



1. Introduction

This Updated 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. Mary's N.S.

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 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 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 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. Do g. Do Not h. 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. Induction Training – On-line Video d. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette e. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) f. Wearing of Gloves g. Cleaning h. Access to the School Building / Contact Log i. First Aid / Emergency Procedure
9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
10. Staff Duties
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;

2. St. Mary's N.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.

COVID 19 Policy Statement

St. Mary's is committed to 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 COVID19 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 consultation with our staff
- 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 in relation to summer provision
- 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 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 in line with Department of Education and Skills 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) Julie Horgan and Linda Lynch

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 work must be done safely and in 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 re-opening schools in the new school year schools are reminded to check the following:

- Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
- Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
- Have bin collections and other essential services resumed

B. Signage

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The following is a link to the dedicated area of the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website where there are a number of posters, including those appropriate for primary school pupils, located. Irish versions are also available here

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/>

Schools can download the posters and display in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

4. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete an updated Return to Work (RTW) form, which is available electronically.

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.

5. 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.

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/BOM.

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.

6. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

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 2.

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 Summer Provision 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.

7. 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 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 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;
 - Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

- 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.

Infection Prevention Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools 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.

St. Mary's N.S. will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner

8. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

a. Wash your Hands Frequently 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>

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 Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

d. Physical Distancing Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. Guidance on the physical distancing requirements will be informed by public health advice for schools.

e. 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 2 provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

f. 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 Covid-19. 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.

g. Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- 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

- Ventilate rooms appropriately
- Staff should Maintain a contact tracing log

h. 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.

i. 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 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.

9. 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.

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

The following control measures have been put in place:

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. Induction Training for Return to School

The Department has prepared short induction training for schools operating the summer provision this year. It is intended that this training will be updated and become more comprehensive to cover all aspects of the return to school safely protocols. The Induction training for the Summer Provision may be of interest in the context of the kind of training which staff will need to undertake is available at the following link. <https://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Services/summerprovision/summer-education-programme2020.html#SchoolBased>

d. 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.

Staff need to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser when entering and exiting vehicles, when entering and exiting school buildings and classrooms.

e. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All staff will continue to be advised of the updated advice issued from HSPC. Medical grade masks are advised and a stock is available for staff use. The Board of Management has also made money available to staff members to purchase masks.

PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care
- Where 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.

The use of a face covering will conceal facial expression and can make communication difficult and as such may not be practical in a school 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.

f. 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.

g. Cleaning Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

- 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.
- Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.
- There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.
- Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or pupils due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas. This shall be reviewed in line with government guidance.
- Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

h. 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.

A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained.

The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts.

In addition see visitor contact log at Appendix 3.

i. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St. Mary's.

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.

10. 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 St. Mary's N.S. will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation room is identified in the school with a closed door and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St. Mary'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 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.

11. 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 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
- 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 at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid19
- Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work
- Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace
- Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

12. Covid related absence management

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

13. 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.

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.

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An [Occupational Health Strategy](#) is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of '*Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile*'.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experienced mental health professionals.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.

