



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills



# **COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary Schools:**

## **Coláiste de hÍde**

## **Table of Contents:**

- 1) What is a School COVID-19 Response Plan?
- 2) School COVID-19 Policy
- 3) Planning and Preparing for Return to School
  - 4.1) Induction Training
  - 4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
  - 4.3) Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
  - 4.4) Display signage
  - 4.5) Making changes to school layout
  - 4.6) Update Safety and Risk Assessment
  - 4.7) Access to the School and Contact Log
- 4) Control Measures – To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools
  - 5.1) Know the Symptoms of COVID-19
  - 5.2) Respiratory Hygiene
  - 5.3) Hand Hygiene
  - 5.4) Physical Distancing
  - 5.5) Use of PPE in Schools
- 5) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities
- 6) Hygiene and Cleaning in School
- 7) Dealing with a suspected case
- 8) Staff Duties
- 9) Absence Management
- 10) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme
- 11) Code of Behaviour

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1**      Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

**Appendix 2**      Lead Worker Representative

## **1) What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?**

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

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education plan for school reopening that will aim to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of schools complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to students, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice and any other relevant agreement with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and sustainable return to work, and reopening of schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM/ETB, staff, students and parents.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

*Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify the same.*

## **2) School COVID-19 Policy**

Coláiste de hÍde is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our students. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM/ETB 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 students on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan in relation to summer provision
- inform all staff and students of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the public health guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and students 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 students 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.

### **3) Planning and Preparing for Return to School**

The BOM/ETB aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Before reopening schools for the 2020/21 school year each school will need to have processes in place to include the following:

- Means of keeping up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates;
- Means of passing on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education (**details at Section 4.1**);
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form (**details at Section 4.2**);
- Identified a Lead Worker representative (**details at Section 4.3**);
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 (**details at Section 4.4**);

- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing (**details at Section 4.5**);
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school but take into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment (**details at Section 4.6**);
- Made necessary arrangements to restrict access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school (**details at 4.7**);
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:
  - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
  - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
  - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

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

#### **4.1) Induction Training**

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

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

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

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

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

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the principal (**Appendix 1**).

A RTW form should be completed and returned **3 days** before returning to work.

On receipt of the completed form the principal will provide details 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.

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

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

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

- are over 70 years of age – even if fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Details of the arrangements that will apply for these staff, which will be in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, will be updated by the Department of Education following consultation with management bodies and unions and a circular will issue to all schools.

### **4.3) Lead Worker Representative**

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

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in respect of schools. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review.

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

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

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

The role of LWR is separate to that of the Safety Representative under the health and safety legislation. However the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.

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;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- 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;
- Consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19;
- Promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- Monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week);
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;

- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 response plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or other s/he should contact the LWR/s who will engage with the Principal/ETB.

Names of Lead Worker Representative/s:	Contact details:
Máirtín de Barra	mairtin@colaistedehide.ie

All staff, students, 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 control measures.

Full details of the arrangements which apply for the LWR in post primary schools is set out at **Appendix 2**.

#### **4.4) Signage**

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The Department will provide printed posters to schools with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc.

Coláiste de hÍde has displayed signage in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

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

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Further information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is found at **Section 5.4**.

S. 10A Saotharlann	DORAS ISTEACH	Oifig AÓN	S. 9 Bliain 5: Rang Naithí
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S. 10B Saotharlann		↕	S↕	S. 8 Bliain 5: Rang Bhríde
S.10C Saotharlann		↕		S. 7 Seomra Comhairleoireachta/ Seomra Cruinnithe
S.10D Seomra Taispéantas		↕		S. 6 Seomra Stórais
S. 11 Seomra Ealaíne	Cistin Bhreise do Mhúinteoirí	↑ ↗ ↘		S. 5 Seomra Oibre do Mhúinteoirí
DORAS AMACH	← ←			S. 4A Bliain 4: Rang Aonghusa
	<b>Bialann</b> <b>Bl. 4 - 6</b>	↑ S↕ ↓		S. 4B Bliain 4: Rang Maelruain
Oifig MNA		↑ ↘		S. 3 An Teanglann
An Leabharlann	Oifig na hIdirbhliana			S. 2 Bliain 3: Rang Chilliaín
Seomra Foirne	L L	↕		S. 1 Bliain 3: Rang Aodáin
Seomra na Feighlithe	L L L	↕		
S. 13 Bliain 2: Rang Santain		↕		Oifig an Rúnaí (Sadhbh)
S. 14 Seomra Miotalóireachta		↕		Oifig an Phríomhoide Tháinistigh (SNM)
S.15 Seomra Adhmadóireachta		↕	S↕	Oifig an Phríomhoide (CMG)
Oifig SÓD			AN PRÍOMHDHORAS	S.C. Bliain 2: Rang Dominic

