



St. Mary's N.S. Ashbourne Covid-19 Response Plan

Underlying Principles:

- The Board of Management of St. Mary's N.S. aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can make every effort to protect the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community - children, parents and staff.
- It is preferable that all children return to school for all five days and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve this.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the cooperation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to the school and consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as cooperation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

Assumptions (as per DES Guidelines)

1. All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system. Within each class the children will be divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between the pods inside.
2. Classrooms will be reconfigured to maximise physical distancing.
3. Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all class and support rooms and at various points around the school.

Procedure for St. Mary's N.S. Staff Returning to Work (RTW)

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school by all staff before returning to work. The Board of Management requested this in writing, in February 2021 for the first phase of school re-opening on 1st March, 2021 and again for the second phase of re-opening on 15th March, 2021.

Informing Staff and Parents of Infection Prevention Control Measures (to prevent introduction and spread of Covid-19 in St. Mary's N.S.)

1. Staff and parents have been advised to self-isolate or restrict their (and their children's) movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test.
2. Staff and parents have been advised not to return to or attend school (or send their children to school) in the event of the following:
 - (a) if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of Covid-19
 - (b) if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
 - (c) If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow the latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
3. Staff and parents have been 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.

Teaching and Learning:

As a staff, we are very mindful that the children have been away from school for a long period from March to June 2020 and again from January to March 2021. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families. Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the remainder of the 2020/2021 school year. The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

Wellbeing of the School Community

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff.

These are promoting a sense of:

- Safety
- calm
- belonging and connectedness to school
- self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- hope.

Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on what is known as the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

Lead & Assistant Worker Representative

Mr Liam Ó Brádaigh is the school's Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

Children who should not attend school:

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19.
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19.
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
- Children with underlying medical conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school.
- Children who have returned after travelling home from abroad and who need to self isolate for 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell.

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school:

- If a child is not able to attend school due to a confirmed covid-related absence, the class teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher, where relevant) may suggest activities to support the child's learning at home and share these with the parents/guardians.
- Children with underlying medical conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend the school will also be supported by class teacher and/or Special Education Teacher.

Hygiene and Cleaning

In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities. Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.

Hand Hygiene

- 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. Alcohol-based sanitiser in St. Mary's N.S. is not stored or used near heat or naked flame.
- Hand hygiene in the classroom will consist of washing hands using soap and water and the use of hand sanitiser.
- Additional sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at entry and exit points, in each classroom and in strategically located places.
- Good hand washing will be taught by the teacher and will be consistent with the methods recommended by the HSE. The teachers will implement safe procedures for getting all children to wash their hands.
- The children will be required to cleanse their hands throughout the day, including;
 - On arrival to school
 - Before eating and drinking
 - After using the toilet
 - After playing outdoors
 - When hands are dirty
 - After coughing or sneezing
- Children will be required to bring their own hand towels (to be kept in a zip lock bag in their school bag) to dry their hands.
- Teachers and students are advised NOT to shake hands with each other.

Dealing with a Suspected Case of Covid-19:

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

Pupils **should not attend school** if they are displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.

If a pupil complains of feeling unwell with any of the above symptoms a staff member will:

- Contact the secretary to ask that the pupil's parents/guardians be rang to arrange immediate collection from the designated isolation room.
- Ensure that they are wearing an appropriate face covering.
- Take the pupil outside of the classroom. Ask the child to put on a mask (but not if they are experiencing breathing difficulties) and sanitise their hands with gel. They will remain outside of the room (within your sight) while you wait for someone to escort the child to the isolation area, (Mr O'Connor or Mrs Kavanagh)
- Gather up the child's bag and coat.
- When the person arrives to escort the child, clean down the table and chair with disinfectant spray/wipe.
- Assure the other students in the classroom that there is nothing to worry about, should they ask. Scale back any activities that require excess mixing of pods e.g. PE and keep a close eye on the children in the same pod as the unwell child.

What if a staff member develops symptoms of Covid- 19 whilst at school?

- It is imperative that any staff member who develops any symptoms of Covid-19 during the school day, puts on a face mask in addition to their visor, and notifies Mr O'Connor or Mrs Kavanagh immediately. Once class cover is arranged, they should exit the school via the nearest possible exit and head straight home. If the staff member is too unwell to drive or walk home, they will wait in the isolation room until their designated contact collects them.
- The staff member needs to contact their GP to discuss their symptoms and seek medical direction.
- The covering teacher needs to disinfect any items in the classroom, particularly the teacher's desk and any items thereon, in advance of using them, as a precaution.
- The staff of St. Mary's N.S. has been reminded about the HSE COVID-19 tracker app and its purposes to assist Public Health for contract tracing, both in and out of the school setting.

