

Covid-19 School Response Plan for St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School

Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in **St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School**.

The *Covid-19 Response Plan* details the policies and practices necessary for our 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)**. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change. 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

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

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

This document aims to provide details of:

1. **COVID-19 School Policy**
2. **Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
3. **Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
4. **Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
5. **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
6. **Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
7. **Control Measures**
8. **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
9. **Staff Duties**
10. **Covid related absence management**
11. **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

Chairperson: Ms. Maureen O' Sullivan

Principal: Mr. Niall Heneghan



1. St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School COVID-19 Policy

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

COVID 19 Policy Statement

St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary 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 the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus.

We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct handwashing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative and deputy worker representative who are 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 Representatives, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Principal) Date: _____

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to 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.

School Buildings

Before re-opening schools in the new school year, schools have been reminded to check the following:

- Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella Disease? **All taps have been run and toilets flushed on a regular basis by our caretaker, Noel, since the school building closed in March.**
- Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again? **Teachers to check all classroom equipment in the days up to school reopening. The lift is in working order and we are awaiting a service at present. No obvious signs of damage or deterioration have been identified in any school equipment. The ceiling in the gym has been given added support at 4 points of weakness. The school will continue its process of applying for funding from the DES to upgrade the entire roof of the school gym.**
- Have bin collections and other essential services resumed? **Yes**

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 following is a link to the dedicated area of the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website where there are a number of posters, including those appropriate for primary school pupils, located. Irish versions are also available here. <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/> Schools can download the posters and display in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

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

A RTW form should only be completed at least 3 days prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace. Forms should be returned to Ms. Niamh Tierney (LWR).



On receipt of the completed form details will be provided of the Induction Training for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

Induction Training for staff has been developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff.

3. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows:

- Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, insofar as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- 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 with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Make representations 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.

Lead Worker Representative: Ms. Niamh Tierney (Junior Infants Teacher & INTO Rep)

Deputy Lead Worker Representative: Ms. Mary Dunne (SNA)

All staff, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors have a responsibility both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A **Risk Assessment** to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in our school has been prepared in consultation with staff.

Emergency procedures.

Evacuation procedures: Children and staff will be advised of the escape routes to be taken in case of emergency and fire drills will take place at least once a term. Escape routes have not changed from previous practice. However, children from 1st – 6th will assemble in the playground and stand on a designated marking in the relevant assembly area, ensuring 1m distance is maintained between each of them. Reception, Junior Infants and Senior Infants classes will have a new designated area in which to assemble during fire drills/evacuation procedures. Mr. Lar Keogh (Health & Safety Officer) will co-ordinate this plan.

First aid: Staff administering First Aid need to wear PPE consisting of face covering, disposable gloves.

The school's Safety Statement has been updated.

The school's Critical Incident Policy has been updated.

5. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

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

They are:

- ✓ **High temperature**
- ✓ **Cough**
- ✓ **Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties**
- ✓ **Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste.**

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This will be achieved through the following measures:

- Promoting awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- Advising 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.



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- Advising 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.
- Ensuring that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Everyone entering the school building will be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day will be by prior arrangement and will be received at a specific contact point.

Staff, pupils and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

The Department has been working closely with the HSE and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) to develop health advice which has been tailored to the needs of schools in order to support schools in planning for reopening in autumn.

The advice will continue to be updated in line with public health advice generally and will inform the development of more detailed guidance for schools by the Department of Education.

<https://www.education.ie/en/covid-19/interim-recommendations-for-the-reopening-of-schools-and-educational-facilities.pdf>

Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

- **Wash your hands frequently.**
- **Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19.**
- **Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:**

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:

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

- **Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers**

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

Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities.

They will be available at entry and exit points and in each classroom.

- **Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**



Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

- **Physical distancing**

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. Guidance on the physical distancing requirements is informed by public health advice for schools. Physical distancing will be encouraged and practised throughout the school insofar as possible.

- **Practice respiratory hygiene**

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

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

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

Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Do Not

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups.