Halla A. Bliain 1: Rang Chrónáin
DORAS ISTEACH → S↕
Halla B. Bliain 1: Rang Mológa

Oifig MÓL	↕	S. 31 Seomra Leithlise
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<p><b>S</b>↕</p> <p>↕</p> <p>↕</p>	S. 30 Seomra Stórais
	S. 29 Seomra Breise Mata
	S. 28 Seomra Breise Eolaíochta
<p>↕</p> <p><b>S</b>↑</p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p>↕</p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p>↕</p>	S. 27 Seomra Grafaic Theicniúil / Seomra Breise Béarla don Ardteist
	S. 26 Seomra Ceoil
	S. 25 Seomra Ceoil
	S. 24 A Cistin
<p><b>L</b></p> <p>↕</p> <p>↕</p> <p><b>S</b>↕</p> <p>↕</p> <p><b>DORAS ISTEACH</b></p>	S. 24 B Seomra Eacnamaíocht Baile
	S. 23 Bliain 6: Rang Éanna
	S. 22 Bliain 6: Rang Cholmchille
	Oifig   S. 21 INF   Seomra Tacaíocht   Feabhais

<b>L</b>	Halla Spóirt
<b>DORAS AMACH</b> ←	
<b>S</b> ↕	<b>Bialann</b> <b>Bl. 1 - 3</b>
<b>L</b>	

Córas Aontreo i bhfeidhm

\*siúil ar chlé

**S**↕ - Staighre síos

**S**↑ - Staighre suas

**4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment**



**Risk Assessment**

Hazards	Is the hazard present	What is the risk?	Risk rating High/Low	Controls (When all controls in place)	Is this control in place?	Action/to do list/outstanding controls	Person responsible	Signature and date when action
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## First Aid/emergency procedure

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

## 4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

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

- Every visitor must make an appointment with the school secretary before arriving at the school. The secretary will meet the visitor at the front door and ask them to complete our school contact tracing log.

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



Contact Tracing Log

<b>Name of School</b>	Coláiste de hÍde		<b>School Contact Person</b>	
<b>Address of School</b>	Bóthair Cháisleáin Thigh Móthain, Tamhlacht, BÁC 24.		<b>For Queries only: Phone No</b>	01-4513984
			<b>Email</b>	@colaistedehide.ie
<b>Name of Visitor</b>				Was the visit pre-arranged with the Principal? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Date of Visit</b>	___/___/___	<b>Time</b>	<b>Entry to school</b> _____ am <input type="checkbox"/> pm <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Exit from school</b> _____ am <input type="checkbox"/> pm <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Visitor Status</b>	Contractor <input type="checkbox"/>	Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/> Please complete: _____	
<b>Contact details of visitor</b>	Company Name (if applicable)			
	Address			
	Contact No.		Email Address	
	Reason for Visit			
<b>Who the visitor met (separate line required for each person the visitor met)</b>				
<b>Name of Person visited</b>			<b>Length of time spent with each person in the school</b>	

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

#### **4) Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools**

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student - student, teacher - teacher and teacher- student, 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, students, 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, students, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

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

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

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

- Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and students not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the principal (or deputy principal if the principal is unavailable) promptly;
- Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (***details at Section 8***);
- Advise everyone entering the school building that they needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contract point;
- 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. They are:

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

## **5.2) Respiratory Hygiene**

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

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

## **5.3) Hand Hygiene**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and are laminated.

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

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

When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that students do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

### **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Students and staff should perform hand hygiene:

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

## **5.4) Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in a post primary school setting 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. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at time.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from students and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the student.

