

BALLINABRANNA NATIONAL SCHOOL

Milford

Co. Carlow

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COVID-19 Policy Statement August 2021

Ballinabranna NS 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: _____ Date: _____

Covid-19 School Response Plan

Primary and Special Schools Update August 2021

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

This plan was introduced in August 2020. It was updated in February 2021. This further revision (August 2021) is in line with the Covid-19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Operation of Primary and Special Schools V4 August 2021.

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 Ballinabranna NS.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. 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).

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.

The BOM aims to facilitate the continuation of school based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff. 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.

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, www.dbei.ie www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie;

Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management has facilitated the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff in Sept 2020 and again in March 2021. The focus now is on the return for the 2021-2022 school year. 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.

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Planning and Systems

The school monitors and is keeps up to date with the latest advice from Government and Department of Education, to ensure that advice is made available in a timely manner to staff and pupils and to adjust your plans and procedures in line with that advice.

- School emails **are** monitored daily by school secretary and principal.
- Information provided by the Department **of Education** for parents/**staff** is communicated through our Funky Frog App, email or via Aladdin text.
- The Covid-19 response plan is adjusted accordingly.

We will promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.

We advise staff and parents of pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases not to attend school, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.

We advise staff and parents of pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID-19 not to attend schools and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.

We 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.

We 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.

We ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.

Everyone entering the school building is required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.

A school COVID-19 response plan has been prepared and made available to staff and pupils using the department guidance and templates provided.

Staff **avail** of the Department of Education's training materials to provide them with information and guidance on the measures that have been put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus and what is expected of them.

Information **is** circulated to parents prior to our re-opening to give guidance to parents and children on the measures that have been put in place to help prevent the spread of the virus and what is expected of them. This **will be** reinforced by teachers and SNAs in the school.

COVID-19 posters will be displayed in suitable locations highlighting the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

A COVID-19 contact log is in place to support HSE tracing efforts if required. Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained.

Staff have been informed of the purpose of the Covid- 19 Contact log.

All staff have been informed of the Covid-19 measures and can raise concerns in person, via email to the principal or through the Lead Worker Representative.

Our risk assessments have been reviewed in line with DES advice to take account to any controls to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment.

We have updated our Fire escape and First Aid plans, where necessary to take account of the COVID-19 response plan.

First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Ballinabranna NS

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

Staff

We have made available to each staff member a COVID-19 return-to-work form to be completed and returned before they return to the workplace via Google Forms. The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

All staff returning to work are required to complete the updated Return to Work Form.

We request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Circular 42/2021 “Coronavirus (COVID-19): Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants” has been circulated to staff members.

We have advised staff members of the categories who are considered at very high risk under the HSE guidance on people most at risk and asked them to inform us if they are in this category.

Staff members who identify themselves as belonging to this category are advised of the DES agreed arrangements for management of high-risk staff.

People at Very High Risk (Extremely Vulnerable):

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk.:

The list of people in very high risk groups (Last updated: 7 May 2021 by the HSE) include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have Down Syndrome
- have cancer and are being treated with chemotherapy or similar drugs other than hormone therapy
- have lung or head and neck cancer and are having radical surgery or radiotherapy
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer or head and neck cancer
- are having certain complex cancer surgery, for example, surgery for lung cancer, head and neck cancer or oesophageal cancer
- have advanced cancer or cancer that has spread to another part of the body
- are on dialysis or have end-stage kidney disease and an eGFR less than 15
- have a condition affecting the brains or nerves that has significantly affected your ability to breathe, meaning you require non-invasive ventilation (such as motor neurone disease or spinal muscular atrophy)
- have unstable or severe cystic fibrosis, including people waiting for a transplant
- have severe respiratory conditions including Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have uncontrolled diabetes
- have had an organ transplant or are waiting for a transplant
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the last 12 months, or are waiting for a transplant
- have a rare condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as APECED or errors in the interferon pathway)
- sickle cell disease
- have been treated with drugs such as Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Alemtuzumab, Cladribine or Ocrelizumab in the last 6 months
- have certain inherited metabolic disorders (such as Maple Syrup Urine Disease)
- have obesity with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 40

High risk groups

The list of people in high risk groups includes people who:

- are over 60 years of age
- have a learning disability other than Down Syndrome
- are being treated for cancer but are not very high risk
- have been treated in the past 5 years for a cancer of the blood or bone marrow (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- have been treated in the past 1 year for a cancer that did not start in the blood or bone marrow
- have chronic heart disease (such as heart failure)
- have chronic kidney disease with an eGFR below 30ml a minute
- have chronic liver disease (such as cirrhosis or fibrosis)
- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease or cerebral palsy) that affects their breathing or ability to protect or clear their airway

- have clinically stable cystic fibrosis
- have a serious lung condition but are not at very high risk, for example, moderate COPD, severe asthma, emphysema or bronchitis
- have diabetes
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids)
- have a condition that means you have a high risk of getting infections (such as HIV, lupus or scleroderma)
- have an inherited metabolic disorder but are not very high risk
- have obesity with a body mass index (BMI) between 35 and 40
- have a severe mental illness (such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe depression)

Advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare if they believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the Departmental provision for those in the very-high risk or high risk categories and how to apply for these are outlined in circular 42/2021 by the Department of Education and Skills.

Staff were advised of the Information Notes 001/2021 and 002/2021 in relation to temporary arrangements for parental and unpaid leave during the phased return to school.

Our Covid-19 Lead Worker and Deputy Lead Worker Representative are available to answer staff concerns regarding returning to school.

All Staff will review our Covid-19 response plan prior to the return to school of children on the 30th of August 2021.

Staff, parents and pupils they must stay at home if sick or if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.

Staff and pupils have been told what to do and what to expect if they start to develop symptoms of COVID-19 in school and know where the isolation area is.

Staff are advised of the availability of the supports of the occupational health and wellbeing programme through Spectrum Life.

Lead Worker Representative

A lead worker representative has been identified (in line with the process agreed with the DES and education partners) to help advise staff and to monitor compliance with COVID-19 control measures in the school and all staff know who the representative is.

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 the employer 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 Safety Protocol and current public health advice;**
- **In conjunction with school management** monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- **Conduct regular reviews of safety measures**
- **Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;**
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Make representations **to school management** on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

Name(s) of Lead Worker representative: Eddie O Connor
Deputy Workers Representative: Kara Dunne

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.

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

Training and Induction

All staff have undertaken and completed Covid-19 Induction Training provided by the Department of Education and Skills. 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 training includes information on infection prevention and control re: hand hygiene and use of PPE as appropriate as part of the Department's online training programme.

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

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

Training for staff was developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools. Our staff availed of this on the 26th of August 2020 at our staff planning day.

We have updated our school induction training to include additional information relating to COVID-19 for our school.

Staff reviewed Covid-19 training prior to the phased return in March 2021.

All new staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building.

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: 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 Covid-19, 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 and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19
- Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances
- **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.
- 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

Covid related absence management

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

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

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

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing.

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.

Buildings / Equipment

Prior to reopening our mechanical ventilation has been checked for cleaning and maintenance. Our water system has been flushed at outlets following low usage to prevent

Legionnaire's Disease.

We have visually checked, or had someone check, all equipment in the school for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again.

We have arranged for the school, including all equipment, desks, benches, doors and frequent touched surfaces points, to be cleaned before reopening with Woods Contract Cleaners.

Control Measures in place

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.

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, 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 should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

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

Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices. Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

- ***Wash your Hands Frequently***

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19. We follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

- ***Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers***

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

Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities. They will be available at entry and exit points and in each classroom.

Hand sanitisers are easily available and accessible for all staff, pupils and visitors in each classroom and at entry and exit points to school buildings. Care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Hand washing facilities are accessible 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.

Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

We have accessed supplies of hand sanitisers and necessary PPE equipment in line with the interim HPSC health guidance relating to the reopening of schools, from the national framework provided by the Department.

Arrangements have been made for staff and pupils to have regular access to handwashing/hand sanitising facilities. A sink was installed in the only classroom without access to running water **during summer 2020**.

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

We have made arrangements to ensure hand hygiene facilities are regularly checked and well-stocked. **There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.**

The alcohol-based hand sanitiser has at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient.

Alcohol-based sanitiser is not to be stored or used near heat or naked flame
Care is taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.

