

COVID-19 Response Plan



**ST. CLARE'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
HAROLD'S CROSS ROAD
DUBLIN 6W
ROLL NUMBER 16651H**

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

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1. Introduction

This response plan was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Clare's Primary on 07.08.2020. It adheres strictly to the Department of Education & Skill's 'Roadmap for the Full Return to School'.

The Minister for Education has published "*The Roadmap for the Full Return to School*" on the 27th July 2020. It sets out what the operation of schools will look like and the range of supports which will be available in a COVID-19 context.

It has been developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the "Return to Work Safely Protocols" developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. This document sets out the information that primary schools need to implement a School COVID-19 Response Plan, including a COVID-19 policy, lead worker representative and process to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in 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 which can be taken in our school to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection into schools while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The documentation and templates in this booklet are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities. That report is available [here](#)

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

The Department has worked intensively with the education partners to develop consistent plans, advice, protocols and guidance for schools, including the School COVID-19 Response

Plan. There is a suite of documentation available to support schools to continue to operate safely and fully including guidance on learning, school programmes and wellbeing for the 2021/22 school year. There is also information on funding, staffing and resources to schools to support COVID-19 measures. Schools are advised to familiarise themselves with these documents. All of the documents will be available at [gov.ie/backtoschool](https://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

A Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and the Board of Management 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 our school to meet the Government's '*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.

It is important that the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to pupils, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of St. Clare's Primary 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 for primary and special schools.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, 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 same.

2. School COVID-19 Policy

A COVID-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson and principal of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of the staff, pupils, parents and others.

St. Clare's Primary School COVID-19 policy can be found at **Appendix 1**.

4. Reviewing the Safe Operation of Schools

The Board of Management of St. Clare's Primary School aims to facilitate the continuation of school based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff. The operation of schools must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Details for the safe operation of St. Clare's Primary School and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Before reopening St. Clare's Primary School for the 2021/2022 school year we will have processes in place to include the following:

1. Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to and Department of Education updates;
2. Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required;
3. Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education **(details at Section 4.1)**;
4. Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form **(details at Section 4.2)**;
5. Identified a Lead Worker representative **(details at Section 4.3)**;
6. Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 **(details at Section 4.4)**;
7. Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing **(details at Section 4.5)**;
8. Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
9. Updated the health and safety risk assessment **(details at Section 4.6)**;
10. Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school **(details at 4.7)**;
11. Reviewed the school buildings to check the following after any period of closure:
 - 1) Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
 - 2) Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
 - 3) Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

4.1) Induction Training (to be completed by new staff)

All new 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 Board of Management.

4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available online or from the principal. A copy is available at **Appendix 2**.

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

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

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

4.3) Lead Worker Representative

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

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

Responsibility for the development 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 Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared responsibility in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker representatives who will engage with the Principal and the Board of Management.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent **all staff** in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as **washing hands regularly** and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;

- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to the measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct regular reviews of the safety measures;
- Report any issues of concern immediately to principal and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the principal 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 principal any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to the principal and/or school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

St. Clare's Primary School as a school with more than 30 staff is obliged to appoint a Deputy Lead Worker Representative in addition to the LWR. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise where the LWR is absent.

Name of lead worker representative	Contact details
Sarah O'Reilly	info@stclares.ie 01 4963237

Name of Deputy lead worker representative	Contact details
Catherine McKenna	info@stclares.ie 01 4963237

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 control measures.

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

4.4) Signage

Schools are required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The Board of Management has arranged for the display of signage throughout the school in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staff room area, classrooms and toilets outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

4.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. St. Clare's Primary School has reconfigured all classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the Department of Education guidance.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. The risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in St. Clare's is attached at **Appendix 4**.

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

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

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard procedures as outlined in our school's Fire Evacuation Procedures and the 'Accident/Injury Protocols' will continue to be applied. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, the school call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

The school will strive to identify additional fire evacuation lines to achieve the 2m physical distancing between class bubbles. Fire Drills will continue to be carried out each term as usual.

4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

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

Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit the school for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace.

A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering St. Clare's Primary School will be maintained as a supplementary procedure to our school's existing visitor procedures.

All staff members shall enter and exit the building via the controlled front door entrance.