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

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

The suite of measures set out in Coláiste de hÍde:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing; (single desks 1m apart, clutter and unnecessary furniture removed)
2. Utilising and reconfiguring all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing; (two canteen areas, one-way system)
3. Review Timetables; (more double classes)
4. Reconfiguring Classes; (12 bases classes in the largest rooms in the building)
5. As far as possible and practical students would be assigned to a main class cohort which would remain in the classroom for most subjects, with teachers moving between rooms.
6. Where possible and practical double classes should be planned to minimise movement during the day.
7. Where students have an elective subject they would move quickly into the new class and would be seated with members of their class cohort, observing as much physical distance as possible.
8. Hand washing and/or sanitising is required when moving between classes by teachers and students.
9. Physical distancing between the teacher and class would be observed.
10. Where movement of class groups between rooms is required it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.
11. Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.
12. Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.
13. Where students need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimise congregation at the shared resource.
14. Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items.
15. Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

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

#### **Staff**

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

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

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

Implement no hand shaking policy.

Minimise gathering at the beginning or end of the school day.

### ***Corridors and Stairwells***

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions. Lockers are only to be used at the beginning and at the end of the day. Students are advised to keep their books in their base classes.

## **5.5) Use of PPE in Schools**

It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members and students. Staff members can wear a visor if a physical distance of 2m or more can be maintained.

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

### **Masks/Face Coverings**

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.

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

Information should be provided on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

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

### **N.B:**

**If anyone is not complying with the policy regarding face coverings, a call will be made home. If the situation is not resolved they will be sent home. There will be exceptional cases to this policy.**

### **Gloves**

The use of disposable gloves in the school by students or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for matters such as cleaning, intimate care settings or when administering first aid. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves.

Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

## **Aprons**

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

## **5) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

### *Choir/Music Performance*

- For the moment, singing and the playing of wind and brass instruments should be minimised due to the additional risk of infection.
- Where such activities need to occur, a risk assessment on the size of the space, the ventilation levels within the space, and the positioning of singers/players with extended social distancing should be conducted.
- Any classroom performing should take place in a well-ventilated space with social distancing observed. Such activity should be for a maximum of 10 minutes with the space being aired appropriately afterwards. Student positioning should be back to back or side to side. Avoid singing and playing face to face.
- In terms of developing performing skills, it may be necessary in the interim for teachers to demonstrate and model the skill. Students can practise at the skill at home, record their efforts and then submit this to the teacher online.
- The sharing of classroom instruments such as smaller percussion instruments should be avoided as much as possible. It may be necessary to allocate instruments to specific students; these instruments should be sanitised before and after use. If students have their own instruments, they should bring those, ensuring they are appropriately sanitised and not shared with others.
- Before playing keyboards, pianos and other classroom instruments, all players should wash or sanitise their hands. Piano keys should be disinfected with cleaning cloths before and after being played.
- Social distancing between the pianist and other performers and between all performers should be observed.
- Audio equipment, music stands and other devices in use should all be regularly wiped down.
- It will be important to follow the manufacturer's instructions in relation to the cleaning and disinfecting of electronic keyboards and other electronic devices.
- Larger extra-curricular school groups such as choirs, and wind and brass ensembles should be avoided at present.

### *Sport Activities*

- Physical activity (PE) is important and students should be encouraged to participate in PE provided they are well and asymptomatic. It is always advised that students do not train/ exercise when ill.
- It is suggested that, where practical, PE lessons should take place outdoors. If this is not possible, the external PE hall doors should be opened.

