



Covid Response Plan for Presentation College, Currylea.

Table of Contents:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) What is a School COVID-19 Response Plan?
- 3) School COVID-19 Policy
- 4) 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
- 5) 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
- 6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities
- 7) Hygiene and Cleaning in School
- 8) Dealing with a suspected case
- 9) Staff Duties
- 10) Absence Management
- 11) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

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 post primary schools.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

Appendix 2 Lead Worker Representative

Appendix 3 School Contact Tracing Log

1) **Introduction**

In accordance with the Work Safety Protocol, each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work.

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

This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in post primary schools to minimise the risk of infection 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 the school and the steps to 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 reopen 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

2) **What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?**

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and 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 a school to meet the Government's ' *Work Safely Protocol*', to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that school based teaching and learning and the operation of schools complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to students and staff 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 for post primary schools.

In line with the Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM, 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 same.

3) School COVID-19 Policy

Our COVID-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the response plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The revised, updated policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson of the BOM and principal and brought to the attention of the staff, students, parents and others on our school website. The signed copy is on view in the school foyer.

4) Reviewing the safe operation of schools

The BOM aims to facilitate the continuation of school based teaching and learning and the return to a safe working environment of 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 a school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document. Each school will need to review their current processes in ensure that they include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice 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 or classroom layout if necessary 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 limit access to the school to necessary visitors 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 (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 BOM.

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 Deputy Principal.

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

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 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 respect of schools.

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.

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;

- In conjunction with school management, 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 COVID19 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 regular reviews of safety measures
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Names of Lead Worker Representatives:	Contact details:
Una Kirrane & Gillian O Connor	Una.kirrane@prescurrylea.com & Gillian.oconnor@prescurrylea.com

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 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.

There is a link on the Department website for these posters.

Schools can arrange to display the posters in prominent areas.

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.

Information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is found at **Section 5.4** below including a link to the "[Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all students for the 2020/21 School Year.](#)

Schools can reconfigure classrooms and other areas to support physical distancing in line with the guidance.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings has been undertaken by the Board and is available on the school website.

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 schools 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 be incorporated into the schools statement.

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.

Arrangement 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 schools and centres 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 the school facilities will be maintained. The school should maintain a log in the foyer for all visitors to sign.

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/en/news-media/data-protection-implications-return-worksafely-protocol>

All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

5) Infection Prevention 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.

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

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 to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/confirmed case
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland: in such instances staff and students are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel
- 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**);
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contact 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

If you have any common 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. 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

You can 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

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.

There is a requirement for 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 can be 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 should be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

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

Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.

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

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. Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame

Choosing a Hand Sanitiser

Hand sanitising gels are biocides and fall under the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) – Regulation (EU) 528/2012. The Pesticide Registration and Control Division (PRCD) of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the competent authority for biocides in Ireland. Only biocidal products listed on the DAFM biocide product register are legal to market and use in Ireland. Schools should ensure that all sanitisers and disinfectants they have carry a PCS 9xxxx, PCS 1xxxxx, IE/BPA 7xxxx or an EU-000xxx-xx registration number on the label. Each product registered by DAFM will carry a unique registration number specific to that particular product. If the product label does not contain any of these number formats, Schools should not purchase or use the product. To confirm the biocide can be used on the Irish market, Schools can check the registers of products online at Biocidal Product Registers. Further information from DAFM on Sanitisers and Disinfectants is available by contacting them at biocide-enforcement@agriculture.gov.ie or at the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine website. Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol. Nonalcohol based hand sanitiser may also be used. However, in choosing a hand sanitiser, it is important to ensure that it is effective against Coronavirus.

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.

A drawdown framework which was established for the 2020/2021 school year will continue to remain in place to enable schools purchase hand-sanitisers and any other necessary PPE

supplies for use in the school. The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with the hand sanitising and PPE requirements in schools.

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

Increasing separation

Given that each school setting is different in terms of (i) location; (ii) physical layout (iii) available space within the school; and (iv) student numbers; schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate reconfigurations / operational changes necessary to maintain physical distancing.

