

## **Covid-19 Response Plan**

### **Introduction**

This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Knock National School. The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school re-opening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change. The response plan will support the sustainable re-opening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school. In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

This document aims to provide details of:

1. COVID-19 School Policy
2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School
3. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)
4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
5. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus
6. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
7. Control Measures

8. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

9. Staff Duties

10. Covid-19 related absence management

11. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

12. Special Education

13. Transport

14. What to do if a child is in the school/educational facility and they suddenly feel unwell or develop symptoms?

15. What to do if a staff member is in the school/ educational facility at the time that they feel unwell and develop symptoms?

16. Checklists

17. Age Specific Health education Suggestions

The assistance and co-operation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan. Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify the same. Note: The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie), [www.dbei.ie](http://www.dbei.ie) [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie), [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie), [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie); [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## **1. Knock National School's COVID-19 Policy**

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

Our Covid-19 Policy Statement has been ratified by the School Board of Management and is available on the school website.

## **2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School**

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government. Details for the re-opening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

### **School Buildings**

Before re-opening Knock National School we have checked the following:

- The building have been checked thoroughly for any signs of deterioration over the closure
- Water systems have been checked and flushed regularly to prevent Legionella disease
- Water and essential services are in operation

### **Signage Schools**

Schools are required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The school has downloaded posters from the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website where there are a number of posters with regard to Coronavirus. The school has displayed posters from the Department of Education and Skills and purchased a number for display in classrooms and throughout the school pertaining to correct coughing and sneezing etiquette.

## **Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW) & Appendix 6 Checklist for School Management**

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a Return to Work (RTW) form, which is available electronically or from the Principal. A RTW form should only be completed at least 3 days prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace. Each member of staff received a RTW form and this was completed in advance of return to work. The Principal disseminated Induction training links to all members of staff. This was completed prior to return to the workplace.

### **3. Return to Work Safely and Lead Worker Representative**

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership of Knock National School. The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

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

- Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
- Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

- Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace. If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response
- Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal

<b>Name(s) of Lead Worker representative:</b>	Shirley Horkan
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All staff, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors have a responsibility both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

#### **4. Safety Statement and Risk**

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at Appendix 1. 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. 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.

#### **5. Infection Prevention Control Measures- To Prevent Introduction and Spread of Covid-19 in Schools**

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

- a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or more
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- loss or changed sense of taste or smell

- shortness of breath

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place. This can be achieved through the following measures:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- 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 parents of pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases not to attend school and self isolate, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- 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 live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - 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 to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Everyone entering the school building should be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point.

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

Covid-19 virus. Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website –

<https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. Knock National School will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner via our school website and or email.

The Department has been working closely with the HSE and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) to develop health advice which has been tailored to the needs of schools in order to support schools in planning for re-opening in autumn. The link to the Interim Public Health recommendations for the re-opening of schools can be found below. The advice will continue to be updated in line with public health advice generally and will inform the development of more detailed guidance for schools by the Department of Education. <https://www.education.ie/en/covid-19/interim-recommendations-for-the-re-opening-of-schools-and-educationalfacilities.pdf>

## **Managing the Risk of Spread of COVID-19**

### **Hand Hygiene**

Every classroom has a sink with warm running water and anti-bacterial hand soap available to children. Children are encouraged to wash their hands frequently particularly after play and before eating. Each classroom has a hand sanitizer station. Children use this on entry to and exit from the classroom.

Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing: For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

The Board has purchased hand sanitisers for use throughout the school. These are located in each classroom and at each entry and exit point. Sanitiser is stored in the caretakers store.

Frequency of hand hygiene pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;

- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze
- When entering or exiting a vehicle
- When entering or exiting a school building

Hand sanitiser dispensers are deployed at exit and entry points of the school and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls. Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing. Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas. Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities.

### **Physical distancing**

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace.

Physical distancing will be usefully applied 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. The Board has purchased a number of stickers and posters to remind staff and children of the importance of physical distancing. All pods have been measured to ensure a distance of 1m between pods in the classrooms. Teacher's desks are 2m from children where possible.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation



- Decreasing interaction Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout have been used by staff at Knock National School to increase separation to the greatest degree possible.