- Where group work is being undertaken, students should stay in the same group for the duration of the lesson. As with all physical group activities, it is important to be mindful that with more vigorous exercise the area of spread of respiratory droplets is greater and so a larger area should be allowed between participants where possible and in keeping with public health advice.
- Avoid sharing of water bottles. Each student should bring his/her own water bottle and towel clearly labelled with this/her name. The sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect should be discouraged. The sharing of towels, clothing, or other items used to wipe faces or hands should not be allowed. Students should bring in their own training gear. School sets of jerseys or bibs should not be used unless completely necessary. In such cases, they should be washed at the highest temperature after every use.
- Spitting should be strictly forbidden ([COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents](#)).
- Whistles should not be used indoors; alternative mechanisms can be used to attract students' attention.
- Physical guides, such as signs or markings on floors or pitches, should be displayed to make sure that teachers and students are aware of social distancing requirements. Distance between students should be created when explaining drills or the rules of a game.
- Where practical demonstrations are required, the teacher may have to repeat the demonstration to a number of smaller groups. This will help to prevent all students grouping together. Unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, or hugs should be discouraged. Alternative ways of celebration or greetings that do not involve contact should be used.
- In relation to contact sports, it is advised to avoid as much as possible the contact aspect of sport and instead focus on fitness and skills, which can allow maintenance of social distancing.
- Clean and disinfect shared equipment between uses by different people. For each individual lesson, the cleaning (with antibacterial wipes) of equipment should be done by the students after they use them.
- For items that may be difficult to decontaminate such as helmets, students must, where possible, provide their own.
- The toilet areas will need regular disinfecting to maintain appropriate hygiene standards.
- A whole-school approach to facilitate students wearing their PE uniform/gear to school on the day that they have PE should be agreed to avoid the use of communal changing rooms.
- Subject department planning is key to ensuring the activities/curricular areas that are being taught are selected carefully to reduce the need for close contact. When planning for teaching, learning and assessment, the PE department should review the subject specifications and identify learning outcomes that are non-contact and could be done individually and remotely (for students who are unable to attend school). This will be particularly relevant for schools offering LCPE where restrictions related to COVID-19 may impact the practical activities selected.

- Communicate all new measures and rules which will need to be implemented related to COVID-19 with parents in advance of the resumption of PE. Ensure that parents and students understand what measures are obligatory.
- Extra-curricular physical activities both at lunchtime and after school will need to be discussed and a decision made if they are viable. Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport [COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents](#) for further guidance.
- If schools are renting out their sporting facilities, for example, in the evening or at weekends, they should carry out a risk assessment to ensure they can guarantee that all public health guidance is being adhered to. Similarly, if schools are using external facilities, a similar risk assessment should be conducted and measures put in place to ensure that the guidance is observed.
- Ensure the availability of hand sanitisers adjacent to the PE hall and/or changing area.
- Where possible, one-way circulation should be provided for entering/leaving the PE area.
- While activities up to Grade 3 of [COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents](#) (page 5) would be possible, individual activities should be prioritised as these present less risk. A list of activities that present a relatively low/moderate risk might include:
  - Athletics – jumping, running activities (except relay); throwing activities such as shot-put, discus, javelin, and hammer could be considered but would require the equipment to be cleaned/wiped after each use so may not be practicable
  - Adventure activities – orienteering, kayaking
  - Aesthetic activities –individual dance and gymnastics performances
  - Divided court games – badminton, tennis, table tennis. Volleyball, squash and handball could be considered but as these activities involve players sharing the same court space they may be considered slightly higher risk
  - Field games – skills sessions where skills are developed outside a game context
  - Health-related activity / personal exercise and fitness – circuit training or other activities performed individually; weight training could be considered if equipment is cleaned by each participant after use
- Additional time at the start and/or end of PE lessons may be necessary to facilitate cleaning of equipment that has been used. Where possible, students should wipe down/clean equipment at the end of a lesson. A more thorough cleaning/sanitising of all equipment that has been used should be carried out at the end of the school day.

## Art

- All large equipment, machines, and hand tools are to be cleaned/sanitised after the last lesson each day.
- For each individual lesson, the cleaning (with disinfectant wipes) of machines and tools that are used should be undertaken by the students and built into the typical housekeeping procedures that are the norm in practical classrooms such as cleaning

down work areas and drawing boards, sweeping floors and general clean-up. For example, if a student uses a printing press, disinfectant wipes should be provided beside the press and students should clean any contact areas after each use.

