

+St. Joseph's Primary School for Children with Visual Impairment

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St. Joseph's COVID Response Plan

Introduction

The St. Joseph's school community has successfully and safely navigated its way through the challenging days of school closure due to Covid -19 in Spring 2020. We celebrated the joyful reunion of some children and staff for July Education Programme 2020 and the re-opening of our school to all pupils on 31st August 2020, while also being aware that there will be challenges ahead.

The health, safety and well-being of all members of our school community is very important to us all, and especially so at this time. Our school will operate under new norms and everyone in the school community will have to adapt quickly to new and revised practices and procedures, many of which are outlined in this plan. In our preparations and in putting together this plan, we have been, and will be following guidance from the HSE and Department of Education and Skills and applying them to our own school setting.

More than ever, we will all need to work together as a school community to fully support school procedures that have been put in place to minimize the risk posed by Covid-19. It is critical that staff, children, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined in this plan and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements. Each and every individual must play their part to ensure the safety of our school community as Covid-19 poses a serious risk to us all.

Our COVID school policy outlines our commitment to implement the plan outlined below and to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Aims

Through the implementation of the practices and procedures as outlined in this policy, our school community aims to:

- Do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into our school.
- Reduce the likelihood of the spread of Covid-19, insofar as possible, within our school if introduced.
- Detail for all members of our school community how our school will operate so we can be sustainable in a Covid-19 context.
- Balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a calm and supportive environment for teaching and learning

Underlying Principles

- This COVID Response Plan is a living document. It has, and will be, updated in line with public health advice as appropriate for schools. Most recently, it has been amended to reflect compliance with the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the 'Work Safely Protocol' which has been developed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA).
- The school has a responsibility to make every effort to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- Assuming it is in keeping with current and emerging public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all in the school community – Board of Management, staff, parents and children - will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete the relevant Covid-19 Induction Training modules, provided by the Department of Education, prior to returning to the school building. This involves general and role-specific training. The aim of the training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health and keeping each other safe
- Covid-19 symptoms;
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school;
- Overview of the Department of Education Covid-19 Response Plan document.

Staff will consider and discuss the St Joseph's Covid Response Plan, including the control measures in place at the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19. Following on from this initial training, staff will be kept fully informed regarding any changes to the control measures or in 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 Board of Management.

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, available online or from the principal. An RTW form should be completed and returned 3 days before returning to work.

Following subsequent periods of closure, staff will be asked (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged.

Lead Worker Representative (LWR) and Assistant LWR

All staff, pupils, parents, 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.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, our school will have two staff members, the LWR and the Assistant LWR, who will take a particular responsibility, along with the Principal, in implementing Covid safety procedures. The LWR and Asst. LWR are appointed as whole-staff representatives. The Assistant LWR will help the LWR and will deputise for the LWR when s/he is absent. The role of the LWR and Assistant LWR will be to:

- consult and work collaboratively with the Principal in putting into practice the control measures outlined in our plan to prevent the spread of COVID -19, e.g. procedures relating to arrival and departure, hand and respiratory hygiene, use of PPE, physical distancing, cleaning protocols, visitors, contact tracing log
- consult with all staff cohorts on matters in the workplace relating to Covid
- regularly review safety measures and adherence to these measures, e.g. stocking of supplies, facilities
- record any concerns and report to management on a regular basis
- keep personally informed about Covid safety measures
- make sure staff know about any changes in Covid public health advice or guidelines from the Department or in the school COVID Response Plan
- if an incident of Covid arises at the school, assess with Principal any follow up action that is required

<i>Name of Lead Worker Representative:</i>	<i>Name of Asst. Lead Worker Representative:</i>
Catherine Foran, Computer Teacher. Email: catherineforan@stjosephsprimaryvi.ie	Matthew Mynes, SNA/ Bus Escort Email: m-itchy-m@hotmail.com

Signage

Covid signage is on display in entrance areas, corridors, bathrooms and classrooms, outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and raising awareness of good hand and respiratory hygiene. Floor stickers have been laid to remind pupils, staff and any visitor about the importance of physical distancing.

