitment of the school to implementing the  plan and help prevent the introduction and spread of the virus. The revised updated  policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson and principal of the BOM/ETB and  brought to the attention of the staff, pupils, parents and others. A template of a School  COVID-19 policy can be found at ***Appendix 1.***

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**4) Reviewing the safe operation of schools**

The BOM/ETB aims to facilitate the continuation of school based teaching and learning  and a safe working environment for staff. The operation of schools 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 operation of a school facility and the applicable controls are outlined  in this document. Each school will need to review their current processes to ensure that  they include the following:

∙ Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any  Government plans for living with COVID-19 and Department of Education  updates;

∙ Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils,  parents and others as required;

∙ Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the  Department of Education ***(details at Section 4.1);***

∙ Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form (***details at Section  4.2);***

∙ Identified a Lead Worker representative ***(details at Section 4.3);*** ∙ Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of  COVID-19 ***(details at Section 4.4);***

∙ Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to  support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing ***(details at  Section 4.5);***

∙ Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a  stimulating learning environment;

∙ Updated the health and safety risk assessment ***(details at Section 4.6);*** ∙ Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors  and maintain records of contacts to the school ***(details at 4.7)***;

∙ Reviewed the school buildings to check the following after any period of closure:

• Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to  prevent Legionella disease;

• Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs  of deterioration or damage before being used again;

• Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

There are checklists in place to assist schools on the details of what is needed for these  arrangements in the Appendices of this plan.

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**4.1) Induction Training**

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the  school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and  understanding of the following:

∙ Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health;

∙ Covid-19 symptoms;

∙ What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at  school;

∙ Outline of the Covid-19 response plan.

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their  duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and will be updated with  any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health  authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the COVID-19 Response Plan, the  associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek  guidance from the Principal, who is supported in this role by the BOM/ETB

**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 online or from the principal. A copy is attached also at ***Appendix 2.***

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work.  Schools should request staff to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form  remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff  and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to  facilitate the staff member’s return to the school facility.

There are some school staff who may be unable to return to school. Current public  health guidelines have identified these people as being in groups who are defined as  being at **very high risk.** This will be updated in line with public health advice.

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

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

∙ are over 70 years of age - even if fit and well

∙ have had an organ transplant

∙ are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer

∙ are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer

∙ have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or  myeloma who are at any stage of treatment

∙ are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer ∙ are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system,  such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors

∙ have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are  still taking immunosuppression drugs

∙ have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma,  pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD ∙ have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such  as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)

∙ are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as  high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)

∙ have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Details of the working arrangements  that apply to the very high risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the  public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Department’s website.

**4.3) Lead Worker Representative**

The Protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in  each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the  implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence  to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around  COVID-19 in the workplace.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in schools. The process for  appointment of the lead worker representative in schools has been agreed centrally  between the Department of Education and the education partners.

Responsibility for the development, updating and implementation of the COVID-19  Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of  Management/ Education and Training Board and school management.

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Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against  the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of  staff and students. Adherence to the 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.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19  Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or  others he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.

**Role of the Lead Worker Representative**

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

∙ 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.

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative

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In schools with less than 30 staff, a Deputy Lead Worker Representative will be  appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise as  LWR where the LWR is absent.

In schools with 30 or more staff and in all Special schools, an Assistant Lead Worker  Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Assistant LWR  will be to:

∙ assist the LWR in their duties as set out above; and

∙ deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Name(s) of lead worker representative:*** | ***Contact details:*** |
| ***John Mc. Donnell*** | ***012961340*** |

All staff, pupils, parents, 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  infection prevention control measures.

Full details of the arrangements which will apply for the LWR in primary and special  schools is set out at ***Appendix 3.***

**4.4) Signage**

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID 19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

The Department has provided printed posters to schools, with age appropriate key  health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc.

Please see link below to these posters which will allow schools who may wish to have  an additional supply of posters available. Any such supply can be sourced locally.

https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/information-for-schools preschools-and-third-level-institutions-on-the-coronavirus.html#1

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Schools can then arrange to display the posters in prominent areas such as offices,  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. Further information on how physical distancing can be used in the  school environment is found at ***Section 5.4*** below including a link to the suite of  illustrative primary classroom layouts (including special classes).

Schools should reconfigure classrooms and other areas as necessary to support  physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening.