The following procedures will apply:

- ✓ Hand sanitiser and wipes are available in the porch.
- ✓ Wipe the key pad before use with sanitising wipe.
- ✓ Dispose of the wipe in the bin provided in the foyer.
- ✓ Ensure minimum contact with door handles at all times.
- ✓ All staff shall wash their hands after entering the building before signing in.
- ✓ All members of staff shall sign in and sign out of the Staff Member Covid 19 logbook
- ✓ Staff will sign in and sign out will using **Jibble** to avoid contact.

The school visitor contact log is available at **Appendix 5**.

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

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

All school records and data will 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 in their role as data controller.

5. Infection Prevention Control Measures - To prevent the Introduction and the 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, 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.

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.

The Board of Management of St. Clare's Primary School will take the following additional measures to mitigate against the risk of the introduction of the virus to our school:

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into St. Clare's:

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

- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and pupils to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test;
- Advise staff and pupils not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
 - ✓ if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
 - ✓ If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel
- Advise staff and pupils that **develop symptoms at school** to bring this to the attention of the **Principal promptly**;

- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details at Section 8**);
- Advise staff and pupils to co-operated 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 an outbreak in the school;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser and in addition wash their hands thoroughly;
- Visitors to the school during the day will be by prior arrangement **only** and will be received at a specific contact point - the foyer at the main entrance;
- Physical distancing of 2m will 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-19 Tracker App

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

- alert you if you have been in [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
- give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms

It is recommended that staff download the free app from [Apple's AppStore](#) or the [GooglePlay store](#)

Employers and workers 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

All persons in St. Clare's Primary School should 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. In addition, please refer to St. Clare's Infection Control Policy.

5.3) Hand Hygiene

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

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

Adequate hand washing facilities are provided throughout the school building to meet the needs of the school population. *See St. Clare's Handwashing Policy.*

Wash hand basins, warm running water and liquid soap dispensers are provided in all bathrooms, kitchen, staff room, on the corridors outside the classrooms Room 1-18 and in the classrooms 5-8 and classroom 19.

Percussion taps are installed in all hand basins.

Each class is allocated their own toilet/hygiene area.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff shall perform hand hygiene:

- ✓ Before leaving home;
- ✓ On arrival at school;
- ✓ Before eating or drinking;
- ✓ After eating;
- ✓ After using the toilet;
- ✓ After playing outdoors;
- ✓ When hands are physically dirty;
- ✓ After coughing, sneezing or wiping one's nose;
- ✓ After touching cuts, blisters or open sores;
- ✓ After playing in sandboxes;
- ✓ After playing with water;
- ✓ Before leaving the school building at the end of the school day.

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

Pupils and staff have access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Hand sanitiser dispensers will be deployed at exit and entry points of the school building and in all classrooms, and care will be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies will be topped up regularly.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to all washing facilities. <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

Hand hygiene can be achieved by washing hands. Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

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

The hand sanitiser used in St. Clare's Primary School is **Alcohol-Free, NHS approved** and manufactured in the UK. It is:

- Alcohol-Free and kind to all skin types;
- Certified to be effective against Coronavirus;
- Kills up to 99.9% of germs and kills more resilient germs such as MRSA, C-Diff and Norovirus;
- The brand name is **Nilaqua Sanitiser Plus**.

5.4) Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in primary and special school settings allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

The focus will be in avoiding physical contact unless necessary which may include:

- First Aid Treatment
- If a pupil is emotionally upset
- One to one teaching by the class teacher or a SET teacher

Staff shall maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m.

Staff shall also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on the optimal school layout and referenced at **Section 4.5** above is used by St. Clare's Primary School to increase separation to the greatest degree possible.

Where required, our school has

- Reconfigured class spaces to maximise physical distancing
- Utilised and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

The teacher's desk is at least 1.5m from pupil desks.

Decreasing interaction

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

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

All classes will operate within a bubble system.

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

Within each class bubble there will **be Pods of a maximum of 4-6 children** established in all classrooms. In circumstances where available space restrictions and class number factors require it, **the Principal may sanction a Pod of 3 or 5 pupils.**

Within each Pod there is still 1m physical distancing between individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the Pod, whenever possible.

Generally speaking, the objective is to **limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles)** as

much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.

The aim of the system within St. Clare's 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.

Pupils and teaching staff shall consistently be in the same Class Bubbles.

Each bubble of classes will have access to their play zone during their allotted break times. Please refer to the supervision and break timetable.

The school is split into 3 groups:

- Group A: Room 5, 6, 7, 8
- Group B: Room 1, 2, 3, 4
- Group C: Room 9, 10, 11, 12

The sharing of educational materials between Pods should be avoided and minimised where possible.