Changes on the School Premises

Some of the measures taken to prepare our school for reopening with our new norms are:

- **increased number of available entrance/ exits:** door hooks have been fitted to allow fire doors to be safely used as separate class entrances and exits. Also allows for good ventilation.
- **rearranged desks in classrooms and installed screens** to assist with physical distancing
- **removed furniture** to allow for more physical distancing in classrooms and Staff Room
- **purchased storage container** for equipment not presently in use
- **installed outdoor toilet cabin** to avoid queuing in corridor
- **installed mobile water units** in two priority locations
- **created outdoor shelter area** to allow for outdoor lessons and for physical distancing at staff breaks on fine days
- **fitted additional coat hooks** to allow for distanced storage of pupil and staff coats/ backs
- **all swing lid bins replaced with pedal bins**

Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. Risks have been assessed and recommended control measures are, and will be, implemented to prevent the introduction of Covid or its spread if it is introduced. Staff have considered how usual school activities can be adapted or temporarily suspended during this time, for the safety of the children. Classroom resources that are difficult to sanitise have been removed and replaced with alternatives. Additional resources have been purchased to reduce the sharing and sanitising of equipment. Our Fire Safety Emergency procedures and First Aid Response remained unchanged except for staff awareness of maintaining Covid safety measures as they carry out these procedures, insofar as is possible.

Control Measures to Prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19

The best way to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid introducing it into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. If it is introduced, there is a risk that infection will spread as children and staff interact with each other.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined below and that they fully cooperate with all procedures and health and safety requirements.

Promoting Awareness and Compliance

- All members of our school community will actively promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms.
- Signage informing members of the school community of the symptoms of Covid-19 and the need for social distancing are displayed at all access points to the school.
- All members of the staff will remind pupils, and each other if necessary, of the need for appropriate respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene.
- Parents, pupils and staff will adhere to all procedures.

Attending and Visiting the School

Access to School and Contact Log

Essential visitors only have been given access to the school, i.e. nurses, therapists, contractors and those providing necessary maintenance services. A Contact Log is kept at the school entrance to record contact details of visitors who do not visit a classroom. Contact Logs are kept at each classroom to note visits from ChildVision nurses and therapists and collections for withdrawal sessions, e.g. O&M/ SLT/ OT.

Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors or parents are made with the Principal. Contact Logs are processed in compliance with the GDPR and Data Protection Acts.

Everyone who enters

- Everyone entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitiser provided at each entrance unless they are directly going to the bathroom to wash their hands.

Not to attend or visit the school; and Cooperation with HSE and Government advice

- Members of the school community should immediately self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their doctor to arrange a test.
- Members of the school community the school must not attend or visit if they have been identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 or if they live with someone with symptoms of the virus
- Children, staff or arents who have travelled outside of Ireland must consult and follow the latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel
- Members of the school community 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 should undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health
- If pupils are sick, would not be fit to take part in school activities and would need additional support with personal care throughout the school day, they must not come to school. Short information videos for parents from public health doctors are available at www.gov.ie to reaffirm the importance of keeping COVID-19 out of education facilities by keeping symptomatic children at home. Parents should err on the side of caution in this respect and follow the school's Pupil Illness policy.

Return to School after Absence and after Respite or Stay in Hospital

Parents of pupils returning to school after either illness, or after a stay at Respite or in hospital, are asked to complete the HSE Return to an Educational Facility Declaration Form

<https://www.hpsc.ie/az/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/Return%20to%20Educational%20Facility%20declaration%20form.pdf>

All parents have received an electronic copy by email and hard copies can be requested from the school office or through the class teacher.

Parents collecting a child from Respite, or from hospital after an in-patient stay, should also complete this form for the school, to declare that their child is fit to return to school.

If Covid symptoms develop at school

- Staff that develop Covid symptoms at school, and pupils if able, must promptly bring this fact to the attention of the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Staff must know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school as detailed in Section 8 of the DES Covid-19 Response Plan Guidelines.

Visits to school from Parents, ChildVision Staff and Others

- Visits to the school by all persons other than St. Joseph's staff and pupils will be by appointment only.
- Appointments must be arranged in advance through the school office, by phone on 01 8373696 or by email at office@stjosephsprimaryvi.ie
- Contractors and supplier visits will be kept to a minimum
- Student placements will not be facilitated for the moment. This will be reviewed at October mid-term.
- Parents, nurses, therapists, O&M tutors and any other visitor with either a pre-arranged appointment or a scheduled classroom visit must wear a suitable face covering.
- Each parent or contractor entering the school for any arranged purpose will be required to complete a detailed Contact Tracing Log irrespective of the duration of the visit.
- ChildVision nurses or therapists on scheduled or emergency classroom visits need not complete Contact Tracing Log at entrance but should instead note their visit on the Classroom Contact Tracing Log
- O&M Teacher/ Tutor who enters the school to conduct indoors O&M lesson with a child need not complete Contact Tracing Log at entrance but should instead note their visit on the Classroom Contact Tracing Log
- Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between staff and all visitors to the school and between adults who meet on the school grounds.
- Parents collecting or dropping back a child during the school day should either press the buzzer at the main entrance door or phone the school office on arrival (01 8373696). They will be directed to the fire exit door for their child's classroom. The Secretary or Principal will 'sign in/ out' the child according to school procedures. A member of the class team will bring the child out to meet the parent at this point.
- Therapists and O&M Tutors calling to bring a child out for an O&M session, or across to ChildVision for a therapy session, will call at the scheduled time to the classroom fire exit door and knock on the window.