We have informed staff about the importance of hand washing and have arranged for staff to view how to wash their hands (with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) and dry them correctly through the use of the HSE video resource. Class teachers have shown their class how to wash their hands properly.

We have shown staff and pupils how to use hand sanitiser correctly and where handsanitising stations are located.

Staff and pupils need to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer:

- before and after eating and preparing food
- after coughing or sneezing
- after using the toilet
- where hands are dirty
- before and after wearing gloves
- before and after being on public transport
- before leaving home
- when arriving/leaving the school /other sites
- after touching potentially contaminated surfaces
- if in contact with someone displaying any COVID-19 symptoms

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

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

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

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.

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

We have told staff and pupils of the importance of good respiratory measures to limit the spread of the virus.

- avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth
- cover coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- dispose of tissues in a covered bin

Physical Distancing:

Physical distancing 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.

We have identified all available school space to be used to maximise physical distancing.

We have reviewed the templates provided by the Department of Education which show options for revised layout of school rooms to meet physical distancing requirements.

We have revised the layout of the rooms and furniture as per the Department Guidelines.

We have arranged in each room that the **teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.**

Rooms are clear of unnecessary furniture or shelving etc on the walls.

We have arranged in each room that pupils would be at least 1m away from each other when seated. **It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary school.**

We allocate work-stations consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces that are shared.

Class teachers have structured 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

Where classes are divided into Pods, we have arranged at least 1m distance between individual Pods within the class bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.

We have taken steps to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those class bubbles) as much as 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.**

We have arranged Pod sizes to be as small as it is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context.

We have arranged to the greatest extent possible for pupils and teaching staff to be consistently in the same Class Bubbles acknowledging that this will not be possible at all times.

We have arranged where possible that different class bubbles to have separate breaks and meal times and separate areas at break times.

Sharing educational material between Pods is avoided/minimised where possible.

Staff members moving from class bubble to class bubble are limited as much as possible.

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 is organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and pupils avoid sharing of personal items.

Pupils are 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 is cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

School Drop off/collection

We have made arrangements to limit interaction on arrival and departure from school and in other shared areas. We encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.

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

We encourage walking or cycling to school as much as possible.

We have opened additional access points to the school to reduce congestion, providing one system for entering and exiting the school.

Children arriving at school stand on distanced spots until the school start time.

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 is observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks

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

Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this is minimised as much as possible.

We regularly remind staff and pupils to maintain physical distancing.

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

It is now a requirement that primary school teachers and staff wear face coverings where a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

Surgical/Medical Grade Facemasks conforming to EU EN 14683 are available for SNAs, SET teachers and where requested for other staff members.

Training and posters are provided to staff to show the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE as on the HSE website at <https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid->

19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/covid-19_business_supports/business_supports/hse-hpsc_posters_and_videos/
Information is provided on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>

PPE will be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

Such include roles where:

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

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid.

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

Visors do not offer the same protection to the wearer as a standard face mask and should only be used in specific circumstances where people have breathing difficulties, and worn in conjunction with a mask where physical distancing cannot be maintained, there will be prolonged close contact and/or that exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets is likely. HPSC advice is that a visor does not provide protection equivalent to a mask. **In certain situations, for interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties, the use of clear visors can be considered.**

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
- 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 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.

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.

Our school has additional disposable face coverings available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Under current guidelines children under 13 years of age are not required to wear a face covering to school. However, those who choose to wear a disposable face covering

may do so. Parents should ensure that children who do are taught good mask hygiene practices.

Wearing of 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.

Ventilation –

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice ‘Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools’

The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather

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

CO2 monitors are provided to all classrooms. If the CO2 reading is above 1400-1500 ppm ventilation should be increased by opening doors and windows to address high CO2 levels

Visitors to Schools

All visitors who do need to come to the school must make an appointment, arrange to contact the secretary’s office and record their visit using the contact tracing log. Visitors to school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point.

The school secretary informs essential visitors to the school of the measures to help prevent the spread of infection.

We have identified activities that involve interacting with essential visitors to the School and made arrangements to minimise the number of such visitors and put in place measures to prevent physical contact, as far as possible.

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

A contact log is maintained.

School Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school have been made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed regularly with the school **setting cleaned at least once per day.**

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

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

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

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

Dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19

Staff members will be required to manage a suspected case in line with the protocol and training.

A nominated member of the school management team will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to.

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

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

A designated isolation area is in place- the old school office and the hall kitchenette. Children from 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th will isolate in the old school office, children from Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st class and 6th class will isolate in the hall kitchenette. Should one isolation room be in use on arrival, the other isolation room may be used by a child from any class.

Isolation Area

1. We have an isolation area with a door that can close, the old school office/hall kitchenette.
2. The isolation area allows those using the room to be 2m away from others in the room.
3. The isolation area is accessible, including to staff and pupils with disabilities.
4. The route to the isolation area is accessible via the school corridor or from outdoors.
5. If there is more than one suspected case of COVID-19, those suspected of having Covid-19 will be asked to wear PPE, provided in the room and to stay 2m away from each other until they can safely leave the building. If there are 2 cases the staff member may supervise from the door of the room wearing PPE. In the event of a third case the principal's office and/or kitchenette can be used as additional isolation areas.

6.The following are available in the isolation area(s)

- Tissues
- Hand sanitiser
- Disinfectant/wipes
- Gloves/Masks
- Waste Bags
- Bins

Isolating a Person

Procedures are in place to accompany the infected person to the isolation area along the isolation route with physical distancing from them. Staff are familiar with these procedures.

If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately. The secretary contacts the child's parents to collect as soon as possible.

The staff member accompanying them and the pupil (where possible) should wear a mask while enroute.

Others are advised to maintain a distance of at least 2m from the affected person at all times as part of the Department training provided.

The staff member accompanying them should be a staff member who is in their class bubble or pod to limit staff exposure.

Another staff member is asked to step into the class/POD to supervise if necessary.

We isolate the person and 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. **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 worn as the virus does not pass through skin.**

We provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. There is a disposable mask to wear for the affected person while in the common area and when exiting the building.

The affected person should be advised to avoid touching other people, surfaces and objects. The affected person is advised to cover their mouth and nose with disposable tissue(s) when they cough or sneeze, and to put the tissue in the bin.

We assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents.

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

Arranging for the affected person to leave the school

Staff – We establish by asking them if the staff members feel well enough to travel home. If not, their next of kin are contacted and asked to collect them. A mask will also be provided for the next of kin if required.

Pupil – As above we immediately contact the parents/guardians and arrange for them to collect their pupil. Under no circumstances can a pupil use public or school transport to travel home if they are a suspected case of COVID-19 or be collected by an after school service. The affected person is advised they must not use public transport.

If the person is well enough to go home we 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.

We facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor.

If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required we contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.

Transport home or to an assessment centre is provided by the staff member themselves, their next of kin, a child's parent/guardian or a nominated family member. A mask can be provided to the person collecting if required.

The affected person is advised not to go to their GP's surgery or any pharmacy or hospital.

The affected person is advised to continue wearing the face mask until they reach home.

We carry out an assessment of the incident to identify any follow-up actions needed. We are available to provide advice and assistance if contacted by the HSE.

Cleaning of Isolation Area

We take the isolation area out-of-use until cleaned and disinfected

We make arrangements to clean and disinfect any classroom space where the isolated staff or pupils were located.

We arrange for cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area and any other areas involved, as soon as practical after the affected person has left the building.

The cleaners have been trained in dealing with contaminated areas and supplied with the appropriate PPE. Woods Contract Cleaners.

- **The room should be cleaned as soon as practically possible.**
- Do not use the room 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.**
- The person assigned to clean the area should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household or disposable single use non-sterile nitrile gloves and a disposable plastic apron. and wear a face mask. These should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours and then put with the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished
- If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, from a person with coronavirus (Covid-19) consider using protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as wearing gloves and apron
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds and after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning

- Open the window while you are cleaning.
 - Clean the environment and the furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed or combined with Chlorine based product such as sodium hypochlorite (often referred to as household bleach). Chlorine based products are available in different formats including wipes.
 - Pay special attention to frequently touched flat surfaces, the backs of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces or items that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
 - Place all waste that has been in contact with the pupil, including used tissues, and masks if used, in a plastic rubbish bag and tie when full.
 - Remove your apron and gloves and discard into the waste bag and clean your hands. Place the plastic bag into a second bin bag and tie it, then clean your hands.
 - Store the bag in a safe place until the result of the test is available. If the pupil tests negative, place the waste in the normal domestic waste bin. In the event the pupil tests positive, Public Health will advise what to do next.
 - Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be put back into use.
- ☒ Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids can be cleaned as normal
- ☒ All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, including objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids

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.