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



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- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppressive drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means you 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 you are pregnant

HSE advice for this group is to 'cocoon'. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. If an employee believes that they are in this category they must present for assessment with the Occupational Health Service (OHS). The OHS will determine if the employee is fit for work. If so, working from home may be a possibility. If unfit for work, a substitute teacher may be employed.

6. Control Measures

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors insofar as possible within the school. These control measures are outlined in this document. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements. Staff, in particular, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

The following control measures have been put in place:

i. Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school Facility. 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.



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ii. 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 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.

iii. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. These posters are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and soap will be available in the toilet blocks and hand sanitisers will be available at multiple locations around the school, as well as in each classroom.

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 procurement process for this framework has commenced and orders have been placed with Stac First Aid and have arrived in the school.

iv. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The current occupational and public health guidance states that, where physical distancing of 1 metre or more cannot be maintained, staff should wear face coverings. Face visors/shields will also be available for staff who wish to avail of them.

PPE will also need to be used when carrying out certain work activities.

These will include:

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



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- Administering First Aid

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated as appropriate in line with advice from the HPSC.

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

Wearing of Gloves:

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

v. Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school been made. Our caretaker will be on site to perform cleaning duties for much of the school day and 2 cleaners have been employed for an extra 2 hours per day to ensure enhanced cleaning takes place throughout the entire school building.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces will be conducted, in particular, toilets, the lift, stair railings and door handles. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

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 classrooms, staffrooms, offices and other areas within the school.

Staff have the option of providing their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.). Each staff member has a designated cubby hole in the staff room for their personal items and utensils. Staff are requested to wash and dry their own utensils after use. If staff members choose to use communal utensils in the staff room, these must first be rinsed and then placed in the dishwasher in the relevant staff room.

vi. Access to the school building /contact log

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 will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts.



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vii. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School.

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

Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident.

7. 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 St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of the school day:

A designated isolation area has been set up in Room 12 in the school.

Should more than one person display signs of Covid-19, an available room will be identified by the Principal to be used in such an event.

The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door in a ventilated room and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St. Joseph's Co-ed. Primary School the following are the procedures to be implemented:

The school's **Critical Incident Team (CIT)** will be responsible for all suspected cases of Covid-19. The team members are: Niall Heneghan, Lar Keogh, Lisa Fitzpatrick, Sandra Cleary and Noel Dolan.

-Teacher will make a phone call to the principal.

-Principal will go to the classroom of the child, speak to the teacher and ask to speak to the child outside the room.

-A decision is made to bring the child to the isolation room or not, i.e. confirmation from the principal that the child is displaying one of the 4 Covid-19 symptoms?

-If it is decided to do so, a member of the CIT will clean and disinfect the space and touch points in the child's sitting area in the classroom.

-Parents will be called immediately and asked to collect their child.

-The child will be accompanied by a CIT member, who will be wearing PPE to our designated isolation room, which is located in Room 12.

-The CIT member will remain at least two metres from the symptomatic child and will make sure that for child protection reasons, another member of the CIT is also present at a greater distance.



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- A face shield will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms. The face shield should be worn until the child has left the school building.
- The child will be advised to cover his/her mouth and nose with disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and to dispose of the tissue in the pedal bin provided in the isolation room.
- Upon collection at the **Senior Red Gate**, parents will be advised to inform their GP by phone of the symptoms. -Public transport should not be used by a symptomatic person. If the child is too unwell to go home, the school will call 999 or 112 and advise of the situation.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate deep cleaning of the isolation room.

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

Staff will receive an internal and confidential staff update from the principal at the end of each day, in relation to any suspected Covid-19 cases. This is in order to ensure the safety of all staff members in the school.

8. Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. 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.
- ii. Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- iii. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- iv. Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19.



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- v. Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- vi. If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- vii. Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- viii. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- ix. Complete the RTW form before returning to school. 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.

9. Covid related absence management

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

10. 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 school or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events. These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, they are encouraged to speak to the principal.

Signed: _____ (Chairperson) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Principal) Date: _____