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in corridors and other shared areas.

Classes will operate within a bubble system.

Within each class from 3rd to 6th, the children will be further divided into pods with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods. This means that the children will remain in their own pod in their own class bubble and share an outdoor play zone with the class in their bubble.

Each class is allocated their own toilet and hygiene area.

Corridors are 2m wide and social distancing measures will be implemented.

A one-way system will operate in the school building as is currently the case.

All areas in the school building are well ventilated with classrooms and corridors both having openable windows.

Classroom doors will be propped open to reduce contact points and also to increase ventilation.

The school is split into 3 groups with each group having different break times and play times.

- Group A: Room 5, 6, 7, 8
- Group B: Room 1, 2, ,3, 4
- Group C: Room 9, 10, 11,12

Staff and pupils shall not share any personal items.

Pupils shall avoid behaviours that involve putting pens, pencils into their mouths or sucking on the top of pencils/pens/markers.

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

Shared Equipment

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms such as Aistear.

Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes and other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils is outlined in detail in St. Clare's Primary School Logistic Plan is available at **Appendix 10**.

Walking, cycling and/or scooting is encouraged as much as possible.

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

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.

Social physical contact is prohibited at all times – no hand shaking and no hugs.

Physical distancing shall be observed between staff members **at all times**. **Step Back to Step Up**.

Communication is via Aladdin.

Staff shall pay particular attention to the procedures on entering and exiting the building. Only one staff member may be in the foyer at any one time. Staff observe physical distancing at all times and remain outside the building maintaining 2m distance until it is safe to enter.

Staff shall not gather in the staff room or on corridors or in classrooms at the beginning or end of the school day.

Staff can rotate between classes but this should be minimized where possible.

Staff shall not store clothes, shoes etc. in the classroom or in other areas of the school.

Staff Breaks

The Board of Management strives to support, within the confines of the public health advice, the good staff morale and healthy social atmosphere and relationships which is enjoyed by the staff in St. Clare's Primary School. The Board recognises the effect good staff morale and social relationships have on creating and sustaining a healthy workplace and also on the teaching and learning in St. Clare's. To this end, the Board is keen to keep the staffroom and a designated area in hall operational albeit in a limited form.

Seating Area

Physical distancing of 2m will apply in the staffroom and in designated staff area in the hall. Staff will sit at the same seat at each break time in the staff room and in the designated area in the hall; this is required for contact tracing. When finished eating, pack everything into your lunch bag wipe the table with an alcohol wipe and depart promptly taking your lunch bag with you. **Staff Room door will remain propped open at all times.**

Hot Water Boiler

A Hot Water Boiler (Burco) will be available in the staffroom and in the designated staff area in the hall.

Staff will use an alcohol wipe when dispensing hot water and will wipe down the front panel of the Burco before and after use, using the wipes available.

Only **one** staff member may approach the Burco (*Hot Water Boiler*) at any one time.

Sanitisation and Safety

Staff members are required to wash their hands before and after eating.

Each staff member is responsible for sanitising the table, the seat and the area where they eat, immediately afterwards.

Complete the cleaning requirements daily and complete the mandatory daily checklist.

Other Utensils

All staff are required to bring food and use their own equipment and utensils. (cup, cutlery, plate etc.) **No preparation of food is permitted in the staff room.**

Corridors

Briefly passing someone on the corridor is unlikely to contribute to the spread of infection **if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.**

All staff and pupils, shall walk on the left at all times whilst walking along the corridors while maintaining physical distance at all times.

Classes must stand back and wait for a class to pass or walk on **and must maintain their class bubble by not intermingling with other classes on the corridor.**

The usual protocols will be followed by the class teacher and staff when classes are moving throughout the school.

Classes and/or individual pupils **are not permitted to leave their classroom** unless for a timetabled event, e.g. PE Lesson, SET teaching, circuits.

Playground/Supervision

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

Playground times will be split to ease congestion on the playground and allow for class bubbles to maintain a distance from other class bubbles. Please refer to the break and supervision timetable.

Children will perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

Playground equipment will not be shared beyond a class bubble and will be sanitised after each use.

Ventilation

The Department of Education (DE) has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice '*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*'. The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](#).

- On arrival at 07:00, prior to commencement of the school day, all windows in each classroom, SET rooms, on the corridors, the staff room, the library, isolation room, offices, kitchen and in hall to be opened to ensure proper ventilation in the school building as recommended.
- To ensure proper ventilation all windows shall be left open during the school day in each classroom, SET rooms, on the corridors, the staff room, the library, isolation room, offices, kitchen and in the hall over the course of the school day and closed 30 minutes after the school closing time.