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom we have:

1. Re-configured class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilised and reconfigured all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

## **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 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.

## **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 prerequisite to re-opening a primary or special school for all pupils. Each class and their teacher will be referred to as a 'bubble'. Where possible, from infants – 2<sup>nd</sup> class, pods are located 1m apart. All pods from 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> class are 1m apart. Each pod is colour coded and children are given wrist bands that correspond to their pod colour to eliminate confusion during transition periods. The aim of the system within Knock National School is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. Pods sizes are kept as small as possible – generally 4/6 children in each pod.

Opening, closing and break time have been staggered in order to decrease interaction. Each yard area is marked using the pod colours and line by pod before entry to the building.

Sharing educational material between pods should be avoided/minimised where possible. We are conscious that staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble should be limited as much as possible. With this in mind, one SET has been allocated to the junior end of the school and another to the senior end of the school. Due to staffing limits SNAs have to move between the bubbles. This has been kept to a minimum.

#### **Additional measures to decrease interaction include:**

- 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 pupils 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 minimize congregation at the shared resource.
- Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.
- Encourage pupils to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device 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 pupils should have been arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible. Please refer to emails sent out to staff and parents. Parents are asked not to congregate.
- Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible.
- Arrangements have been made to maintain a distance of 2m between parents/guardians and school staff.
- All access points are being used to reduce congestion.
- Signage has been erected to remind people of physical distancing. The school yard have been marked to ensure physical distancing when children line up after break.

- A one way system has been created for entry and exit to the school premises.
- Staggered starting, break and finishing times have been implemented. Pupils are advised to go straight to their small group 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.
- Staff meetings have and will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.
- A no hand shaking policy is in place.
- Minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day.
- Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this should be minimized where possible.

## **Staffroom**

In order to ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities we will:

- Stagger staffroom use and extend serving times to align with class groupings.
- No more than two people should be in the staffroom at any one time
- Children will not be permitted into the staffroom area.
- Staff have the use of two separate areas for canteen purposes

## **Corridors**

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. We would however advise that all members of staff would use the right hand side of the corridors where possible as indicated by floor stickers in situ.

## **Yard/Supervision**

The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. Play time/outdoor activities have been staggered and adjusted to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits and on the yard. It is not possible to maintain a physical distance when pupils in primary or special schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups. Therefore all bubbles must play within their own class bubble/ group and no interaction between any class bubble is permitted. Break times have been staggered and each class has been assigned a designated area on the yard. Each classroom has a specific area for lining up at the end of break – this has been marked to ensure physical distancing and colour coded as per each pod. Access to the yard for activities such as PE lessons will be timetabled so as to avoid congestion and mixing of class bubbles. Children should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities. Sharing of equipment is not recommended and must be minimised. All equipment used must be cleaned after before and/ or after use by different people.

## **Practice Respiratory Hygiene**

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid19. Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

### **Do**

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

### **Do Not**

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean

- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

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

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk.

The HSE has set out these groups, which include people who:

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

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

- Are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- Have a serious heart condition and if pregnant the advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. Refer to Circular 42/2021.

Details of the leave arrangements that will apply will be updated by the Department of Education and Skills. If the Board/Principal is unsure whether or not staff fall into the very high-risk category, advice will be sought from the Occupational Health Service.

### **6. Control Measures**

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school . These control measures are outlined in this document. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements. Staff, in particular, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace. The following control measures have been put in place:

#### **Return to Work Form**

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test. Parents are required to complete a Return to Educational Facility Form if children are absent for any reason.

#### **Induction Training**

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

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

- Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

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

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the Covid-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal.

### **Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices. Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school facility and are available in each classroom.

### **Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

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

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that medical grade face coverings should be worn by staff members within the school setting. All staff and essential workers wear medical grade face coverings.

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

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice. The Board has purchased PPE for staff to use while providing intimate care.

### **Reception Area**

A Perspex screen has been installed in the reception areas as it is not possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or students. Essential visitors to the school must enter the building through the main entrance only and follow the procedures now in place to ensure the safety of all in our school community.

### **Face Coverings/Face Visors/Masks**

#### **Medical Grade Masks**

Medical grade masks are available to all SNAs, teachers and essential workers. These are readily available in dispensers at various locations throughout the school. It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings. All staff wearing face coverings are 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 on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered in addition to wearing medical grade masks.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe. Masks should be changed after going to the bathroom, after it is removed for eating or drinking (after each break) and should it become wet, dirty or damaged.