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.

Appendix 1

Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) guidance on the re-opening of schools
Reopening of Schools January 2021 with initial focus on special schools and special classes

The HPSC has set out detailed advice in respect of the infection prevention and control measures required for the safe and sustainable operation of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This advice, aspects of which have been updated throughout the period since from September 2020 to January 2021 has become the basis of the “School COVID-19 Response Plans”. The schools plans are also based on the guidance provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) in compliance with the protocols established by Departments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Health on “Returning to Work” safely. The Department of Education’s ongoing oversight and management of schools during this pandemic is also in line with the Government “Resilience and Recovery: 2020 – 2021: Living with COVID-19 Plan” and the successor to the “Return to Work Safely” protocols entitled “Work Safely”.

Full details of the range of supports and guidance available to schools, staff and students can be found on gov.ie/backtoschool.

General Management of COVID-19 in Schools

- ☑ All schools have and will update as appropriate their school COVID-19 Response Plan and COVID-19 Policy;
- ☑ Staff will be reminded to review again the training materials provided by the Department to include knowledge of symptoms, hand and respiratory hygiene, how to manage a suspected COVID-19 case as well as the specific module for SNAs, cleaners and lead workers;
- ☑ Schools should request staff to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.
- ☑ Schools should review their Risk Assessment Template and ensure that it continues to comply with the health and safety requirements as set out in the COVID-19 Response plan;
- ☑ Schools will continue to implement the control measures set out in Part 5 of the School COVID-19 Response plan (as updated) to include minimising the risk of introduction into schools, knowing the symptoms and how to respond if you have those symptoms, respiratory and hand hygiene, physical distancing within the classroom, physical distancing outside the classroom and within the schools, use of PPE as appropriate including face masks;
- ☑ Schools will pay particular attention to the management of the risk of COVID-19 in relation to school activities such as those associated with art, toys, books, sports equipment etc;
- ☑ Schools will implement the cleaning and hygiene arrangements at Part 7 of the School COVID-19 Response plan and the management of suspected cases of COVID-19 at Part 8 of the Plan.

Additional Measures for Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs

The School COVID-19 Response Plan recognises that additional consideration is required to support children with special educational needs and the staff who engage with them. These considerations are referenced in the HPSC advice on the Re-opening of Schools (June 2020).

These include:

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. A precautionary approach should be taken.

Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness. A precautionary approach should be taken.

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.

Specific Advice relating to the work of SNAs in close contact settings and mitigation measures to be observed in those settings

Specific advice has been provided by the HPSC for the work of SNAs (updated January 2021) and it is intended that while directed to SNAs it can also be applicable to all school

staff who work delivering personal care or attention within 2metres to a pupil. This advice

does not materially differ to the original guidance issued in June 2020 but as it is recently

provided by HPSC with a particular focus on special education settings, it is set out below.

It notes that the "guidance is not a rulebook that must be followed to the letter. The appropriate use of this guidance requires the use of compassion and good sense and a reasonable judgment of the level of risk in most situations. If the general principles of this

guidance are implemented, the risk that any given pupil or staff member in the educational setting on any given day has infectious COVID-19 is very low. All additional measures are

applied as practical to the context with a view to further lowering the risk of transmission

to staff or pupils in the event that a person with infectious COVID-19 is at school". .

The guidance goes onto say:

The role of the Special Needs Assistant and Associated Risks of COVID-19

People living with certain disabilities associated with increased medical vulnerability may be disproportionately affected by COVID-19. The measures taken to control the spread of

COVID-19 can also have a very serious impact on people with disability. Some disabled children and young people have additional care needs that must be met to support them in

achieving their full potential. Children have a right to education and ensuring continued

access to education for people living with disability is critical to managing the public health emergency in an inclusive way.

