



Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa

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Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa

COVID-19 Response Plan

August 2021

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

1) **Introduction**

In accordance with the Work Safety Protocol each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being a place of learning, Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa is also a place of work.

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

This document focuses on the practical steps to be taken in our school to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection into the school while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The information in this Response Plan is supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities. That report is available [here](#).

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

The Department of Education has worked intensively with the education partners to develop consistent plans, advice, protocols and guidance for schools, including the School COVID-19 Response Plan. There is a suite of documentation available to support schools to continue to operate safely and fully at gov.ie/backtoschool.

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

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

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

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

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

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the continued success of 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 school principal, Kieran Lyons, so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

3) School COVID-19 Policy

Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa 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 school's 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 Government.
- 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, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

4) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The BOM aims to facilitate the continuation of school-based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff. The operation of the school must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

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

4.1) Induction Training

All new staff and staff returning to the school following leave of absence for the duration of the 2020/2021 academic year will undertake and complete COVID-19 Induction Training prior to returning to school. Training videos are available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd7fb-induction-training-for->

[reopening-schools/](#). The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health;
- COVID-19 symptoms;
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school;
- Outline of the COVID-19 Response Plan.

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

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the COVID-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from Principal Mr. Kieran Lyons, Deputy Principal Ms. Clara Donohoe or Lead Worker Representative Mr. Rory Thynne, who are supported in this role by the BOM.

4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

Staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form before returning to the workplace.

Staff will be requested to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Mr. Lyons and/or Ms. Donohoe and/or Mr. Thynne will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by new and returning staff and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate staff member's return to the school facility.

Details of the working arrangements that apply to the very high risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Department's website. Circular 0042/2021 is applicable at present and is available at <https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0042-2021.pdf>.

4.3) Lead Worker Representative

The *Work Safely Protocol* provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace.

The LWR in the school will work in collaboration with the employer (BOM) to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and monitor adherence to those measures and will be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

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

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the LWR who will engage with the school's management team.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with implementing infection prevention control measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the *Work Safely Protocol* and current public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 symptoms while in school, including the location of isolation areas and an isolation room;
- 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.

| <i>Name of Lead Worker Representative:</i> | <i>Contact details:</i> |
|--|--|
| Mr. Rory Thynne | (01) 8216400 sacredheartns@gmail.com |

Assistant Lead Worker Representatives will be appointed in Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa in addition to the LWR. The role of Assistant LWRs will be to:

- assist the LWR in their duties as set out above; and
- deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent

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

4.4) Signage

Signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene is displayed in the school.

4.5) School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key infection prevention control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. The school

has reconfigured classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the Department of Education guidance in advance of the school reopening.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A risk assessment has been completed to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in the school.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure continues to apply in the school. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, the school will call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999, giving details of location and type of medical incident.

4.7) Access to the School and Contact Log

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

- No adult, other than a staff member, should enter the school building, unless invited to do so.
- Messages for teachers and SNAs from parents/guardians can be sent via Aladdin Connect.
- Messages for school management or school secretary can be sent by email to sacredheartns@gmail.com or by phoning the school office at (01) 8216400.

If a parent/guardian wishes to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply:

- Upon arrival at the school, the parent/guardian should either phone the school office or use the intercom at the front door of the school to alert the office that they have arrived.
- The child will be brought from their class to the parent/guardian by a member of staff.
- The parent/guardian who is collecting the child will be asked to 'sign the child out'.

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 school office. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit the school to support the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious persons is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the persons themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the school. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school will be maintained. The school will also maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts. All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

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

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

5) **Infection Prevention Control Measures - To Prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in the School**

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, staff-staff and staff-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 the school is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

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

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

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

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms amongst staff, pupils and parents/guardians (*details at Section 5.1*);
- Staff and pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 infection (see *Section 5.1*) must not attend school, they must phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Staff and pupils must 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;
- Staff and pupils must follow the HSE's advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/ confirmed case of COVID-19;
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland staff and pupils must consult and follow latest Government advices in relation to foreign travel;
- Staff must make themselves aware of the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (*details at Section 8*) and deal with any such cases promptly and appropriately;
- Staff and pupils/parents/guardians must 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;
- Physical distancing (of 2 metres) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

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

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms 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. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a [COVID-19 walk-in test centre](#).