It is essential to note that 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 pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for cleaning, intimate care settings and when administering first aid. Nitrile gloves have been purchased for staff use.

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. Disposable aprons have been purchased for use while providing intimate care. These have been placed in the bathrooms used for assisting with toileting and changing.

## **7. Cleaning**

Thorough cleaning of Knock National School has taken place. The entire school has received a deep clean and been disinfected using a ULV Fogger.

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces have been made before, during and after each school day. The school employs a cleaner to clean the premises each evening and all high traffic areas, communal areas and touch points are cleaned during the day. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty. All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. 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 are not available for use by staff or pupils due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas.

## **Access to the School Building /Contact Log**

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. All staff and visitors sign contract tracing log on entry to the building.

## **First Aid/Emergency Procedure**

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Knock National School.

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999  
Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident

Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19 staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how Knock National School will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work. A designated isolation area has been created in the area beside the photocopier. All staff have been made aware of this. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 has been considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area is behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Knock National School the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, 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

- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. 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. The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff confidentiality is essential at all times
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## 8. Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties.

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

1. Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.
2. Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
3. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
4. Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19.
5. Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
6. If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
7. Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
8. Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
9. Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
10. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
11. Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

## **9. Covid-19 Related Absence Management**

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

## **10. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The Board of Management of Knock National School aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work.

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

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

## **11. Special education**

### **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 reasonable 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 might suggest illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present, children should not attend the school.

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

## **Hand Hygiene**

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

## **Equipment**

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which require 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 in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

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

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

Staff who provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment should apply Standard Precautions, as per usual practice.

The use of a face covering will conceal facial expression and can make communication difficult and as such may not be practical in this setting however the wearing of a visor as an alternative to a facial covering may be considered where there is a concern that physical distancing cannot be

maintained, there will be prolonged close contact and/or that exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets is likely

## 12. Education support in the home

### General

- Staff should work consistently with one household or the same designated number (2-3 of households)
- Staff should be aware of the common symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath and myalgia/muscle aches) and that if they have symptoms of infection including COVID-19 should not provide the service.
- Families should inform the teacher as soon as possible if any member of the family has a new cough, temperature or shortness of breath

Before entering the student's home:

- Confirm that the child and members of the child's household have no symptoms of COVID-19 On arrival to student's home:
- Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or with hand sanitiser if your hands are visibly clean on arrival and when leaving the house.
- Bring a limited number of the items you expect to use with you into each child's home
- Bring as little as possible of your personal items into the child's home. Where it is necessary to bring personal items with you, try to avoid using them in the child's home and minimise any contact between the child and your personal items.

If you bring a mobile phone into the client's home try to avoid using the phone during the visit and if use is unavoidable remember to clean the mobile after leaving the premises

## 13. Transport

- The DES Response Plan to Covid-19 states that transport personnel should be empowered to decline to transport a child who has obvious symptoms.
- When waiting for transport physical distancing should be maintained.

- Children should disembark in a controlled way from the bus, which is one at a time.
- Supplies of hand sanitizer, tissues, gloves or wipes should be supplied on board the transport vehicle for staff and children to use as needed.
- Bus escorts have been provided with face visors and masks
- Where physical distancing cannot be maintained on board the vehicle then those over the age of 13 who can wear a cloth face mask/covering should be encouraged to do so recognising however that for many with special educational needs this will not be appropriate.

#### **14. What to do if a child is in the school/educational facility and they suddenly feel unwell or develop symptoms?**

- If a child develops any symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever, shortness of breath or sudden loss of taste or smell while in the care facility, a staff member will need to take them to the place that is planned for isolation. This should be a room if possible but if that is not possible it should be in a place 2m away from others in the room.
- Call their parent(s) or guardian and ask them to collect their child as soon as possible.
- Remember the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so the physical separation is enough to reduce risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room.
- If a distance of 2m cannot be maintained then a staff member caring for a child waiting for pick-up should wear a cloth face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin.
- The staff member should be aware that it is essential to avoid touching their own nose, mouth or eyes while caring for a symptomatic child and to perform hand hygiene.
- If a member of staff has helped someone with symptoms they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves or unless they are subsequently advised to by public health.