Special Needs Assistants play a vital role in supporting the additional care needs of some

children and young people.

☑ Some parts of the work performed by SNAs are similar to tasks performed by healthcare workers and in particular, the nature of the work is such that it is often not possible to maintain distance;

☑ Some children and young people concerned may display behaviours that are associated with an increased risk of virus transmission if they are infectious;

☑ Some children and young people concerned may have limited ability to self-report symptoms therefore recognising infection may be more difficult;

☑ In this context, there is a requirement for specific guidance to support the work of SNAs and any other people who may provide similar support for children and young people with additional care needs.

Transmission

Like other respiratory viruses, the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 occurs mainly through respiratory droplets generated from the mouth and nose of an infected person during activities such as coughing, sneezing, talking or laughing. The droplets may carry virus directly to the mouth, nose and eyes of person standing nearby or may land on a nearby

surface. Under certain circumstances, airborne transmission may occur (such as when aerosol generating procedures are conducted in health care settings or potentially, in indoor crowded poorly ventilated settings elsewhere).

In general, higher levels of virus are present around the time of first onset of symptoms. Some people who never notice any symptoms may be infectious to others (asymptomatic transmission). Recognising infection is likely to be more difficult in people who are not able to describe their symptoms or communicate easily that they feel unwell however parents,

SNAs, teachers and others who are very familiar with the baseline function of a child or young person may notice changes that suggest infection and may warrant medical assessment.

Virus can remain on the surface for some time and be transferred to the mouth, nose and eyes of another person on their hands after they touch the contaminated surface. The virus does not penetrate through the skin.

Survival in the environment

Virus on surfaces is easily removed or with common household cleaning products (detergent) and in those circumstances where disinfection is needed common bleach and a number of other disinfectants are effective

Duration of Infectivity

People may be infectious for up to two days before they develop symptoms (pre-symptomatic transmission). In Ireland, people with COVID-19 are generally considered infectious for up to 10 days after the date of onset of symptoms or for 10 days after the date of their first positive test if the date of onset of symptoms is not clear. A longer period may apply to people who were hospitalised with COVID-19. After 10 days, the person is no longer considered infectious if they have been free of fever for 5 days. Doing another test at the end of the ten days is usually not useful and should only be done if specifically requested by a doctor.

Practical Measures for Harm Reduction Related to COVID-19 when addressing Additional Care Needs in the educational Setting

The following practical measures for preventing harm related to COVID-19 when addressing additional care needs in the education setting are organised under 3 main headings, reducing the risk of introduction of COVID-19, reducing the risk of spread of COVID-19 and reducing the impact of COVID-19 infection if it occurs.

Reducing the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the Educational Setting

The virus that causes COVID-19 cannot spread in any setting unless it is introduced.

Although there is significant anxiety about introduction of virus on objects in practice the

virus is essentially always introduced by a person who is infectious and is shedding the virus.

Although some people with no signs or symptoms can be infectious, people are generally

most infectious for others when they have symptoms and signs of infection.

1. School staff should be familiar with the main symptoms and signs of COVID-19 (see above) so that they may be able to recognise if a pupil develops obvious signs of infection.
2. Pupils (as appropriate to their ability) their parents, guardians and families should be informed of the main symptoms and signs of COVID-19 (see above) so that they may be able to recognise if a pupil develops obvious signs of infection.
3. School staff as well as pupils (as appropriate to their ability), their parents, guardians and families should be aware that they must not attend school or training if they have symptoms or signs that may suggest COVID-19 until they have taken appropriate medical advice and testing if appropriate. They should be aware that they should not attend school or training if they have been told they are close contacts of a person with COVID-19. These messages should be reinforced regularly.
4. School staff as well as pupils (as appropriate to their ability), their parents, guardians and families should be aware of the general advice they should follow outside of the educational setting to lower the risk that they become infected with COVID-19.
5. Limiting the number of people entering the educational/training setting to those essential to provide the service reduces risk of introduction of the virus.
6. Staff should be alert for any signs of illness that suggest that they, a pupil or a colleague may have COVID-19 on arrival for school and throughout the day.