5.5) Use of PPE in Schools

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

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

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. The Department has accepted this recommendation. **Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members** where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. (*Please see note re medical grade masks on page 23*)

Workers should be trained in the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE. The HPSC has produced posters and videos on the correct donning and doffing of

PPE available 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
- In the event of a bodily fluids incident
- 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.

In addition, please refer to St. Clare's Bodily Fluids Spillage Policy.

Face Coverings/Masks

The wearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they may be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

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 coverings coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

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

Staff who are attending to particular care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves, aprons and face masks.

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

All staff wearing face coverings are reminded not to 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 on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings is available [here](#).

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.

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

Medical Grade Masks

Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

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

St. Clare's Primary School provides medical face masks to EU Standard EN 14683 for all staff.

Gloves

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

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

Aprons

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

6. Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

Choir/Music Performance

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

Sport Activities

Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here. <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sport-protocols/>

Shared Equipment

All toys will be cleaned on a regular basis, some will require weekly cleaning and some daily.

Cloths used to clean toys and equipment will be machined washed at 60 degrees.

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

Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils and pupils with supplementary educational needs may be inclined to put into their mouths will be washed and disinfected daily.

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

Play dough and Thera-putty will be for individual use **only**.

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Some hard-plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water that is electronic or wind up should be wiped with a damp cloth and dried.
- In some situations, toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. Toys/equipment that have been soiled or toys where a case of COVID-19 has been identified.
- If disinfection is required: A chlorine releasing disinfectant should be used diluted to a concentration of 1,000ppm available chlorine. The item should be rinsed and dried thoroughly.

Art

Each pupil will have their own set of colouring pencils and/or markers and shall not share with other pupils in their class.

Electronics

Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, or keyboards will 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.

Library Policy

Where practical pupils should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment

Minimise equipment sharing and clean equipment between uses by different pupils.

Pencil Cases

All pupils will have their own pencil case that will remain in school at all times.

7. Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. St. Clare's Primary School will comply with the advice.

St. Clare's Primary School has arranged for enhanced cleaning of the school. All areas of the school building are cleaned at least once per day.

The cleaning of our school will be covered in the Covid-19 induction training for all school staff.

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

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

Complete the cleaning requirements daily and complete the mandatory daily checklist.

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

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

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

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

The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.

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

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

The person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.

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

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

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

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

8. Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Staff or pupils of St. Clare's Primary School shall not attend school if displaying **any symptoms of COVID-19**. The following outlines how St. Clare's will deal with a suspected case that may arise in our school.

Room 23 has been identified within the school building as a designated isolation area. The **veranda area to the rear of the kitchen** is identified as a back-up isolation room.

If a staff member or a pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedures will be implemented:

- A mask will be provided for any person presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask.
- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately;
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area **Room 23** and/or the **Veranda area** via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.
- The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be 2m away from others in the room;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home and or be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m, a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- 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 and/or 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 shall be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times. School staff should be encouraged to download the **HSE COVID-19 tracker app** to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes. Both in and out of the school setting **(see section 5.1)**.

9. Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

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

In keeping with our Special Education Policy, support teaching will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble.

- 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 3rd to 6th class receive support in one of the SET rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group.
- The tables and chairs in the SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending.

Hand hygiene

Pupils who are unable to wash their hands by themselves will 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 pupils may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment.

Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out a cleaning schedule detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

The following points can guide the development of such cleaning schedule:

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean;
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.
- Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water.
- Equipment that is used by different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child e.g. toileting aids;
- If equipment is soiled with body fluids:
 - First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
 - Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
 - Rinse with water and dry.

10. Staff Duties

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

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- New staff must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained at all times.
- 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.
- Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- 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 accordance with the agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department of Education Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An [Occupational Health Strategy](#) is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of '*Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile*'.

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

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

Where appropriate, 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. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.

How to access the EAS?

The EAS is accessible through the dedicated **Free-phone Confidential helpline** at **1800 411 057** and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Alternatively, text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 to avail of EAS support on SMS & WhatsApp. Employees can access the Spectrum.Life wellbeing portal as follows: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=yVIIU17>

Signed: 
Sr. Mercedes Coen
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 20.08.2021

Signed: 
Maria Spring
Principal

Date: 20.08.2021

