



St Patrick's B.N.S Covid -19 Response Plan (updated 2021)

1. 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 St Patrick's BNS.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for our school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening 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). This Plan should be read in accordance with the Department of Education's Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools (Feb 2021).

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 reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils and the school community while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

This document aims to provide details of:

- 1 COVID-19 School Policy
2. Safety Statement
3. Planning and Preparing for the Return to School
4. General Advice
5. Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19
6. Control Measures
7. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
8. Staff Duties
9. Covid-related absence management
10. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme .

2. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

The Health and Safety Policy of St Patrick's BNS has been updated to include a risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings. The risk assessment is available on the school website.

3 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 school will be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.
Procedure for Returning to Work

Return to Work Form

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

The school will request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Return to Education Form

Parents will be asked to complete and return a Return to Education Form.

Covid 19 Induction Training will be completed/revised by staff.

Staff will be kept 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

Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

In accordance with the Return to Work plan, the following Lead Worker Representative(s) has been appointed:

LWR: Michelle Quinn and Jenny Doyle

Assistant LWR: Anne Dunne and Brian Skelly

The role of the Lead Worker Representative(s) is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace. The necessary training has been provided for the lead workers.

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. General advice to prevent the introduction and spread of the virus

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

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:

- ⇒ Physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be observed by staff, pupils and visitors.
- ⇒ Staff and pupils and visitors are advised 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;
- ⇒ Staff and pupils who develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly
- ⇒ Staff and pupils should know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- ⇒ Staff are encouraged to download the Covid Tracker app.
- ⇒ Staff and pupils are advised not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
 - if they have symptoms of Covid19, 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.

5. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

How to reduce the chance of getting infected by Covid 19

- ⇒ Wash your hands frequently
- ⇒ Maintain social distancing
- ⇒ Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

⇒ Practice respiratory hygiene

Do

- Wash your hands properly and often (• 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.)
- 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 you're 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 you are 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. 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 the revised Health and Safety Safety Statement for St Patrick's BNS which can be accessed on the school's website.

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.

> Changes to School

Unnecessary furniture and clutter has been removed to facilitate maximum space and cleaning , while taking into account the importance of having educational materials in creating a stimulating learning environment.

Ventilation Windows and internal doors will be open to increase room ventilation.

Bubbles and Pods Children will remain in their own classroom (unless outside for yard, in the PE hall, outdoor P.E, or outdoor lessons)

Children will be seated in pods in their classrooms (class bubbles). There will be 1 metre between pods and 1 metre between pupils within pods , from 3rd to 6th class. To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should constantly be in the same class bubbles although this will not be possible at all times. Sharing educational material between Pods should be avoided/minimised where possible. Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble will be limited as much as possible.

Physical distancing. Where a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained, staff should wear a visor/face covering.

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> Access to School

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures: (subject to review)

School gates will open at 8.40am each morning. Pupils are encouraged to walk/cycle to school.

The school requests that parents do not come onto the school grounds or into the school building unless it is for an essential purpose.

Drop-off times

	Arrival time	collection time
Junior Infants	8:50-9:00	1:30-1:35
Senior Infants	8:40-8:50	1:20-1:30
Downstairs classrooms in senior school	8:40-8:50	2:20- 1st class 2:25- other downstairs rooms 2:30- 3rd class 2:40- 6th class 2:35- other upstairs rooms
Upstairs classrooms in senior school	8:50-9am	2:30- 2nd class 2:40- 6th class 2:35- other upstairs rooms

There is no gathering in the yard or at the gates before this time.

Entry is through the pedestrian gate only. Exit is through the exit gate only.

Please drop the children directly to their class door (infants and downstairs rooms of senior school) where their teacher will welcome them. Classes of upstairs rooms gather in their lines area of the yard , supervised by staff, until their teacher collects them.

The Hug and Go area on the Junior yards are a one way system.