**4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment**

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school  environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to  mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at ***Appendix 4.***

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

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

**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 should call for an ambulance or the  fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

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

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial  step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the  individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A  detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained.  The school should maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts. A sample contact log is  available at ***Appendix 5*.**

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

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

Schools are reminded that all school records and data must be maintained and  processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The  responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school (or ETB) in their  role as data controller.

**5) Infection Prevention 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,

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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.

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

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

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

∙ Advise staff and pupils 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 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 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 should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;

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∙ Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors  where possible.

**5.1) Know the Symptoms of COVID-19**

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

✔ High temperature

✔ Cough

✔ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties

✔ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

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.

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

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your  room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test.  Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home).

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.

**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

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∙ 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

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

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

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

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

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

There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely  to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser  does not work on dirty hands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.  **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

∙ On arrival at school;

∙ Before eating or drinking;

∙ After using the toilet;

∙ After playing outdoors;

∙ When their hands are physically dirty;

∙ When they cough or sneeze.

The Department has arranged for a drawdown framework to be established to enable  schools purchase hand-sanitisers and any other necessary PPE supplies for use in the  school. . The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with hand  sanitising and PPE requirements in schools.

**5.4) Physical Distancing**

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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 should be used by schools to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, primary schools and special schools  should:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing

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

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

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

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A link to the suite of illustrative primary classroom layouts is available here. A link to illustrative special classes is available here.

Funding has been provided under the enhanced minor works grant to facilitate this  classroom re-configuration works. .

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

***Decreasing interaction***

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

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

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

The risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into Class  Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as  possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, to the extent that  this is practical.

If the class is divided into Pods, there should be at least (1m distance) between  individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever  possible.

Generally speaking the objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities  between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles) as  much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not  always be possible.

The aim of the system within the school is that class grouping mix only with their own  class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day.  The Pods within those Class Bubbles is an additional measures, to limit the extent of  close contact within the Class Bubble.

Pod sizes should be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific  classroom context.

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To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should consistently be in the  same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.

Different Class Bubbles should where possible have separate breaks and meal times or  separate areas at break or meal times (or this could be different class years i.e. 2nd class, 3rd class etc.)

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

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

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

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas. Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.

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

Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.

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

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of  the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

**Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school *School drop off/collection***

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

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

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

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

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Staggered drop off/pick up times should be considered where practical and feasible.

If schools have additional access points, consideration may be given to whether they  can be used to reduce congestion.

Consideration may be given to where pupils congregate as they arrive at school. This  could include heading straight to their small group designated learning space/classroom.

***Staff***

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly  relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as  the staff room and arriving to work.

If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and  updated guidance on face covering should be observed.

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

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

Implement no hand shaking policy.

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

Ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities

Stagger canteen use and extend serving times to align with class groupings. Implement a queue management system.

Make sure pupils clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.  ***Corridors and Stairwells***

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

***Yard/Supervision***

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The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. Adjust play time/outdoor activities to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary or special  schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to  consistent groups.

Stagger break times and outdoor access.

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

Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different  people.

***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.

**5.5) 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

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

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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

∙ Parent Teacher meetings

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

**Reception Areas**

Consideration should be given to the use of Perspex in reception areas where it is not  possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or pupils. Minor works funding grant can be used for this purpose.

**Face Coverings/Face Visors/Masks**

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 covering 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 should be considered, for example staff  interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

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Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:  ∙ Primary school children

∙ Any person with difficulty breathing

∙ Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated

∙ Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance  ∙ Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very  uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or  developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile  sensitivity.

All staff wearing face coverings should be 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 should be provided 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.

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for staff  in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, schools should have available a stock of additional disposable or multi-use face coverings, or if appropriate face visors, available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed throughout the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

On the use of face masks by staff, schools should consider the specific circumstances where the use of medical face masks, to EU Standard EN 14683, may be more appropriate for staff (for example where staff by necessity need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs such as SNAs or School Bus Escorts).

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

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**Gloves**

The use of disposable gloves in the school by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary 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 cleaning an area where a suspected or  confirmed case of COVID-19 was present.

**6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

The Department will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on  certain schools activities in advance of school reopening.

*Choir/Music Performance*

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

*Sport Activities*

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

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

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When purchasing toys choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when  necessary).