- Students should use disinfectant wipes to clean desks and drawing boards (where they are used) at the end of each lesson.
- Where possible, students should have individual art-packs with everyday tools and materials such as pencils, paint brushes, paints, coloured pencils, pastels, charcoal, measuring equipment, mixing tray, sketchpad/notebook, eraser, sharpener, scissors. Each art department should adapt the contents of art packs to meet the needs of their school/class groups. This could be included on the students' booklist or supplied by the school as part of the overall art department equipment/materials.
- Where practical, students should only use the tools/equipment assigned to them and should not interchange these with other students. For example, in a lino printing lesson, students should only use their assigned cutting tool, baren and bench hook equipment. Where possible, a class group should be assigned individual tools for the duration of the project/unit of learning and these should be stored in named ziplock bags (or similar) between lessons. Where equipment such as ink tubes and rollers have to be shared, these should be wiped clean between each use.
- Students should wash their own pallet and brush at the end of a lesson. Teachers should stagger students' use of sinks to ensure social distancing. Students should wash their hands thoroughly after using the sink. Taps and sinks should be wiped down with disinfectant wipes at the end of the lesson.
- For the preparation and handling of student materials such as clay, drawing boards, paper and paint, teachers should wear gloves to avoid direct contact, where it is safe to do so. Gloves should be disposed of after each use. A similar approach should be taken when handing out materials to students and collecting materials or work from them.

To avoid crowding around storage areas, students should leave wet work on their desks at the end of a lesson for teachers to place on drying racks. Teachers should distribute students' work-in-progress at the beginning of lessons, taking appropriate steps to avoid direct contact.

- Where possible, each student should store their workpieces in their lockers to avoid others coming into contact with them. It may not be practical to store A2 folders and larger pieces of work in lockers. Where possible, drawings/paintings that can be stored in sketchbooks should be prioritised. Art room storage should be reserved for larger scale works as necessary.
- When planning units of learning, teachers should consider how equipment will be assigned to class groups for the duration of a project/unit, in order to avoid cross contamination. All members of the art department should plan collaboratively to minimise overlap of use of equipment by rotating areas of learning where possible. For example, where 'class group A' is using ceramic equipment, other classes could, where practical, avoid using the same equipment until 'class group A' has finished their project and all equipment has been sanitised. This is particularly important where teachers share classrooms and/or tools and equipment.
- Layout of practical art rooms should follow the general social distancing health and safety advice provided. It is important that face coverings are worn during lessons.

For practical demonstrations, digital technology such as the visualiser could be used to reduce the need for students to group together. Many visualisers also have the capability to record demonstrations so this will provide an additional support for students.

### Wood Technology/Construction Studies, Engineering, Applied Technology/Technology and Graphics/DCG

- All machines and hand tools should be cleaned/sanitised after the last lesson each day.
- For each individual lesson, the cleaning (with disinfectant wipes) of machines and tools should be done by the students and built into the typical housekeeping procedures that are the norm in practical classrooms such as cleaning down work areas, sweeping floors and general clean-up. For example, if a student uses a pillar drill, disinfectant wipes should be provided beside this machine and students should clean any contact areas after each use.
- Where practical, students should only use the hand tools assigned to them and not interchange these with other students. For example, in a Wood Technology lesson, students should only use their assigned chisels, mallet and marking-out equipment. Where hand tools such as measuring tapes and vernier calipers have to be shared, these should be wiped clean between each use.
- For the preparation and handling of student material such as metal, perspex, paper and timber, teachers should wear gloves to avoid direct contact, where it is safe to do so. A similar approach should be used when handing out this material to students. Where practical, designated storage space within the classroom should be made available for each individual class group to store their materials between lessons in order to reduce the risk of other students coming into contact with the materials.
- All students studying the Technology subjects should have their own safety goggles for using equipment such as the bandsaw or scroll saw. These should be kept and stored safely by each student and cleaned at home each evening. If a student is studying more than one of the practical subjects (including Science), one set of goggles is adequate.
- For practical demonstrations, digital technology such as the visualiser could be used to reduce the need for students to group together. Many visualisers also have the capability to record demonstrations so this will provide an additional support for students.
- It is important that face coverings are worn during lessons and unnecessary movement around the room should be avoided.

### Science

Teachers have flexibility to consider how best to safely manage laboratory equipment and PPE within the parameters of current public health guidelines and taking account of the context of their own school. The following guidelines provide an example of what may be considered when making decisions about implementing the curriculum, including affording students the opportunity to engage in scientific investigations.