> **Access to Yard**

To support children remaining in their bubbles, break and lunch /yard times will be staggered as follows: (this is subject to change, following monitoring and review)

Times	Class
Break 1 10:00-10:10	Junior Infants
Break 2 10:15-10:25	Senior Infants
Lunch 1 11:45-12:15	Junior Infants
Lunch 2 12:20-12:50	Senior Infants

Times	Junior Yard	Senior Yard
Break 1 10:00-10:10	1st classes and Junior Language class	4th classes and senior language class
Break 2 10:15-10:25	2nd classes	5th classes
Break 3 10:30-10:40	3rd classes	6th classes
Lunch 1 11:45-12:10	1st classes and Junior Language class	4th classes and senior language class
Lunch 2 12:15-12:40	2nd classes	5th classes
Lunch 3 12:45-13:10	3rd classes	6th classes

> **Others accessing the school building**

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians are restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts. In addition see visitor contact log at Appendix 3.

All adults shall wear face masks within the school building.

After school clubs cannot occur, and will be reviewed on a regular basis by the BoM, in line with government guidelines for school and public health advice.

> **Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

Information posters are prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school, to remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus.

Hand sanitiser dispensers are available in each classroom and at entry and exit points. Outdoor pumps are available at the main entry points to the school grounds.

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

PPE will be required to be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. These circumstances include:

- Performing intimate care
- Providing first aid
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- where a physical distance of 2m between staff and pupils, and staff and other staff cannot be maintained, facial coverings must be worn.

Appropriate PPE will be made available in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)..

> **Masks**

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, the school has available a stock of additional disposable face coverings, and face visors. On the use of face masks by staff, the school provides medical surgical grade face masks, EU Standard EN 14683, which may be more appropriate for staff (for example where staff by necessity need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs such as SNAs or School Bus Escorts

> **Ventilation**

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.

> **Cleaning**

There are arrangements for regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school.

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

> **Teaching Resources**

Where possible children will have their own equipment eg pritt stick, scissors, clearly labelled.

Washable resources and shared electronics should be wiped down or cleaned in between use.

Children should have a school pencil case and a home pencil case to minimise movement of resources between school and home.

Each pupil will have their own individual book space at their table.

Classes will have set books/copies for homework. Homework will be completed and returned via an online platform.

The school library will not be in use. The class library can be available, with measures in place to minimise sharing of books and allowing 72 hours before others touch them. Children are encouraged to have their own reading book in their school bag.

> **PE & Sports Equipment**

Children will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after these activities.

Strand units that support physical distancing will be timetabled for P.E e.g Athletics, Gymnastics, obstacle courses, skills and drills, penalty shootout etc. Outdoor PE is encouraged. If using the hall, windows and doors will remain open.

> **Staff room**

Physical distancing must be applied in the staffroom. A maximum occupancy will apply to the senior staff room and the Junior staff room and must be adhered. Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.) They should wipe down their eating area once finished.

- > **The offices** that receive essential visitors will have Perspex screens on the desks. Only one person should be at the photocopier and it should be wiped down after use.

7. Dealing with a Suspected Case of Covid 19

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St Patrick's B.N.S 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 a staff member (either class teacher or the SEN teacher) is 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.

School staff are encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

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:

- ⇒ Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the preventative and 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.
- ⇒ 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 or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances, if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus or if they

have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

- ⇒ If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined in the Plan.
- ⇒ Complete the return to Work form (RTW) form and complete Covid 19 training before they return to work, and 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
- ⇒ Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with the same.
- ⇒ Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school, including any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

9. Covid 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 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.

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.

Support for school staff wellbeing is provided by Department Support Services, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'. The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have

access to a dedicated freephone confidential helpline 1800 411 057. Information about this support is shared with staff.

Appendix 1.



COVID-19 Policy Statement

St Patrick's BNS is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all pupils, staff and the broader school community by providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in relation to most recent public health advice and in consultation with school partners and the Board of Management.
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