In recognition that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be appropriate as schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate configuration for their school, the Department has developed a *Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year*. The Framework sets out a suite of available measures and this remains in place for 2021/2022 school year.

The suite of measures set out in the Framework are:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing;
2. Utilising and reconfiguring all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing;
3. Review Timetables;
4. Reconfiguring Classes;
5. Consider Use of Live Streaming within the School; and
6. Accessing available spaces within the local community

A link to the "Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year" is provided [here](#).

You can see a link to illustrated classroom layouts to maintain social distancing [here](#).

Decreasing interaction

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

In post primary schools physical distancing of 2m where possible or at least 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual students or staff.

As far as possible and practical, students would remain in the classroom and teachers would move between rooms.

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.

Where possible and practical double classes should be planned to minimise movement during the day.

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.

Hand washing and/or sanitising would be required when moving between classes by teachers and students.

Physical distancing between the teacher and class would be observed.

Where movement of class groups between rooms is required it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.

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

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.

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.

Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items.

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

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting students should be arranged to maintain physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible.

Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing requirements may not be respected.

Staggered drop off/pick up times should be arranged where feasible.

If schools have additional access points, consideration may be given to whether they can be used to reduce congestion.

Students should head straight to their designated learning space/classroom.

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.

Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks etc.

At post primary level consideration could be given to formation of staff “pods” or teams who work together and take breaks together.

Staff meetings should 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.

Canteen

Ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities

Stagger canteen use and extend serving times where possible to align with class groupings.

Implement a queue management system.

Make sure students clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.

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.

Ventilation

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

should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](#).

5.5) Use of PPE in Schools

The Department has published “Guidance to Post Primary Schools on PPE consumables and equipment” on gov.ie/backtoschool. This provides schools with the information needed on the appropriate quantities of PPE consumables and equipment to support the full and safe reopening 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.

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

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

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

Reception Areas

Consideration should be given to the use of Perspex in reception areas where it is not possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students. Minor works funding grant can be used for this purpose.

Masks/Face Coverings

The wearing of face masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined already but are to be used in addition to these protective measures especially where maintaining physical/ social distancing is difficult.

Face Masks 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.

It is therefore a requirement that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained.

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

All students on the post primary transport scheme should be asked to wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

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

- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

All staff 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/>

All teachers and staff should be aware that they should wash or sanitize hands (using a hand sanitizer) before and after helping a student put on or adjust a face covering.

Face coverings should be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn (e.g., in individually labelled containers or bags).

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.

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day. Whilst staff may wish to utilize 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 Escorts.

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

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.

6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

The Department will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on school activities in advance of school reopening.

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.

Shared Equipment

Art – Where possible students should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

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.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments should be

Library Policy – Where practical students 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. Students should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

7) Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

The Department of Education will provide additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. Details of the funding supports will be provided to schools by way of circular and will be updated as required. The funding will be provided to schools in advance of reopening.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and will be covered in the induction training. 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. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate. Schools are reminded to take particular care of the hygiene arrangements for wash hand and toilet facilities.

In summary, each school setting should be cleaned at **least once per day**. Additional cleaning if available should 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 consideration may be given to appropriate cleaning products being 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.

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

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.

If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a canteen, 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 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 should be identified within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19 should be considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and students.

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 have a procedure in place to 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;
- 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;
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a student should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- 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. School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes.

9) 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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
- 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.
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health
- 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

10) 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 selfcare. 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.

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 COVID19 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 COVID19 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 e.g. where there is a significant number of non-teaching staff in the school and one or more expressions of interest are received from that cohort (this will be discussed further between the parties).

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 have a vote to select the LWR(s).

The LWR(s) will, following selection by the school staff, be formally appointed by the BoM/ETB. The LWR(s) will be required to confirm, prior to taking up the role, that they have been provided with and have completed the requisite training and that they are fully aware of the requirements of the role.

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.

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of post primary schools

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

Appendix 3

Contact Tracing Log

