

St. Patrick's Loreto PS

Covid-19 School Response Plan

This is an updated **Covid-19 School Response Plan**. The document has been prepared on the basis of current public health advice and will continue to be updated as further public advice is received.

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Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) of St. Patrick's Loreto PS to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19.

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 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).

It is important that the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocols to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, these protocols, and the measures management and staff need to address, may also change.

The response plan supports the manageable reopening 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 school 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**
 - a. School Building**
 - b. Signage**
- 3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
- 4. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
- 5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
- 6. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
 - a. Wash your Hands Frequently**
 - b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitiser**
 - c. Avoid Touching your Eyes, Nose and Mouth**
 - d. Physical Distancing**
 - e. Practice Respiratory Hygiene**
 - f. People at Very High Risk (Extremely Vulnerable)**
- 7. Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19**
- 8. Control Measures**
 - a. Return to Work Form**
 - b. Induction Training**
 - c. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - d. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
 - e. Wearing of Gloves**
 - f. Cleaning**
 - g. Access to the School Building / Contact Log**
 - h. First Aid / Emergency Procedure**

9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
10. Requirements of Staff Members
11. Covid related absence management
12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The assistance and cooperation 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 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, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie;

1. St. Patrick's Loreto PS COVID-19 Policy

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the Covid-19 Response 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.

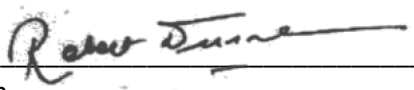
COVID 19 Policy Statement

St. Patrick's Loreto PS is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe and healthy learning environment for all our pupils. To better ensure that, we have developed this COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff members are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort from all members of our school community will help limit the spread of the virus.

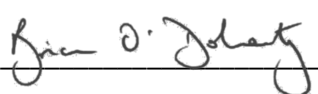
As a school community, we will

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff, pupils and parents 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 Lead Worker Representative 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 received from the Department of Education and Skills
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- 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 routines in line with the guidance and direction received from the Department of Education and Skills

All members of the school's staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions that may arise. This can be done through the Lead and Assistant Lead Worker Representatives.

Signed: 
Chairperson

Date: 25/02/2021

Signed: 
Principal

Date: 25/02/2021

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

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

a. School Buildings

Before the re-opening of the school building for the new school year:

- Water systems will be flushed and samples will be tested to ensure against the presence of Legionella bacteria
- School equipment will be checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again
- Waste collection and other essential services will be resumed

b. Signage

The school will display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (School) [RTW(s)]** 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.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide

- details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and
- details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility

See Appendix 1 for the Return to Work Form.

Note: Induction Training for staff will be developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff members

4. 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's leadership team.

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 Lead Worker Representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace by

- working collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19
- promoting good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice

- assisting with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace
- monitoring adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- consulting with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace
- making 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 Representative who will engage with the Principal/BOM to represent those concerns or observations.

Names of Lead & Assistant Lead Worker Representatives	Contact details
Barbara Dagg Mary Sparkes	

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.

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work by each member of staff. Staff members will confirm (verbally or in writing) that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. The school will conduct a Risk Assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings.

As part of this Risk Assessment, the school will review its emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents, etc., to consider any new risks that arise due to the COVID-19 School Response Plan. Any changes to the school's existing emergency procedures will be documented.

See Appendix 2 for the Risk Assessment document.

6. General advice to prevent the 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 the introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This can be better achieved by

- promoting awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors
- ensuring that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school
- requiring everyone entering the school building, to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser
- ensuring visitors to the school during the day are by prior arrangement and are received at a specific contact point

Staff and pupils must 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.

Staff and pupils must 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).

Staff and pupils should 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, 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 will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. The school will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and parents in a timely manner.

7. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

a. Frequent Hand Washing

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19.

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>

Hands should be washed 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

b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers

Hand hygiene can also be achieved by the use of a hand sanitisers (when hands are clean).

Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities.

They will be available at entry and exit points and in each classroom.

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

c. Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth

Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. Accordingly, the touching of one's eyes, nose or mouth with one's hands should be avoided.

d. Physical Distancing

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

Note: Guidance on the physical distancing requirements will be informed by public health advice for schools and will be updated over the summer period.

e. Practice respiratory hygiene

All members of the school community are required to 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 Covid-19.

f. 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:

- 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 immunosuppression 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.

g. Ventilation

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice 'Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools' The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

8. 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. 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 control measures are as follows

a. 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.

b. 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.

c. 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. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such posters 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 will be available in each classroom.

d. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE will be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. PPE will need to be used due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. Such instances include where:

- staff members are assisting with intimate care
- staff members are providing first aid
- a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre) Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment, they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Medical grade masks in the EN16483 category will be available to all SNAs and those staff, by necessity, that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs.

e. *Wearing of Gloves*

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It 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.

f. *Cleaning*

All classrooms and shared spaces will be sterilized/cleaned using a fogging system on a weekly basis. In addition to this, regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, lifts, door handles and kitchens. 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.

g. *Access to the school building /contact log*

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangements 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. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained.

See Appendix 3 for Contact Tracing Log

h. *First Aid/emergency procedure*

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedures shall continue to apply in the school. In an emergency or in the case of a serious incident, an ambulance or fire brigade will be called on 112/999. The principal or nearest first aider should be contacted, giving details of location and type of medical incident.

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

9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, 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
- The person will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times
- A mask will be provided 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
- An assessment will be made as to 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
- The school will facilitate the person presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
- The person presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided
- If the person is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP 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, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made 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.

10. Requirements of Staff Members

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, staff members are required to

- adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined - the cooperation and assistance of all staff members are essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far, as possible within the school
- coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained
- make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- self-isolate 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

- adhere to the procedure outlined above, if they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility
- complete the RTW form before they return to work
- 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
- complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- wear appropriate PPE as directed by public health advice
- keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same
- not return to or attend school in the event of the following:
 - 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)
- co-operate 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

11. Covid related absence management

Any Covid-19 related absence of a staff member will be managed in line the procedures detailed in Circular 0024/2020.

12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff at all times. 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.