- Where Science is an elective subject consisting of a mix of students from different base classes, students should be seated with members of their class cohort.
- It is important that face coverings are worn during lessons. If practical, all available space should be utilised and reconfigured to ensure physical distancing.
- Group sizes for practical work should be kept as small as resources and space allow and students should work in discrete groups where possible.
- The application of enhanced cleaning regimes within laboratories and the need for students to take personal responsibility will be key to successfully keeping the laboratories operational.
- If practicable, non-alcohol based hand sanitiser or skin friendly disinfectant wipes should be used in the laboratories. If alcohol gels are used, care should be taken to avoid exposure to any source of ignition.
- Students should use disinfectant wipes to clean their bench area and chair/stool on entering the room and before leaving.
- The ideal arrangement for the use of safety glasses is for each student to have his/her own labelled set of eye protection which they store safely and clean each evening. Safety glasses should not be shared between students. Each member of staff should have his/her own personal eye protection.
- Shared lab coats should not be used unless they can be laundered between each use. If necessary, students could wear an old shirt as protection over their clothes.
- Sharing laboratory resources between groups should be avoided/minimised where possible.
- Where the sharing of laboratory equipment between students cannot be avoided, each piece of shared equipment should be cleaned/wiped between each use.
- Glassware should be cleaned after use by washing by hand in hot, soapy water using a bactericidal detergent and dried with a paper towel. Other equipment such as mains-powered electrical equipment, gas taps and sockets should be wiped thoroughly, paying particular attention to touch surfaces such as switches.
- Priority should be given to senior cycle students in relation to the use of microscopes. In doing so, students should use their safety glasses and the lens and focus wheels should be cleaned between each use.
- Science departments should revise risk assessments of investigations in line with current public health guidelines. Activities involving saliva, such as cheek cell sampling, the use of saliva as a source of amylase or the use of straws (for example, blowing into limewater or collecting small organisms using a pooter) should be avoided at present. If students are investigating the effect of exercise on breathing or pulse rate this could be carried out at home and results discussed in class.
- Visits to a farm or fields in Agricultural Science should comply with the health requirements in place at the time of the visit. If the visit is not possible, plan for school provision of alternative equivalent learning, for example a virtual tour of a farm.
- Where an activity requires the use of equipment that is difficult to clean, the activity may instead need to be carried out as a teacher demonstration or virtual demonstration. In order to reduce the need for students grouping together during a teacher demonstration, a visualiser or mobile phone camera could be connected to a data projector. Recording the demonstration would allow students to access it at home for revision.

- Due to the extra cleaning of equipment required, time must be allocated for this at the start and end of lessons; the measures here are more suitable to double or one-hour lessons rather than to single lessons.

## Home Economics

### **Food studies**

To ensure that a safe and practicable working environment can be provided, it is advised that a maximum of one student per work station completes practical work in a lesson; this will possibly result in students completing practical work on alternating weeks. Students not completing practical work could complete tasks linked to the practical work being undertaken.

### **Textiles**

When completing practical textiles work, students should use their own equipment or be provided with equipment for their sole use for the duration of a project. Where possible, when planning for units of learning, the focus of practical textiles work should be on crafts that do not necessitate use of the sewing machine. When the sewing machine is used, students should operate the machine individually, be adequately skilled to work independently, and wipe down contact areas on the machine using antiseptic wipes after use.

### **Planning**

- Teachers should plan to educate students about the additional procedures to be followed in practical lessons to ensure a safe working environment for all at this time; for example, guidance should be provided on the safe use of disinfectant wipes on electrical appliances.
- As always, the focus of practical classes should be on the development of practical, procedural and cognitive skills. When planning units of learning, teachers should consider how these skills can be developed in their school in a COVID-19 context.
- If teachers plan for students to bring perishable ingredients into school, arrangements should be made at a local level to facilitate the safe storage of food and to minimise student movement in the school building.

### **Other arrangements in practical lessons**

- Mechanical ventilation and windows should be used to ensure good ventilation in classrooms.
- It is important that face coverings are worn during lessons.
- Wherever possible, resources that are not easily washable or wipe-able should be removed from work stations. Teachers should consider the equipment provided in work stations and remove unnecessary items which can be distributed as they are needed.
- Systems that reduce students' movement from their work stations around the room should be considered and explored; for example, storing equipment at work stations

rather than centrally, and teachers distributing specialised equipment and ingredients (if appropriate). Where student movement in the classroom is necessary, such as when emptying waste bins, staggered access to the areas in the classroom should be facilitated.