School and Home

Communications

We are committed to making school-home communications as good as possible as best progress in learning is made when school and home are working collaboratively together. We will need to make some changes at this time, however, to reduce the risk of introduction of Covid.

- The use of the home-school diary will be discontinued for the time being. During Covid School Closure, most parents communicated with the class teacher by email. This proved very effective and email will be our choice form of communication with parents for now. Where this does not suit a parent, an alternative form of communication will be arranged through the class teacher.
- Conversations with the teacher at the school are by appointment only.
- If a parent is collecting or dropping back a child after an appointment, conversation will not be possible then but the teacher will be happy to arrange a phone call at a time that suits or that a query be communicated by email.
- Parent/Teacher Meetings may take place via phone/ Zoom or be postponed. We will assess the situation after October mid-term.

Homework

Some classes, for the moment, will be suspending homework that involves the moving of books and pencil cases between home and school. However, where it clearly benefits a child to continue with the usual homework activities, using books, this will be facilitated as safely as possible. Parents must ensure that all books/writing equipment are sanitised using alcohol wipes before being placed in the child's schoolbag. The use of Microsoft Teams and Office 365 for senior classes may be an alternative. 'Active' and life-skills based home activities are also under consideration.

Uniform and Shoes

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is not practical for most families. However children's uniforms must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols. As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms only for school related activities. Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, during after-school activities, in shops, etc.

If you find that you are needing to wash uniform more frequently and you are short of uniform items, we are happy for you to supplement with budget equivalents in grey tracksuit bottoms, red sweat shirts and white polo shorts.

If your child cannot open or close his/ her own coat and tie own shoes, shoes with Velcro should be used.

Pupil Snacks

Children will eat their lunches at their desks. No food will be allowed onto the yard. Parents should ensure:

- all lunch boxes/water bottles are sanitised using alcohol wipes before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- their child have sufficient snack/drink coming to school each morning
- their child has have enough drinks to last them throughout the day as we will not be in a position to refill drinks bottles.
- in as much as possible, snack food items and drinks that can be easily peeled /opened.

Parents should remind their children not to share their food or drinks with other children. All leftovers/waste will be stored in each pupil's lunchbox and must be disposed of at home

Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important that everyone in the school community knows and recognises the symptoms. They are:

- ✓ High temperature
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- ✓ Flu-like symptoms

Respiratory Hygiene

All of us in our school community must make sure that we, and the people around us, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering our mouth and nose with a tissue or with a bent elbow when we cough or sneeze. We must then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.

By following good respiratory hygiene, we protect the people around us from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

Hand Hygiene

Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands. We will appreciate parents encouraging the practice of this at home too.

Handwashing

In school, we will promote good hand hygiene. All staff will wash their hands on arrival at school. In as much as possible, pupils too will wash their hands on arrival (or will sanitiser if hands are visibly clean). Handwashing will also be conducted when hands are visibly dirty and after activities that are likely to soil hands, e.g. playing outside, Pottery, Art, or sporting activities. Hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Handwashing will mostly be in the bathroom areas where warm running water, soap and hand drying facilities (drier or hand-towel) are available. Wash hand basins, running water, soap and hand drying facilities are also provided in kitchen areas of classrooms and in the Staff Room. Hot air dryers are used by staff in two locations for hand drying and are regularly maintained. Mobile warm water units have been provided in two classrooms and the Music Room. All hand washing facilities will be kept clean and sanitised and supplies of soap and towels will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

Posters will be laminated and displayed adjacent to handwashing basins and sinks showing how to wash your hands properly, following the HSE guidelines: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your->

[hands.html](#) For regular use of the school's handwashing facilities, classes will arrange to stagger use so queuing is avoided.

Hand Sanitiser

When hands look clean but need to be sanitised, alcohol based hand sanitiser will be used. Hand sanitiser dispensers are located at adult height in each classroom, at both school exit and entry points and classrooms and in other shared areas of the school. Care will be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls. Staff, including bus escorts, have been provided with a waist bag containing sanitiser and other supplies for to allow for hand hygiene when they are assisting pupils.