If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable.

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

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

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

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

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

∙ Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices. ∙ Rinse the toy in clean water.

∙ Thoroughly dry the toy.

∙ Some hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.  ∙ Toys that cannot be immersed in water that is electronic or wind up should be  wiped with a damp cloth and dried.

∙ In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning  for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. Toys/equipment  that have been soiled with blood or body fluids or toys where a case of COVID 19 has been identified.

∙ If disinfection is required: A chlorine releasing disinfectant should be used  diluted to a concentration of 1,000ppm available chlorine. The item should be  rinsed and dried thoroughly.

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

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

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.

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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. Details of the funding  supports have been provided to schools by way of circular and will be updated as  required.

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.

Schools are reminded to take particular care 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 will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain  cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning  materials be removed from the building.

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

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

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

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

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

The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.

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

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

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  canteen, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should  be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC  interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

**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 a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a  school setting.

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

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

∙ If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be  contacted immediately;

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∙ Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to  the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2m away  from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a  distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person at all times;

∙ The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be  2m away from others in the room;

∙ If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m, a staff member caring for a pupil  should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus  does not pass through skin;

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

∙ Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they  cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The  individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be  given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose  with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the  tissue in the waste bag provided;

∙ 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 – (***details at Section 7***).

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

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many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should  therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened  awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19  infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.  Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop  signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

*Hand hygiene*

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean  their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as  outlined previously.

*Equipment*

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of  aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and  handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is  carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is 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

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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.

∙ Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:

⮚ if they are identified 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. ∙ 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 publ**ic** 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) 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.

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**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 staff in  schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and  wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The  Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the  Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by  Spectrum.Life under the logo of *‘Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile’.*

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year  providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation,

management support etc. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live  chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited  and experienced mental health professionals.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over  the age of 18 years and living at home).

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs,  live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise  and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of  wellbeing topics are also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is  provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion  Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and  wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase  engagement with the service. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote  staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.

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**APPENDIX 1 COVID-19 Policy Statement**

**Muslim National School** 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  and updated the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are  responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain  the spread of the virus. We will:

∙ continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation  with our staff

∙ provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice  issued by the HSE and Gov.ie

∙ display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand washing techniques

∙ agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the  role outlined in this plan

∙ 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 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: Maureen Larkin, Principal            Date: 26th February 2021

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**Appendix 2 Return to Work Form**

This form must be completed by staff in advance of returning to work.  If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical  advice before returning to work.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Questions** | **YES** | **NO** |
| 1.  | Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature,  difficulty breathing, loss or change in your sense of smell or  taste now or in the past 14 days? |  |  |
| 2.  | Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected  COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days? |  |  |
| 3  | Are you awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test? |  |  |
| 4 | In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with a person  who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19? |  |  |
| 5  | Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time? |  |  |
| 6 | Have you been advised to restrict your movements at this  time? |  |  |
| 7 | Have you been advised to cocoon at this time? Note: if you’re  at very high risk (extremely vulnerable) from COVID-19 you  may be advised to cocoon. |  |  |

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or  awaiting results of a COVID-19 test and have not been advised to restrict my movements. Please note: The school is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety  within the workplace in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on  vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and this data will be held securely in line  with our retention policy.

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

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**Appendix 3 Lead Worker Representative – Primary and  Special Schools**

The Work Safely Protocol is designed to support employers and workers to put infection  control measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The  Protocol was developed following discussion and agreement between the Government,  Trade Unions and Employers at the Labour Employer Economic Forum.

The Protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in  each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the  implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence  to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID

19 in the workplace.

The purpose of this section is to set out the provisions in respect of the LWR in schools.  The operation of these arrangements will be kept under review by the parties.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

∙ The Work Safely Protocol.

∙ the Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19; ∙ COVID-19 Response Plan for Primary and Special Schools (available on the  Department of Education website).

**1. Collaborative Approach**

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan  and the associated infection prevention control measures lies primarily with the Board of  Management/ Education and Training Board and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against  the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of  staff and 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.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response  Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others,  they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management.

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**2. Role of the Lead Worker Representative**

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

∙ 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 the implementation of 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 infection prevention  control 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.