COVID Tracker App

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

- alert you if you have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus).

- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19.
- give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms.

You can download the free app from [Apple's AppStore](#) or the [GooglePlay store](#) and school staff are advised to download the app.

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

5.2) Respiratory Hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin. Pupils and staff should avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth insofar as possible.

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

5.3) Hand Hygiene

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

The school promotes good hand hygiene. Posters detailing how to wash hands properly are displayed throughout the school. Staff and pupils should wash their hands properly and often. HSE guidelines on handwashing is available at:

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

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

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

Hand washing must take place after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Hand sanitiser dispensers have been installed at exit and entry points of the school and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Alcohol based hand sanitiser is provided by the school for use by adults on the school site and non-alcohol based sanitiser is provided by the school for use by pupils.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all of the school toilets.

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

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

Care should be taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest hand rubs/gels as they may be flammable and/or toxic. Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame.

Young pupils should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel and parents/guardians are requested to only send in non-alcohol based hand sanitisers in pupils' personal hygiene bags.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

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

5.4) Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in primary school settings allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. Care should be taken by teachers 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 1 metre distance from pupils and other staff members, and a distance of 2 metres where possible. Staff members should also take measures to avoid close contact at face-to-face levels with pupils and other staff members.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom the school has:

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

The teacher's desk should be at least 1 metre, and where possible 2 metres, away from pupil desks.

Decreasing interaction

The Department of Education recognises that the extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a primary school depends on each individual school setting and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils.

Classrooms have been reconfigured to comply with physical distancing as per DES guidelines i.e. 1 metre distance between pupils in classes from Third to Sixth Classes where possible. There will also be an increase in distance between the children in Junior Infants to Second Classes and Coiscéim Classes when possible, as well as a reduction in the number of pupils who sit together in groups/pods.

It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore, achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary school is not a pre-requisite to reopening the school.

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

Each class will be its own “Class Bubble” (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles will be created to the extent that this is practical.

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

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

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

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

Breaktimes will be staggered and each Class Bubble will have their own yard area. The three Coiscéim Classes will operate as one Class Bubble. Class Bubbles will not mix in the yards.

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

Staff members moving between class levels will be limited as much as possible.

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

Limiting interaction on arrival and departure (through the use of staggered pupil assembly and dismissal times) and in hallways and other shared areas.

Discouraging social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs).

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

Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.

Pupils will be encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).

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

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Assembly and dismissal times will be staggered to avoid congregation of people on the school grounds and to encourage physical distancing of 2 metres where possible.

Pupils and staff are encouraged to walk or cycle to school as much as possible.

Arrival at school

- The school gates will open as normal at 8.30 a.m. each morning. All pupils will go straight into their classrooms when they arrive at school (as they did in previous school years on wet mornings). This will ensure a ‘flow’ of people through the school grounds at assembly time and avoid congregation of pupils and parents/guardians on the school grounds. **2 metres distance should be maintained between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff.**
- Pupils will be supervised in their classrooms by teachers and SNAs.
- **Classes will begin at the normal times of 8.40 a.m. for Coiscéim Classes and 8.50 a.m. for Junior Infants to Sixth Classes.**

Breaktimes

Staggered breaktimes will operate in the school as follows:

| Breaktimes | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Classes | Small Break | Big Break |
| Coiscéim classes | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m | 12.35 p.m. to 1 p.m. |
| Junior Infants | 10.25 a.m. to 10.40 a.m | 12.05 p.m. to 12.30 p.m. |
| Senior Infants | 10.25 a.m. to 10.40 a.m | 12.05 p.m. to 12.30 p.m. |
| First Classes | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. | 12.35 p.m. to 1 p.m. |
| Second Classes | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. | 12.35 p.m. to 1 p.m. |
| Third Classes | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. | 12.35 p.m. to 1 p.m. |
| Fourth Classes | 10.45 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. | 12.35 p.m. to 1 p.m. |
| Fifth Classes | 10.25 a.m. to 10.40 a.m | 12.05 p.m. to 12.30 p.m. |
| Sixth Classes | 10.25 a.m. to 10.40 a.m | 12.05 p.m. to 12.30 p.m. |