During the school day, pupils will sometimes be asked to, or helped to, use their personal sanitiser from home. Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs may be sent in by parents for their child's use, if they so wish. We have been informed that bus contractors will be supplying hand sanitiser on the bus for general use- this may be used on a child's hands at times, if required. At all times when hand sanitiser is being applied by, or to, a pupil's hands, a school staff member will be supervising or assisting. This is to ensure safe use and to ensure that no hand rub is ingested. Independent use by a child of containers of alcohol gel will not be allowed. Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and school-based staff must perform hand hygiene:

- On entering and exiting vehicles – school buses or private cars
- On arrival at school and before leaving school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.
- After handling a pet from the Pet Farm (Pet Therapy suspended for now. To be reviewed)

NOTE about Hand Hygiene on Buses: Department of Education recommendation is that Bus Escorts will attend to their own personal hand hygiene before boarding and when disembarking from the school bus, after sneezing or coughing, and before and after tending to pupils, e.g. suctioning, admin of emergency medication, strapping in, assisting with respiratory hygiene. Personal hand sanitiser is provided by St Joseph's for bus escorts' use. Bus contractors also supply hand sanitiser and wipes on the bus. This will allow for the cleaning down of bus handles as pupils get on and off the bus and for providing hand sanitiser for a child as they board the bus or after sneezing or coughing. Parents are asked to ensure that children have washed their hands before boarding the bus.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is recognised as a key control measure to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19 and can be done by **increasing separation** and **decreasing interaction**. The Department of Education has recommended that classes be viewed as ‘bubbles’ and that, in as much as possible, these bubbles remain in separate spaces. Since our children virtually all travel to and from school on a school bus, they are part of a ‘bus bubble’ as well as a ‘class bubble’.

Maintaining optimum distance between pupils and staff on buses is not possible but we are glad to know that the Department of Education has worked with Bus Éireann to put other control measures in place for the safety of pupils and staff, i.e. bus escorts to wear surgical 3 ply face masks and children over 13 years of age, where possible, to wear face coverings.

Increasing Separation

Arrival and Dismissal

Breakfast Club is not being provided at the moment. Because of this, and to try to minimise the mixing of class and bus bubbles, the school has planned to arrange arrival and dismissal times differently.

Arrival:

- Bus escorts will stay with the children on the bus. They should only leave the bus when they are available to bring the last child to the yard where she/ he will wait until a member of the class team collects the child.
- For most classes, the teacher will be at the class entrance door (usually the classroom Fire Exit Door) to receive the children. The exception will be where a class is small and it works best for the teacher and SNAs to work together in collecting children from the buses.
- SNAs collect the children from the buses, one by one or in pairs if possible and bring them back in relays to the teacher at the designated entrance.

Classes will mostly enter the school building through separate entrances. If not, they will enter one class at a time and distanced.

Room 1 & 4: Main Prefab Entrance

Room 2 & 5: Main Front Entrance

Room 3, 6, 7, Prefab 1 & 2: Classroom Emergency Exits

Bathroom Use on Arrival

Teachers will cooperate in timetabling order of class use of toilet/ handwashing facilities on arrival, according to age and need. Toilet ‘emergencies’ will, of course, be discreetly communicated and facilitated by staff.

- Infants to use Room 4 bathroom facilities on arrival to avoid queuing for Junior Bathrooms
- Arrival use in Senior Corridor: Room 5, Room 6, Room 7. Staff member will knock on next classroom door or will phone on internal line when bathroom is free, whichever works best. 3 people maximum to be waiting in the Senior Corridor, distanced, at any one time.

Dismissal

At 3.00, the Arrival procedures will happen in reverse order. Bus escorts will be at the buses. Depending on number in class, the teacher will either:

- supervise at the exit door until all but one or two of the children have been brought by SNAs to the buses. The teacher should then bring the last child (or children if safe to do so), to their bus/es. OR
- if staff numbers allow, work with SNAs to bring the children to their buses.

Pupil seating and work spaces

Each teacher has considered the nature of her/ his class and has planned how best to arrange seating and workspaces to maximise physical distancing of pupils (at least 1m and if possible 2m) while avoiding an excessive focus on distancing which may be distressing for the children. Various solutions have been found to have pupils sitting at least 1m and sometimes 2m apart, such as:

- clearing out furniture to maximise space between desks/ work stations
- dividing the class into two pods within the class 'bubble', with pods distanced from each other
- using a mobile transparent screen to allow 2 pods to enjoy group learning activities together.
- using transparent screens between desks in senior classes where children are able to take more responsibility for physical distancing

Distance between Staff and Pupils; Staff from each other

Where possible, **staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m from pupils (and 2m from each other)**. Teachers and SNAs should consciously take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level, i.e. remaining standing instead of sitting or crouching down beside a child.