Staff Duties in relation to Public Health

- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
 - (a) if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
 - (b) 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.
- Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school

- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

The Isolation Room (located in School Hall):

- When the pupil and escort arrive at the isolation room put down the pupil's bag and coat, use gel to sanitise your hands, thoroughly.
- The pupil can sit in the isolation room and await the arrival of their parent/carer. The window in the isolation room should be kept open to ensure ventilation. The child should be encouraged to remain in their seat to avoid potentially contaminating other surfaces.
- **If at any time the child is struggling to breathe or their condition is quickly deteriorating, phone 999 for medical advice.**
- When the parent arrives, they will be advised to ring their GP to discuss the child's symptoms and take medical direction from their doctor.
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation room.
- An assessment of the incident will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery. The HSE will inform any staff/parent who have come in close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The instructions of the HSE will be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality will be observed at all times.

Organisational Issues:

Arrival Procedures: gates will open at 9.05am

- Junior Infants – line up at Infants door with doors opening at 9.20am. Dismissal at 2pm.
- Senior Infants will go directly to their entry point and will be allowed access the school from 9.05am. Dismissal at 2pm whereby they line up at the front of the school (in front of secretary's office).
- 1st to 6th Class – From 9.05am until 9:30am, pupils enter school grounds and are allowed enter the school building through their designated entry door. After 9.30am pupils must go to the main door to gain access to the school building.

Additional Notes on Arrival Procedures:

- There will be no 'free play' before school.
- No adults other than staff members and parents of children in Junior or Senior Infants will be allowed into the school grounds in the morning and evening with the exception of first class parents, who are allowed access to the school grounds at 2.50pm for collection of their child.
- All adults on the school premises are asked to please wear a mask. We ask that parents **drop and go**.
- We encourage children to walk, scoot or cycle to school where possible.
- Messages for teachers from parents can be sent via email, Aladdin or by phoning the office.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry and exit points to all classrooms - children must sanitise their hands on entry.
- The staff car park will be for staff only.

Dismissal Procedures:

- The children will be brought to the designated exit point by their teacher - single file.

Wet Day Procedures:

All students enter the school via the same gate as per normal arrival procedure. They will then enter by their designated entry door from 9.05am.

Breaks:

- Each class will have their own designated play area on the yard.
- Line up in their play area when the bell goes. Silence until their class teacher calls them to move. They enter the building as they would in the mornings.
- Parents/guardians make sure that children bring their lunch to school to avoid adults having to come to the school building during the day. The children will not be allowed to share food, drink (or possessions) with other children.
- The children will eat their lunch at their desks, as per usual practice.

Uniforms/Tracksuits:

- We will follow our practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. In general tracksuits should be worn only on P.E. days. However there will be more flexibility on this as parents may need to wash uniforms more frequently.
- We strongly advise that the uniform and tracksuit be worn only for school. Uniforms and tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school and should not be worn in shops, after school activities etc.

Office:

St Mary's NS operates a contactless payment system. Aladdin connect is used for messages as well as email. Parents/guardians are asked to cooperate in helping to keep school staff and children safe by using these facilities to communicate. Unless it is absolutely essential, no adults other than staff will be allowed into the building.

- Children will not be sent to the office.
- As far as possible, staff members should not enter the office and should speak to the secretary by email or phone.

Substitute Teachers:

A laminated summary of this Covid 19 Response Plan will be pinned to each classroom teacher's noticeboard in the same place in every room. Substitutes will be advised to read this before commencing work in any classroom and to wipe down the laminated document when finished. Substitutes will be required to complete a return to work form before they enter the building and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction training.

The Use of PPE equipment:

Staff members may choose to wear a visor in classrooms / on yard but must wear a face covering if a distance of two metres is not being kept between themselves and other adults or children in any area of the school building or grounds. For a limited number of staff, additional PPE will need to be used due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. This might include:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- Where a suspected case of covid19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in the very high risk groups or may be living with those who are in the very high risk category
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with SEN.

Medical Grade Masks

St. Mary's N.S. provides medical grade masks in the EN16483 category to all SNAs and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs.

First Aid:

- Children will be treated for minor injuries on the yard and the teacher on duty will document these.
- Serious injuries will be brought to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Teachers administering first aid will wear a mask and gloves. These are available in each first aid bag.