- All pupils will have the same amount of play/yard time as previous school years, given the importance of fresh air and exercise and also the need to ventilate classrooms during the school day.
- Coiscéim Classes will have their breaktimes in the playground or in the school hall together as one Class Bubble. Each mainstream class will be assigned their own yard area to maintain the integrity of Class Bubbles.
- There will be a First Aid Station for each breaktime.
- Appropriate levels of supervision of children will be provided during breaktimes.

Dismissal

- 2 metres distance should be maintained between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff at dismissal times. As per DES guidelines for parents at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/#returning-to-school> parents must drop and collect children quickly and not linger on the school grounds.
- Dismissal time for Coiscéim classes will be at 1.20 p.m. (Junior Day) and 2.20 p.m. (Senior Day).
- Dismissal time for Junior Infants and Senior Infants will be staggered to support physical distancing between parents/guardians.
- Dismissal time for all Junior Infant classes will be 1.20 p.m., and the exit point for Ms. Concannon’s Junior Infant class has been moved to ensure that the parents/guardians from different Junior Infant classes can be physically distant from each other when waiting for and collecting the children.
- Dismissal time for all Senior Infant classes will remain at 1.30 p.m. The exit point for Ms. Murphy’s Senior Infant class has been moved to ensure that parents/guardians from different Senior Infant classes can be physically distant from each other when waiting for and collecting the children.
- Dismissal time for First, Second and Third Classes will remain at 2.30 p.m.
- Dismissal time for Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Classes will be 2.20 p.m. and the children will be requested to use different exit gates. The rationale for allowing pupils from Fourth to Sixth Classes to be dismissed before pupils in First to Third Classes is that they are better able to vacate the school grounds quickly and also to allow older pupils to collect younger siblings at 2.30 p.m., which will again assist in minimising the congregation of parents/guardians at dismissal times.

| Dismissal Times | |
|------------------------|--|
| Coiscéim classes | 1.20 p.m. (Junior Day) 2.20 p.m. (Senior Day) |
| Junior Infants | 1.20 p.m. |
| Senior Infants | 1.30 p.m. |
| First Classes | 2.30 p.m. |
| Second Classes | 2.30 p.m. |
| Third Classes | 2.30 p.m. |
| Fourth Classes | 2.20 p.m. |
| Fifth Classes | 2.20 p.m. |
| Sixth Classes | 2.20 p.m. |

Staff

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

If 2 metres cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much distance as is possible and the updated guidance on wearing of face coverings should be observed.

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

No hand shaking should take place in the school.

Staff must minimise gatherings at the beginning and the end of each school day.

Staff working in junior classes (Junior Infants to 2nd Class) should enter the school via the Coiscéim door and staff working in senior classes (3rd – 6th Class) should enter the school via the main door.

Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this should be minimised where possible.

Staff room

Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the staff room. The reconfiguration of the staff room and the implementation of staggered break times will assist in this regard. **Staff should be cognisant of the seating configurations that they avail of at breaktimes.**

The staff room will not be available for food preparation and staff should refrain, until further notice, from using staff room cutlery, crockery etc. Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

Staff must observe good respiratory and hand hygiene practices in the school, including the staff room.

Staff must use antibacterial wipes to wipe down the chair and table area that they have used during break time before they leave the staff room area.

Corridors and Stairwell

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

Staff and pupils should keep to the left when walking in corridors and on the stairs.

Yard/Supervision

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

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary school play together outdoors, however break times have been staggered to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits and to give each Class Bubble their own yard space (Coiscéim classes will operate as one Class Bubble in this regard).

Children perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

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.

Pupils and staff are advised to wear additional clothing layers to school to ensure that they stay warm in well-ventilated classrooms.