Reducing the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the Educational Setting

If the virus is introduced into an educational setting, the highest risk of spread is related to

close contact with an infectious person or their immediate surroundings. Therefore the most important measures to reduce the risk of spread are doing all that is practical to

limit the degree to which different groups of people within the education/training setting mix and interact with other groups. This is especially the case indoors.

It is recognised that there are practical considerations that must be taken into account when it is necessary for an SNA to support multiple students across different settings in the course of a working day. It is also the case that some children will need to move from their special class into a mainstream class during the day to ensure that their integration needs for educational purposes are addressed. As below, where movement is necessary the risk can be reduced by hygiene measures.

The risk of spread can also be reduced to some degree by the highest practical standard of

personal and environmental hygiene. In the context of COVID-19, the risk is associated with droplets and fluids from the respiratory tract. There is very little risk of spread of COVID-19 from other body fluids (such as urine and faeces) although they may carry other infectious microorganisms.

Reducing Mixing Between Groups

1. To the greatest degree that is practical in the context of the educational and care needs of the pupils groups/classes should avoid mixing with other groups particularly indoors.

2. SNA should support the smallest number of pupils that is practical (a pod of pupils) and

should move between pods as little as is practical to do so recognising that flexibility is sometime essential to manage absence due to leave or illness.

3. If movement between pods/classes is necessary SNAs should move between the least

possible number of pods/classes on any given day.

4. If members of discrete pods/classes assemble in one area for meals or other activities

maintain as much distance as is practical between the pods/classes and manage entry and

exit to reduce interaction between members of different pods/classes as much as is practical.

Promoting Key-Behaviours that Reduces risk of Person to Person Spread

1. Promote hand hygiene for staff and pupils particularly on boarding a bus if there is shared transport, on arrival at the school/centre each day, prior to departure, before meals and after any contact with the pupil that is likely to have resulted in contact with oral or nasal fluid.

2. There should be ready access to hand sanitiser in all educational settings with due regard in relation to placement to avoid the risk of ingestion by pupils. Please note also that alcohol based hand rub is flammable and needs to be kept away from naked flame.

3. Providing SNAs with personal pocket size dispensers of alcohol hand gel may be useful,

particularly if wall mounted dispensers are not a safe option in a particular context and also for use during outdoor activities.

4. Promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette to the greatest extent possible.

5. Support in performing hand hygiene should be provided to pupils who need assistance.

6. Limit sharing of items between members of the pod in so far as is practical especially with respect to items that pupils may put in their mouth.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. Personal protective equipment in the setting of COVID refers to items that are used to reduce the risk of infection in particular settings.

2. PPE can be of value as an addition to all the other measures outlined here to reduce the risk of infection for SNAs.
3. As with all children, pupils with additional care needs should not be required to wear a face covering if they are under 13 years of age. Those who choose to wear a face covering may do so.
4. Pupils with additional care needs who are 13 years or older should not be required to wear a face covering if the face covering causes distress or is a barrier to their education and care needs.
5. In this context and in association with other measures specified the use of a face covering should be routine for SNAs in accordance with Government guidance.
6. When SNAs are within 2m of a pupil and to whom they are delivering personal care or attention for a period of time the face covering should normally be a surgical mask. If surgical masks are not available a cloth face covering should be used. If for any reason use of a surgical mask or cloth face covering is not practical for any reason, they should use a visor of a quality suitable for use in a healthcare setting however HPSC advice is that a visor does not provide protection equivalent to a mask.
7. Masks and visors should be donned and doffed and disposed of as demonstrated in videos available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/pppe/>. Masks should be removed and disposed of if they are wet or damaged. Masks should be removed and disposed of if going on a break or visiting the toilet.
8. Gloves and aprons should not be used routinely in the educational setting.
9. If providing care that involves specific risk of exposure to blood or body fluids (oral fluids, faeces, urine) use of gloves and a disposable plastic apron is appropriate. These must be removed and disposed of safely and hand hygiene performed after caring for each individual.
Note with respect to faeces and urine the risk of infection is related to other infectious organisms rather than COVID-19.
10. Hand hygiene should be performed before donning and after removing gloves.
11. If providing care that involves a risk of splashing of body fluids a visor is required to protect the eyes from splashing even if already wearing a surgical mask.
12. Used PPE is generally discarded directly into domestic waste.
13. PPE used when attending to a person with suspected COVID-19 while waiting for collection can be placed in a separate plastic bag, which is then placed in domestic waste.