## **15. What to do if a staff member is in the school/ educational facility at the time that they feel unwell and develop symptoms?**

- If a staff member develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever or shortness of breath ask them to go home without delay and contact their GP by telephone. They should remain 2 m away from others if possible.
- They should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and be advised to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the bin.
- If tissues are not available, they should cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- If they can tolerate doing so and one is available they should wear a clean cloth face covering or a surgical mask.
- If they must wait, then they should do so in an office or other area away from others mindful of the need to observe good respiratory and hand hygiene.
- If they need to use toilet facilities they should wipe contact surfaces for example taps clean and clean their hands after attending the toilet.

**16. Checklists:** All up to date checklists can be found on [gov.ie/backto school](https://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

### **For Students**

1. In a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that you are not alone and talk to someone you trust, like your parent(s) or teacher so that you can help keep yourself and your school safe and healthy.

- Ask questions, educate yourself and get information from reliable sources.

2. Protect yourself and others

- Wash your hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
  - Remember to not touch your face;
  - Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others.
  - Practice physical and social distancing as much as possible
  - Be a leader in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy
  - Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family and friends, especially with younger children;
  - Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands, especially for younger family members.
4. Don't stigmatize your peers or tease anyone about being sick.
5. Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick, and ask to stay home.

### **FOR PARENTS**

- It is important for parents and for those who provide education to accept that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. Some level of risk of infection is unavoidable as a part of a normal childhood. It is important that parents have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of education and that it is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented in any setting either in a childcare centre, school or in a home.
- Know the latest facts Understand basic information about COVID-19, including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission.
- Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF and WHO and national advice and guidelines.
- Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online. GUIDANCE Re-opening of schools and educational facilities

- Recognise the symptoms of COVID-19 in your child. If your child develops COVID-19 symptoms, seek medical advice by first calling your GP. Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common. If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's

absence and symptoms. Request reading and assignments so that students can continue learning while at home. Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe. Keep children in school when healthy. If your child isn't displaying any symptoms such as a fever or cough it's best to keep them in school – unless a public health advisory or other relevant warning or official advice has been issued affecting your child's school. Instead of keeping children out of school, teach them good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent handwashing, covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin, and not touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven't properly washed their hands. The HSE website provides further information on how to wash hands properly to decrease the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

### **Help children cope with the stress**

Children may respond to stress in different ways. Common responses include having difficulties sleeping, bedwetting, having pain in the stomach or head, and being anxious, withdrawn, angry, clingy or afraid to be left alone. Respond to children's reactions in a supportive way and explain to them that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Listen to their concerns and take time to comfort them and give them affection, reassure them they're safe and praise them frequently. If possible, create opportunities for children to play and relax. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment. Provide age appropriate facts about what has happened, explain what is going on and give them clear examples on what they can do to help protect themselves and others from infection. Share information about what could happen in a reassuring way.

### **CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

1. Monitor your child's health and keep them home from school if they are ill.

2. Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children.

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty; Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed of;
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth, and nose.

3. Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.

4. Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another.

5. Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (through parent-teacher committees, etc.).

## **17. Age Specific Health Education Suggestions**

- Children and young people should understand basic, age-appropriate information about COVID-19, including its symptoms, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission.
- Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as HSE, HPSC, UNICEF, WHO and national advice on the radio and television.
- Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online
- Recommendations for Children Attending Primary School include:
- Make sure to listen to children's concerns and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner; don't overwhelm them with too much information. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. - Emphasise that children can do a lot

to keep themselves and others safe. - Explain the concept of social distancing (standing further away from friends, avoiding large crowds, not touching people if you don't need to, etc.)

- Focus on good health behaviours, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands - Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, by putting coloured water

in a spray bottle and spraying over a piece of white paper. Observe how far the droplets travel. - Demonstrate why it is important to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water - Put a small amount of glitter in students' hands and have them wash them with just water, notice how much glitter remains, then have them wash for 20 seconds with soap and water

- Have students analyse scenarios to identify high risk behaviours and suggest modifying behaviours - For example, a teacher comes to school with a cold. He sneezes and covers it with his hand. He shakes hands with a colleague. He wipes his hands after with a handkerchief then goes to class to teach. What did the teacher do that was risky? What should he have done instead?