However, it is recognised that it is not always possible for staff, especially in a special school, to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil, i.e. loss of essential assistance in accessing learning or with care needs. We are aware that it will be a challenge to strike the right balance regarding distancing and that the school community will need to find ways to navigate this issue, taking care to avoid generating tension or potential conflict. The use of PPE will be a very appropriate control measure. See section below.

Corridors

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal 1:1 or group conversations. Staff will be aware to adhere to our 'travel on the left-side' policy which assists those with no or low vision as well as assisting with increasing separation between those walking in opposite directions.

Decreasing Interaction

This, in many respects, goes hand in hand with our strategies to increase distance, as outlined above, i.e. limiting interaction on arrival and departure, in corridors and other shared spaces, staggering of breaks and providing additional 'Yard' area on the Grass Patch. Bus escorts are also encouraged to limit non-essential interactions with the children while travelling to and from school.

Pupils and teachers should avoid sharing of personal items such as pens and other writing materials, tablets and phones to the greatest extent possible. Encourage people to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth). Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets the contact surfaces of the devices should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged. Awareness will be raised and safe practices encouraged in the following areas:

Social Physical Contact

Hand to hand greetings and hugs should be discouraged for now within the school community

Roll Call and Messages

Until further notice, pupils and accompanying staff will not be able to go from class to class to do Roll Call, Messages, Surveys, Recycling Collections, etc. This will be disappointing for those pupils who love to do the rounds and for whom roll call and messages are a great way to develop social communication skills or provide a meaningful movement break. Teachers will consider safe alternatives.

Class Teachers will call the roll each morning by 10.00, recording absences, and noting the reason for each absence, on Aladdin.

Parent/Guardian please note: To notify the school regarding absences and reason for absence, parents may either email the class teacher or contact the school office by phone (01 8373696) or email <office@stjosephsprimaryvi.ie>. Messages about absences or appointments should never be relayed by bus escorts to the school.

Inter –Class Initiatives

The Green Team has members from a cross-section of classes and, to reduce risk, will not meet until further notice. Use of Zoom may be explored.

Subject Teachers

Subject teachers who teach children from a range of/ all classes are limiting their movement from class to class and are refraining from mixing class bubbles. They are following Department of Education and HSE guidelines and are consulting with fellow professionals regarding safest practice within Covid times that align with these guidelines.

Office

Attendance at school office is by pre-arranged appointment only. Pupils will not have access to offices. As queries arise or supplies are needed, staff members should use the internal phone line to contact the office rather than presenting in person.

Principal, Teachers or SNAs calling into Classrooms

New ways will have to be found to interact safely with one another throughout the school. The Principal

will avoid entering classrooms, only occasionally coming to open classroom doorway, wearing a face visor or mask. Teachers on Lunch Duty will not circulate to classes until further notice. Instead they will be 'on call' in a designated area when on duty. Where normally, a teacher may ask an SNA to make an enquiry or retrieve a resource from another classroom, instead the internal phone can be used and an arrangement to safely borrow the equipment, preferable before or after school and attending to sanitisation, as necessary.

Shared Resources and Impact on Certain Activities

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including CCTV magnifier, iPads, desktop computers equipment for structured activities. Cleaning of such shared equipment within class bubbles/pods will take place between use or at regular scheduled intervals, as appropriate, to minimise the risk of introduction or spread of infection. Soft toys have been removed from classrooms for the time being and only essential fabric resources which are machine washable have been retained. Fabric surfaces can be sanitised, between washes or spray with Optimist machine, using Dettol spray. Other toys which are broken or cannot be washed and disinfected have also been removed.

Art: where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics: Shared electronic devices such as iPads, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use, using Dettol wipes.

Musical Equipment/Instruments: To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils. If sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned and/ or sanitised between uses

Library Policy: Books that are shared should be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared PE/ Sports Equipment: Teachers will organise lessons that require very little if any equipment and PE lessons will take place outdoors when the weather allows. Teachers will minimise equipment sharing and shared equipment will be cleaned between uses by different people.

Both class teachers and subject teachers are using strategies to decrease interaction with shared equipment. This is being achieved by:

- purchasing additional resources so pupil can have own item or a resource can be shared within a pod
- resources being used in 72 hr rotation
- parents providing stationery and/ or hygiene supplies for their child's own use. In so far as possible, it is requested that these items be named for ease of identification and that children will leave them in school.