**3. What can a Lead Worker Representative Do?**

The LWR may consult with, and make representations to, school management on any  issue of concern in relation to COVID-19. These include issues in relation to:

∙ Cleaning protocols and their implementation

∙ Physical Distancing

∙ Implementation of one-way systems in the school to ensure social distancing  including when entering and exiting the school

∙ Hand Hygiene facilities including their location and whether they are stocked and  maintained

∙ Hand sanitising

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∙ Staff awareness around hand hygiene in the school

∙ Respiratory hygiene

∙ Personal Protective Equipment

∙ At Risk Groups

∙ Visitors/Contractors

**4. Lead Worker Representative**

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative.

**5. Deputy Lead Worker Representative/ Assistant Lead Worker Representative**

In schools with less than 30 staff, a Deputy Lead Worker Representative will be  appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise as  LWR where the LWR is absent.

In schools with 30 or more staff and in all Special schools, an Assistant Lead Worker  Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Assistant LWR  will be to:

∙ assist the LWR in their duties as set out above; and

∙ deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent

**6. Selection of Lead Worker Representative/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR**

The school staff are entitled to select staff members for the LWR, Deputy LWR and  Assistant LWR positions as appropriate. The LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR  represents all staff in the workplace regardless of role and must be aware of specific  issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts. In this regard, if a teacher is  selected for the role of LWR, then the Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR should be selected  from the non-teaching staff where feasible and vice versa.

The process for the selection and appointment of the LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR  as appropriate should be arrived at by consultation and consensus at school level, through  the seeking of volunteers to act in that capacity. Where there is more than one volunteer,  all school staff should vote to select the LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR.

The LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR will, following selection by the school staff, be  formally appointed by the employer. LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR will be required

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to confirm, prior to taking up the role, that they have completed the provided training and  that they are fully aware of the requirements of the role.

**7. Supports for the Lead Worker Representative/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR** The LWR/ Deputy LWR/ Assistant LWR shall be entitled to:

∙ Receive information and training in respect of their role;

∙ Be consulted by school management on the control measures being put in place  by the school to minimise the risk of being exposed to COVID-19;

∙ Regular communication with school management on issues related to COVID-19; ∙ Be informed of changes in practice arising from COVID-19 response measures;

Where the LWR/ Assistant LWR is a teacher (including a postholder), the 10 Croke Park  hours which can currently be used for planning on other than a whole school basis will be  utilised by the LWR and Assistant LWR to carry out their duties in that role.

Where the LWR/ Assistant LWR is an SNA, 10 of the “72 hours” will be utilised by the  LWR and Assistant LWR to carry out their duties in that role.

Where the LWR/ Assistant LWR is a Secretary or Caretaker, a re-prioritisation of duties  by school management should be carried out to afford the staff member sufficient time to  carry out their duties in that role.

**8. Procedure for dealing with issues that arise**

Where an issue of concern is identified by the LWR (or is notified to the LWR by a staff  member), the LWR should bring this to the attention of the Principal. Action points for  addressing the issue should where possible be agreed between the LWR and the  Principal. Staff should be informed of the outcome.

If agreement cannot be reached, the LWR may notify the Board of Management  (Chairperson of the BoM in the first instance)/ Education and Training Board head office  of the issue. Action points for addressing the issue should where possible be agreed  between the LWR and the BoM/ETB head office. Staff should be informed of the outcome.

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**Glossary of Terms**

∙ **COVID-19 Response Plan:** plan designed to support the staff and BOM/ ETB in  putting infection prevention control measures in place that will prevent the spread  of COVID-19 in the school environment. The plan details the policies and practices  necessary for a school to meet the Work Safely Protocol, Department of Education  and public health guidance to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in  the school environment. COVID-19 Response Plans for Primary and Special  Schools are available on the Department’s website.

∙ **Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF):** the forum for high level dialogue  between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives on matters of  strategic national importance - involves the Irish Congress of Trade Unions,  Government & Employers.

∙ **Work Safely Protocol:** national protocol designed to support employers and  workers to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the  workplace.

∙ **Safety Representative:** Section 25 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act  2005 sets out the selection and role of the Safety Representative in the workplace.  The rights of the Safety Representative are set out in legislation. (Note: A Safety  Representative has rights and not duties under the 2005 Act). This role is separate  to the LWR under COVID-19.

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