The Department of Education has committed to delivering a limited number of CO₂ monitors to every school to supplement and enhance its ventilation guidance. Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa awaits delivery

of this limited number of monitors and further guidance on how best to deploy the limited number of monitors that the school will receive in the coming weeks.

The Department's ventilation guidance can be accessed [here](#).

5.5) Use of PPE

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

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. The Department has accepted this recommendation. Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.

Staff are directed to view posters and videos produced by the HPSC on the correct donning and doffing of PPE on the HPSC and HSA websites https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/covid-19_business_supports/business_supports/hse-hpsc_posters_and_videos/.

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category
- Administering First Aid

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

Reception Areas

Perspex has been installed in the school reception area and hand sanitiser is available for use by visitors to the school.

Face Coverings/Face Visors/Masks

The wearing of face coverings is not a substitute for other measures outlined in this Response Plan (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but is a vital element to be used in addition to these protective measures, especially when maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if a pupil/parent/guardian/staff member is displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

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

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage for children is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly. It is therefore not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings. Parents/guardians, however, may choose to ask their children to wear face coverings in school, provided the face covering fits the child properly and that it can be worn properly.

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

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

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

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

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

Staff are reminded not to touch the face covering with their hands when they are wearing it and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.

Staff are directed to view a video on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>.

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

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

Wearing medical grade or surgical grade face masks offers a greater level of protection against the spread of COVID-19 than wearing a cloth face covering or face visor. Surgical grade and KN95 grade face masks are provided to all staff members and it is recommended that staff wear surgical grade or KN95 grade face masks. Additional surgical grade and KN95 grade masks are available to all staff members from Mr. Thynne or Ms. Donohoe. Face visors are also available to all staff members.

Face 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/infectionpreventionandcontrol/guidance/ppe/>.

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 of gloves does not protect the wearer from possible COVID-19 infection and may expose others to risk from contaminated

gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene. Disposable gloves have been provided to staff and additional disposable gloves are available to all staff members from Mr. Thynne or Ms. Donohoe.

Aprons

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 was present. Disposable aprons are available to all staff members from Mr. Thynne or Ms. Donohoe.

6) Impact of COVID-19 on School Policies and Activities

School uniform

According to Tánaiste Leo Varadkar, "no issues from a public health perspective have been raised regarding children wearing school uniforms" by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HSPC). That said, pupils in our Coiscéim classes and from First to Sixth Classes can alternate between wearing the formal school uniform and the school PE uniform each day. This will facilitate parents/guardians washing or airing uniforms each evening, and the children will not have to wear the same school clothes two days in a row. Children in Junior Infants and Senior Infants wear the school PE uniform every day to school and parents are advised to have two such uniforms to allow for a clean uniform to be worn each day.

School requisites and equipment

The importance of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette will continue to be a major focus in the school. Pupils should have a personal hygiene bag with them in school each day with tissues, a small bottle of non-alcohol based hand sanitiser and a small face cloth for personal use only.

- In so far as possible, all pupils should bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case or 'ziplock' bag (labelled with their name) to avoid the sharing of equipment. All items should have the child's name (or a mark) on them for ease of identification.
- Pupils should leave their pencil case and stationery in school each afternoon and have a second set of stationery at home if needed to complete homework.
- By necessity, some classroom equipment is shared between classes including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.
- Book Rental procedures have been revised in accordance with safe hygiene practices. Additional book rental texts have also been purchased.

Choir/Music Performance

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

Sport Activities

HPSC guidance on Return to Sport is available here:

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

Shared Equipment

Toys

All toys should be cleaned on a regular basis. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.

Toys that are visibly dirty should be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.

When purchasing toys staff should choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect.

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

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

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

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Some hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- Some toys that are electronic or wind up and that cannot be immersed in water should be wiped with a damp cloth and dried.
- In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning, e.g. toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. The items should then be rinsed and dried thoroughly.

Art

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

Electronics

Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens and keyboards should be cleaned between use.