- In some schools, ingredients are provided to students. When teachers are handling and distributing ingredients, gloves should be worn to avoid direct contact with ingredients. Gloves should be disposed of between tasks. A similar approach could be taken when distributing and collecting specialised equipment which is not available in work stations.
- In many schools, some frequently used ingredients are provided by the school. Teachers may request that students bring all ingredients needed or a school may continue to provide some ingredients; for example, an individual salt and pepper cellar and a bottle of cooking oil could be placed at each work station. Such containers, if used, should be cleaned with disinfectant wipes after use.
- For practical demonstrations, digital technologies such as the visualizer could be used to reduce the need for students to group together. Many visualisers also have the capability to record demonstrations so this will provide additional support for students.
- Contact points on equipment such as cooker knobs should be wiped using disinfectant wipes by students after use. Disinfectant wipes and bins for disposal of wipes should be provided at work units and/or near equipment including microwaves.
- All cloths, towels, oven gloves and aprons should be laundered at the end of each lesson. Where possible, students should provide their own apron, oven gloves, cloths and towels and bring them home to be washed. Where this is not possible, teachers should wear gloves when handling used items. In situations where items are laundered in schools, clear lines of demarcation should be evident between clean and dirty items. Ideally, cloths should be laundered in a washing machine on a hot wash cycle (at least 60°C) and then tumble dried.
- As students will be working independently, teachers may decide to allow students to taste their own dishes to evaluate their work. In such situations, students should use their own cutlery or disposable cutlery to taste food. As per normal, this should be undertaken hygienically. Alternatively, students could complete the evaluation of the taste and texture of dishes or products as a homework task.
- As usual, for each lesson, the cleaning of equipment/utensils that are used should be undertaken by the students and built into housekeeping procedures. In situations where sinks are not available for every work station, to maintain social distancing, teachers should stagger access to sinks or provide wash-up basins at work stations. Before washing up, students should wash their hands thoroughly, and the draining board/ workbench should be disinfected. Dishes should be washed using hot water and disinfectant washing-up liquid. Before drying equipment/utensils, students should sanitise their hands. When drying dishes, students should use a clean tea towel and place items in work stations/presses.
- At the end of each lesson, students should use disinfectant wipes/sprays to wipe down all work surfaces used and contact points such as press handles.

- Work surfaces and contact points on appliances should be cleaned/sanitised after the last lesson each day.

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

## 6) Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

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

If students are moving between classrooms, appropriate cleaning products will be provided to enable them to wipe down their desk, chair and surface before leaving the room.

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

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

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

Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or students 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 student/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present***

The rooms should be cleaned as soon as practicable possible.

Once the room is vacated the 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. Therefore when disinfection is required it is always in addition to cleaning.

Person/s assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).

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

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

## **7) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19**

Staff or students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building (seomra 31). If a staff member/student 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 student, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately;
- Isolate the person and the Principal/Deputy Principal will accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect;
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved – **(details at Section 7)**

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

## **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.

The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of COVID19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.

In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- Must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Coordinate practices and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Adhere to the procedure outlined above if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility. .
- Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

## **9) 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.

## **11) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

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

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home). A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is 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. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

## **12) Code of Behaviour**

Any student that doesn't adhere to the new procedures in policy and puts another student or a member of staff in danger will be dealt with severely. Cases will be dealt with on a case by case basis, or as they happen. It is accepted that if a student doesn't adhere to the procedures in this policy, sanctions of the code of behaviour apply.

## **APPENDIX 1** Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

This questionnaire must be completed by staff **at least 3 days** in advance of returning to work.

If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice before returning to work.

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

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

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Questions	YES	NO
1	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days?		
2	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3	Have you been advised by the HSE that you are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?		
4	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
5	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?		
6	Have you been advised by your doctor that you are in the very high risk group? If yes, please liaise with your doctor and Principal re return to work.		

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

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

## **Appendix 2 Lead Worker Representative – Post primary Schools**

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

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

The purpose of this section is to set out the provisions in respect of the LWR in schools. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review by the parties.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- the [COVID-19 Return to Work Safely Protocol](#);
- the [Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19](#);
- COVID-19 Response Plan for Post primary Schools (available on the Department of Education website).