Environment and cleaning

1. The educational environment should provide discrete rooms for each group to the greatest degree practical and be as spacious as is practical with as much natural ventilation as practical.
2. Surfaces should be easy to clean.
3. Outdoor activity is associated with lower risk and should be encouraged where appropriate and weather permits.
4. The highest practical standards of general hygiene should be maintained.

5. The floors, tables, chairs and other items should be easily cleanable and cleaned at least daily.
6. Cleaning is generally with water and detergent or detergent wipes. If disinfection is required in specific circumstances then this is always in addition to and never instead of cleaning.

Isolation for people who develop symptoms or signs in the educational setting

1. If anyone develops symptoms or signs that cause concern about COVID-19 during the day the person should move as quickly as possible to a separate room or if that is not possible to a separate area more than 2m away from other people other than the person(s) needed to provide support until they can leave.
2. The parents/guardian should be telephoned to come and take the pupil home as soon as is reasonably practical. This needs to be done reasonably promptly but this is not an emergency. It is important that parents and guardians do not expose themselves and others to other risks (for example road traffic accident) on the understanding that this is an emergency.
3. Parents/guardian should take medical advice regarding the requirement for testing and the duration of exclusion from education.
4. There is no requirement for other pupils or school staffs to interrupt their scheduled activity immediately if one person develops symptoms.
5. Contact surfaces in the immediate vicinity of the person with symptoms should be cleaned/wiped down.
6. The person accompanying a pupil waiting to be collected should limit physical contact as much as is practical consistent with the pupil's needs and should use a surgical mask, visor and nitrile gloves. Hand hygiene must be performed after removal of gloves.
7. When the pupil is collected, the accompanying person can resume work with other pupils after removing used PPE and performing hand hygiene.
8. It is not appropriate to require certification from a doctor before the pupil returns to education. There is a certificate that parents can be asked to complete on [hpsc.ie](https://www.hpsc.ie) website.

Reducing the Impact of COVID-19 Infection

It is likely that COVID-19 infection will impact on some pupils and SNAs during the coming

school year as a result of infection acquired in everyday life or in the educational setting. The likelihood of suffering serious harm as a result of COVID-19 infection depends on the age and general health of the person when they became infected and on access to healthcare if they need it.

1. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle (exercise, nutrition, avoiding exposure to smoke) and good care of any existing medical conditions improves the likelihood of making a good recovery from COVID-19.
2. Early access to appropriate medical care, if required, is important in recovery from COVID-19. All pupils and school staffs should be registered with a GP to provide care if required.

Appendix 2

Links to the detailed documentation including School COVID-19 Response Plans and advice from Public Health (HPSC)

Relevant section of HPSC website with guidance documents for education settings (updated on ongoing basis)

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/>

Guidance for Schools Regarding Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Supporting Children and

Young People with Additional Care Needs in the Context of COVID-19 (Updated 7th January 2021)

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/COVID19%20Education%20SNA.pdf>

Definition of Close Contacts in an Educational Setting (30th October 2020)

[https://www.hpsc.ie/az-](https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/casedefinitions/covid19educationalsettingscasesandclosecontactsdefinitions/)

[respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/casedefinitions/covid19educationalsettingscasesandclosecontactsdefinitions/](https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/casedefinitions/covid19educationalsettingscasesandclosecontactsdefinitions/)

Interim HSE advice in relation to return to school and at risk groups (September 2020)

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/HSE%20advice%20on%20return%20to%20school.pdf>

Guidance on COVID-19 Respiratory Care in School for Children with Tracheostomy who

require suctioning while in school (2nd September 2020)

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/Children%20Tracheostomy%20Suctioning%20Schools.pdf>

Guidance Document on Infection Prevention and Control Practices in Relation to Delivering Face to Face Education during the Global COVID-19 Pandemic (30.07.2020)

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/IPC%20Guidance%20for%20delivering%20face%20to%20face%20education.pdf>

Guidance on what constitutes Aerosol Generating Procedures (December 2013)

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/infectcont/sth/resources/aerosolgenerating-procedures.pdf>