Pupil Lunch Times

Collecting of pupil lunches by SNAs from the usual serving area until further notice will be limited. All Pupil lunch times are 1.00-1.20 but Michelle will serve the classes in Bubble 1 (Prefab 1, Rooms 1,4,6,7)

first. Bubble 2 come back in from Yard at 1.00 and can wash their hands and settle back into the classroom before being served lunch.

Yard Times

The DES guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. However, yard time normally involve queuing in a small area. To decrease interaction at Yard times we have:

- Brought the fenced Grass Area with run track into use as a second Yard Time space
- Created 2 Yard Bubbles with separate Yard Times, arranging staff supervision and sanitising of shared play equipment surfaces (using Dettol wipes) accordingly.

Yard Bubble 1: Rooms 2 and Prefab 2 (Grass Area); Rooms 3 and 5 (Front Yard)

Morning Break 10:40-10.55

Lunch-Outside Break 12:45-1

Dinner 1-1:20

Yard Bubble 2: Rooms 1 and 4 (Grass Area); Rooms 6, 7 and Prefab 1 (Front Yard)

Morning Break 11:00-11:15

Lunch Dinner 1-1:20

Outside Break 1:20-1:35

Staff- Breaks Areas, Supplies, Facilities, Staff Meetings

It is recommended that all staff members should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not in the classroom e.g. when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, screens should be used or face coverings worn.

Staff break times have been amended to facilitate our new Yard Time arrangements and to attain physical distancing in the Staff Room. Some furniture has been removed, some replaced and screens have been provided to allow a maximum of 8 staff members to have lunch safely distanced. A second 'pop up' Lunch/ Kitchen Area with mobile water unit has been set up in the Music Room to cater for a small number of staff. A covered outdoor area is also sometimes available to staff who wish to have lunch outside when weather is fine.

Changes have also been made in the Staff Room to reduce frequently touched surfaces and sharing of supplies, e.g. water dispenser removed, coffee and sugar sachets replacing shared supplies, compostable wooden stirrers have replaced shared teaspoons. Tea bags will be provided as usual. Staff are using their own cups, water bottles, cutlery and delph and are bringing these home to wash. The large fridge has been put out of use for now but a mini fridge has been provided to store milk only. It is acknowledged that some surfaces will be frequently touched, e.g. Burco lever, Towel dispenser handle, milk. A large hand sanitiser dispenser will be available for staff to use before touching these frequently touched surfaces. The Music Room will be a "pop up" Break/ Lunch area for a small number of named staff teacher. A water unit, manual fill Burco, microwave and mini fridge will be set up in room. A

sheltered area outside the front entrance will have 2 benches for multi-purpose use. Staff who wish to use this area for breaks, sitting at least 1m apart, are welcome to do so, except during Yard time.

Additional staff toilets, with warm running water for handwashing, have been provided outdoors and a covered walkway is to follow.

Staff meetings will be held remotely, using Zoom, or in small groups, in large spaces, to facilitate physical distancing.

Use of PPE

The Department confirms that funding for all required PPE is being provided to schools. St. Joseph's has set up a daily order and supply system at the classrooms to replenish PPE supplies for staff.

Bum Bags:

Each staff member (teachers, SNAs, bus escorts and other non-teaching staff) will be provided with a bum bag to be worn, preferably, at all times during the school day. In the bum bag there is:

- Pack of 10 x 3-ply surgical face masks (in back pocket- these should always be kept in separate section to keep clean and sanitised, inside a plastic/ cellophane bag)
- Hand sanitiser (in front pocket) -this can be used at times when you need to use alcohol rub and the classroom or corridor sanitiser units are within convenient reach. When empty, these will be replaced on request.
- Pen (in front pocket) – pens should not be shared among staff so this pen should be kept for use at times when needed throughout the school day.

If staff member wishes, the bum bag may be taken off at break times so long as it is stored carefully and hygienically. It should be left in school, rather than brought between school and home, unless needed for bus escort role or being brought home for washing.

Medical Grade Masks:

Revised HPSC guidelines, published 7 January 2021, recommended medical grade masks (EN 16483 category) for all SNAs. The Department has confirmed that these masks should also be provided for all teachers in special schools and bus escorts too, given that all special school staff need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils, whether teaching or assisting with physical, intimate or behavioural needs. The recommended 2m distance cannot be maintained in the special school setting. If, for a medically confirmed reason, a medical grade mask cannot be worn by a member of staff, a cloth face covering should be worn. Face masks should be put on using the ear loops with the metal band uppermost. Pinch around your nose and pull the lower part under your chin. Adjust carefully, with minimum touch, so it is a snug fit. When the face mask becomes moist it should be put in the pedal bin and replaced with a fresh mask.