Staff Room / Assembly Hall for Eating Lunch:

- Wash/sanitise hands before entering the staff room.
- Wear a mask/visor until you sit down.
- Staff sit 2m apart.
- Good respiratory etiquette should be practiced. (cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of tissues and wash hands)
- Staff will wipe table and chair after use and dispose of the wipe when finished.
- Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing have been placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and have been laminated.
- Posters and other signage, aimed at preventing introduction and spread of COVID-19 have been placed in staffroom and other areas of school building.
- Staff may bring their own condiments, cutlery and delph and take them home daily.
- Do not share food or drink.
- Minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning and end of the school day - table and chairs must be wiped down when leaving.
- Remove unnecessary clutter to enhance ease of cleaning.
- Frequent cleaning of work surfaces and touch points by Ms Wearen and Ailesbury Cleaning Services.

Personal Equipment:

Each teacher is responsible for cleaning and disinfecting their own personal equipment. They must clean down their own table area daily.

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.

- **Cleaning of Shared ICT Equipment in School:** We must sanitise keyboards, monitors, mice, phones, tablets, interactive panels, laptops and

laptop trolleys with the appropriate disinfecting products, not only at the end of each day, but after each individual use too.

- **When to clean:** Once an individual has finished using the equipment and at the end of the day.
- **How to Clean:**
 - Use suitable products for the device you are cleaning. .
 - Ensure electrical items are switched off during the cleaning process.
 - Make sure the cleaning product you are using has touched every surface.
 - Be thorough whilst also being careful not to damage the equipment by using too much product.
 - When using a spray disinfectant it is usually best not to spray directly onto the device. Instead spray a clean microfiber cloth and wipe the device down.
 - Check manufacturer specific guidance prior to cleaning.
 - Computer keyboards are difficult to clean properly. Shared computer areas, laptop trolleys etc should have posters displayed reminding of proper hand hygiene before and after using them to minimise risk.

Classroom Organisation:

The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our primary schools. To that end every effort will be made to limit interactions within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit sharing common facilities.

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, at the beginning and end of each day when children are not in classrooms, and during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use). Windows will remain 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.

All blinds are to be left up and windows and doors to be left open during breaks to improve ventilation.

Bubbles & Pods

- Each class group, including classroom teacher, will be considered to be a 'bubble'. Every effort will be made to ensure that class 'Bubbles' will not mix with other class 'bubbles'.
- Within each 'bubble', there will be a number of 'pods' of 4 - 6 children
- The desks in each classroom have been set out to ensure that each 'pod' is at least 1m from another pod.
- Children from 3rd to 6th are required to stay within their 'pod' and not mix with pods when in the classroom.
- Children from Junior infants to 2nd will also be placed in pods. These children are not required to social distance and it is accepted that interaction between pods at this level may occur.

Classroom Cleaning

- Each classroom will be cleaned and sanitised after the school is finished every day.
- Each teacher is responsible for thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting their own work area before and after use each day.
- The children will clear their desks of any items at the end of the school day.
- The floor areas will then be cleaned.
- After children have left the room, the cleaning staff will clean and sanitise:
 - The children's chairs and desks

- The floor
- The sink area
- The toilets
- Managing toys and shared items in the classroom - all items will be cleaned before a second use or quarantined for at least three days.

Storage of children's books and belongings

- Junior Infants and Senior infants will store their belongings in large boxes - one per pod.
- Children in 1st to 6th classes will store their classroom belongings (books and pencil cases etc.) in a clear plastic box in the class. During the school day, this box will be stored on/under their table.
- These classroom belongings will stay in school.

Physical Education (PE):

- Where possible PE should be done outside
- Minimise the use of equipment.
- Students will only be allowed in PE store under teacher / coach supervision.

Visitors to the School

- Only HSE, Gardaí, Department of Education and their related agency staff and persons deemed by the Principal to be integral to the maintenance and repair and management of the school, and only then through prior appointment, will be admitted to the school.
- In exceptional circumstances and only where business cannot be transacted remotely or online or by post, may a parent visit the school office. In such circumstances a face covering must be worn. There is no exception to this requirement.
- Should a parent / guardian need to drop an item, such as a lunchbox, into the school it is to be placed in the box located outside the front door and the parent can let Ms Casey know it is there by using the intercom.
- Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit 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 as a supplementary procedure to the school's existing visitor procedures.

- All members of staff must sign in.
- The school visitor contact log is available at **the school's main door and also from the secretary.**
- All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school in their role as data controller.

This document was reviewed in February 2021 by the Principal, Lead-Worker Representative and the Board of Management. It may change in accordance with guidelines from HSE and Department of Education and Skills.

Pat O'Connor

Paul O'Connor

Chairperson

Principal

Date: 26th February 2021