Musical Equipment/Instruments

To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

Shared Sports Equipment

Teachers should minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

Library Policy

Where practical pupils should have their own books. The school library is not currently in use for loaning books to pupils. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

7) **Hygiene and Cleaning in School**

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to the school to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. Three additional cleaners have been hired in the school on a temporary basis.

Specific advice in relation to school cleaning has been set out by the HPSC advice and is covered in the cleaners' induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected case of COVID-19.

Each classroom is cleaned after school each day. Additional cleaning throughout the school day is focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

All staff have access to cleaning products and are required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.

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

Used waste disposal bags will be collected after school each day.

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

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

The isolation area or isolation room will be cleaned as soon as practicably possible. Teachers are responsible for cleaning isolation areas during the school day and school cleaners are responsible for cleaning the isolation room.

Once the isolation area or isolation room is vacated the area or room should not be reused until it 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 in addition to cleaning.

The person cleaning the isolation area or isolation room should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear disposable or household gloves and a plastic apron.

Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the isolation area or isolation room can be reused.

If a pupil or staff member diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then these areas will be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

8) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

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

A designated isolation area has been identified in each classroom. The isolation area should be 2 metres away from others in the room. An isolation room has also been identified within the school building – Resource Room L on the Junior Red Corridor. If required the Board Room may be utilised as a second isolation room.

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

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, a text should be sent to the school phone to inform Ms. Shanahan or Ms. Donohoe. The parents/guardians of the pupils will then be contacted as soon as possible.
- If the person with the suspected case is a staff member, they should text the school phone to inform Ms. Shanahan or Ms. Donohoe.
- The pupil should sit in the isolation area in the classroom until called to the office when a parent/guardian arrives to the school to collect him/her.
- If it is necessary to isolate a pupil who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 in the isolation room, they should be accompanied there by their class teacher/support teacher/SNA, with the staff member 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. Staff members should wear a face covering in this instance;
- If the person with the suspected case is a staff member who is not well enough to go home immediately, they will be escorted to the isolation room by a member of the school management team once the text to the school phone has been received.
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member (or in the case of a staff member to go home on their own), as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner (G.P.) by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect;
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved (*details at Section 7*).

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

for contact tracing purposes.

9) Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs

For children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. Therefore, parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

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

Hand hygiene

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

Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, occupational therapy equipment, respiratory equipment. Such equipment must be appropriately cleaned by school staff after each use.

The following points can guide the cleaning of such equipment:

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean.
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's 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.

Learning Support

- In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal to a resource room. Where possible, support teachers will work within the confines of a class level.
- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers will be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- Where children from Third to Sixth Classes receive support in one of the resource rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group.
- The tables and chairs in the resource rooms will be wiped clean after use.

10) Staff Duties

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

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form
- Inform Mr. Lyons if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate safe return to the workplace.
- New staff and staff members returning to work following a leave of absence for the duration of the 2020/2021 school year must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to return to school.
- Be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Wear a face covering in the school when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- Be aware of, and adhere to, staff room protocols.
- Coordinate and work with colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Be aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Do not return to or attend school under any circumstances if symptoms of COVID-19 are present.
- Follow HSE guidance if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel if a staff member travels outside of Ireland.
- Adhere to the procedure outlined in Section 8 of this document if a staff member develops any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school.
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health.

11) COVID-19 Related Absence Management

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

In the event that a teacher or SNA is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher or SNA for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available for a mainstream class teacher, the DES has advised that schools may “use other non-mainstream teachers to cover the absence”. It is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes, therefore our school will endeavour to provide for mainstream class teacher absence by using one of our support teachers as a substitute teacher in incidences when an external substitute teacher cannot be sourced.

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time for personal reasons and/or family reasons due to COVID-19, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to provide the school with a letter or certificate from a doctor or consultant to confirm the need for the child's absence from school.

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, the class teacher (and/or a resource teacher) will endeavour to liaise with the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) and suggest activities to support the child's learning at home.

12) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

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

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 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.

The Board of Management of Scoil an Chroí Ró Naofa Íosa 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. These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member be experiencing any difficulties he/she should feel free to speak to Mr. Lyons, Ms. Donohoe or any member of the in-school management team.