### **1. Collaborative Approach**

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

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

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

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

The role of LWR is separate to that of the Safety Representative under the health and safety legislation. However the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.

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;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- 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;
- Consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19;
- Promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- Monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week);
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

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

- Cleaning protocols and their implementation
- Physical Distancing

- Configuration/re-configuration of the school facilities, including classrooms, corridors, halls, open areas, entry and exit points, school grounds etc.
- Implementation of one-way systems in the school to ensure social distancing including when entering and exiting the school
- Hand Hygiene facilities including their location and whether they are stocked and maintained
- Hand sanitising
- Staff awareness around hand hygiene in the school
- Respiratory hygiene
- Personal Protective Equipment
- At Risk Groups
- Visitors/Contractors

#### **4. Does a LWR have any legal responsibilities?**

No. A Lead Worker Representative does not have any duties in relation to COVID-19 other than those that apply to employees generally. In other words, the LWR is not responsible for the control measures within an organisation, which remains the employer's responsibility.

#### **5. Lead Worker Representative(s)**

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative.

In schools with more than 40 staff, a second Lead Worker Representative will be appointed.

#### **6. Selection of Lead Worker Representative(s)**

The school staff are entitled to select staff members for the LWR position(s). The LWR(s) represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role and must be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts. In this regard, where a school has two LWRs, the roles should be spread between teaching and non-teaching staff where feasible

All staff are entitled to volunteer for the LWR role and have their name put forward for election where necessary. The process for the selection and appointment of the LWR(s) is that management will seek expressions of interest from all staff in the first instance. A template email for this purpose is attached. If an election is necessary, all school staff members will have an equal vote to select the LWR(s)."

#### **7. Supports for the Lead Worker Representative/s**

The LWR(s) shall be entitled to:

- Be provided with information and training in respect of their role [*further detail to be provided*];
- Be consulted by school management on the control measures being put in place by the school to minimise the risk of being exposed to COVID-19;
- Regular communication with school management on issues related to COVID-19;
- Be informed of changes in practice arising from COVID-19 response measures;
- Have access to any risk assessments prepared or carried out in relation to COVID-19 and to details of incidents of suspected COVID-19 cases that have been notified to the HSE, where they occurred and any actions taken.
- Be provided with the necessary facilities to enable them to consult with employees or prepare any submissions or reports. These might include access to a meeting room, photocopier, communications and equipment.

Where the LWR is a teacher, the LWR will receive protected time of 2 hours per week from timetable to enable them to carry out their duties in that role. In the rare instances where the appointment of a teacher selected for the LWR would cause curricular/timetabling difficulties which cannot be resolved, school management will examine internal and external possibilities to enable the teacher's appointment as LWR. Where the matter cannot be resolved, management will set out the reasons why this is the case. In this circumstance, an alternative individual must be appointed as LWR.

Where the LWR is an SNA, 66 of the "72 hours" will be utilised by the LWR to carry out their duties in that role.

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

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

Where a COVID-19 control concern is identified by the LWR (or is notified to the LWR by a staff member), the LWR should bring this to the attention of the Principal. Action points for addressing the issue should where possible be agreed between the LWR and the Principal as a matter of urgency. Staff should be informed of the outcome. It is envisaged that issues will be resolved at school level to the maximum extent possible.

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

If, having exhausted the process above, a serious issue of concern remains outstanding, the LWR may have recourse to the [Health and Safety Authority](#).

## 9. Glossary of Terms

- **COVID-19 Response Plan:** plan designed to support the staff and BOM/ ETB in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment. The plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the Department of Education plan for school reopening and to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment. COVID-19 Response Plans for Post primary Schools are available on the Department's website.
- **Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF):** the forum for high level dialogue between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives on matters of strategic national importance - involves the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Government & Employers.
- **Return to Work Protocol:** national protocol designed to support employers and workers to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- **Safety Representative:** Section 25 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the selection and role of the Safety Representative in the workplace. The rights of the Safety Representative are set out in legislation. (Note: A Safety Representative has rights and not duties under the 2005 Act). This role is separate to the LWR under COVID-19, but the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.