PPE for Suctioning:

Any staff member who assists a child with suctioning (SNA, teacher or bus escort) will use the following PPE: FFP2 mask, goggles and plastic apron. Suctioning will be performed behind a transparent splash screen.

PPE where there is Spitting Behaviour:

The wearing of a visor over a medical grade mask is advised to protect against airborne droplets. Plastic aprons may also be used.

PPE for Staff Member accompanying Suspected Case

The following will be worn. Staff member will don the PPE at the Eyegaze Room before bringing the child to the chosen Isolation Room: Full Gown, FFP2 mask, Googles and Nitrile gloves. (Surgical Mask will be provided for the suspected case, if willing/ able to wear it.) For more detail regarding a suspected case, see section below.

PPE for Cleaning after Suspected Case:

Plastic apron, medical grade mask and kitchen gloves. Visor to be used over mask when using Neomist sanitizing machine.

PPE for Children over 13 years of age

Children over 13yrs are required to wear a face covering when waiting to board the school bus and while travelling to and from school - exemptions for those with breathing difficulties and for those with additional special needs who would find wearing a face covering distressing. In school, children are not required to wear face coverings but will not be prevented for doing so if they so wish.

Visors

These were originally the Dept. of Education's preferred face shield but are now only recommended as an additional protection from frontal spitting.

Disposable Gloves

These should continue to be used for the purposes they normally would be at St Joseph's, i.e. assisting with personal care, preparing feeds, etc. Gloves, however, are not a protection against Covid as the virus is not absorbed through the hands, so gloves do not protect the wearer against Covid and may cause risk to others if they become contaminated. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Ventilation and Air Purifying

In line with HPSC recommendations, each teacher, in consultation with SNA/s, should consider and review how best to keep the classrooms ventilated without causing discomfort. Windows should be open as fully as possible before the school day begins, at yard times and at the end of the school day. Given that some of our windows don't open, we will use the fire exit doors to provide ventilation, as weather allows. Hooks have been fitted as the base of these fire exit doors and these should be used to keep the door open securely. Air Purifiers have been provided for each classroom and the staff room to remove contaminants from the air.

Cleaning

All staff are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting their own work space/ storage area before and after use each day and for adopting the principle of 'clean as you go'. Staff must use their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.) and bring them home for cleaning.

Any staff member who uses the photocopier should clean it down after use with the sanitising wipes provided.

All classrooms will have a daily-checked supply of: blue roll, detergent (for cleaning surfaces such as tables/ general spills), sanitising spray (suitable for hard surfaces and fabrics) and cleaning/sanitising wipes (to be used to sanitise electronic devices- AAC, iPads, computer keyboards, mouse, etc.)

Additional cleaning will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities. There should be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

Cleaning hours have been extended. School employee is assisting with additional cleaning, distribution of hygiene supplies and use of sanitizing machine after school-hours, 11.30-4.00. After-School Cleaning Services is provided by an external contract cleaning company 2.30-5.30/ 6.30.

Cleaning Plan

All class/ subject teachers have formulated a Cleaning Plan for their room/ space, along with Class SNA/s. Ideas for cleaning class resources have been suggested (see below) and teachers can request necessary products/ additional resources to facilitate the class Cleaning Plan.

- Baskets/ laundry nets to allow for sanitising of class resources
- Bowl, detergent and scrubbing brush (for washing items in class)
- Bin to be used for 'daily dunk'.
- Reduce sharing of equipment between classes, e.g. class supply of paint brushes, etc.

Strategies for reducing cleaning load also suggested, e.g. Monday toys, Tuesday toys (allowing for 72+ hrs between use); individually assigned manipulatives kept in box on desk in relevant classes.

Water Unit to be provided for R3 as well as Music Room.

Class teams have changed routines to reduce the amount of laundry done at school, i.e. asking parents to send in towel, etc. and this being sent home for washing.

From 3.00-4.00, the Optimist anti-viral mister is used to sanitise areas and resources as requested by teachers. Teachers asked to think through and record their own cleaning needs for resources and class areas. Cleaning plans are discussed, planned and reviewed by with Class teams.

Shared Equipment

Staff will follow Department and HSE guidelines regarding the cleaning of shared equipment.

Toys

- All toys in use should be cleaned on a regular basis, for example weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs. This could be made more manageable by limiting toys in use at any one time, i.e. store some and swap for others every week/ according to Aistear theme, etc.

- Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids should be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal, in basket or bag,
- Ease of cleaning and disinfecting will be considered when toys are being purchased.
- Cloth or soft toys are to be removed or kept to a minimum; if used, they should be machine washable.
- Only Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that can be washed and disinfected will be used, as these may at times be put into their mouths.
- All play equipment should be checked for signs of damage, e.g. breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they should be discarded.
- Play dough should be for individual use only.

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water (Fairy Liquid provided), using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Some hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. Toys/equipment that have been soiled with blood or body fluids or toys where a case of COVID-19 has been identified.
- If disinfection is required, one of the following products/ methods will be used: a chlorine-releasing disinfectant, e.g. Milton, spraying with Optimist anti-viral mister, Dettol spray, Clinell wipes which clean and disinfect.
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water, i.e. electronic or wind up can be sanitised using a Clinell wipe.

Specialised and Toileting Equipment

Some children at St Joseph's use specialised aids and appliances and/or medical equipment, e.g. toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. For classes where this applies, this equipment should be included in the Cleaning Plan, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

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

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean;
- Dry crumbs and other debris should regularly be removed using the provided classroom mini vacuum cleaner and/ or the mini dustpan and brush.
- Fabric areas of equipment can be sanitized with Dettol spray; if dirty, it can be cleaned and sanitized with Clinell wipe or a clean, dampened microfiber cloth, dipped in soapy water and squeezed out, whichever is more appropriate.
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Cleaning of larger areas is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent, clean microfibre cloth/ blue roll and warm water. Microfibre cloths should be regularly laundered. Appropriate sanitizer can be used – spray, Clinell wipe or Neomist machine.

- Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and sanitised immediately after use and before use by another child e.g. toileting aids. Clinell wipes can be used to both clean and sanitize.
- If wipeable equipment is soiled with body fluids, it should be carefully cleaned with Clinell wipes:
 - First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
 - Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
 - Rinse with water and dry.

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

- The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.
- Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly **cleaned and disinfected** and all surfaces are dry
- Staff member doing initial cleaning of room should wear a medical grade mask, plastic apron and household gloves; they should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning. Staff member using Neomist machine should also wear medical grade mask with visor.
- Using Clinell wipes, followed by Neomist sanitizer machine, special attention should be paid to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.
- If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like Soft Play or Yard furniture, or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with Clinell wipes and Neomist machine, as soon as is practically possible.

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. Joseph's will deal with a suspected case that may arise.

Two designated isolation rooms have been identified:

1. Child Vision Isolation Pod at back of JoJo's
2. Sensory Room (if this is to be used, Principal will arrange for vacating of room in advance)

If both of these rooms are in use by other suspected cases, the area outside the PE storage room may also be used, keeping both doors to corridors closed and fire exit open. Students in WP room and Sensory room would exit via the Music Room.

Another option may be for the suspected case to stay in own classroom with SNA if the rest of the class will be out for the necessary time period and the room can be cleaned and sanitized before the class returns.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following procedures (displayed on poster in classrooms) will be implemented:

If Child is Suspected Case....

- Teacher phones Nurse. If not immediately contactable, Teacher phones Principal. Assessment made as to whether child can be brought home by parents where doctor will be phoned. If symptoms are very severe, ambulance may be called, informing that child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Principal arranges contact with parent to request immediate collection
- Child may be encouraged to put on mask. Teacher and SNA/s confer about most suitable Isolation Room for the child (ChildVision Isolation Pod/ Sensory Room/ Other) and decide who will accompany the child. Teacher communicates this to Principal.
- Principal arranges the opening/ vacating of Isolation Room. Brings Supply Box to the Isolation Room and, maintaining distance, assists with clearing of Isolation Route to ensure that others maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic child.
- Teacher and Principal confer about most suitable Isolation Room for the child (ChildVision Isolation Pod/ Sensory Room/ Other) and decides with SNAs who will accompany the child. Child is encouraged to put on mask.
- Accompanying adult brings phone and prepares in Eyegaze Room – guidelines on poster.
- Accompanying adult collects child and, if appropriate, a wipeable toy, and brings via Isolation Route to Isolation Room, keeping at least 2m away from the symptomatic person in as much as possible
- The child should avoid touching accompanying adult, surfaces and objects and should cover mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- Back at classroom, member of Class Team washes/ sanitizes hands; then, using mask, plastic apron and kitchen gloves, cleans immediate classroom area where child had been sitting with Clinell wipes, and disposes of these in tied double bag.
- If the child is very unwell, a ChildVision nurse/s would take over and the school staff member would leave the isolation room.
- Isolation Room and Classroom are ventilated and then cleaned and sanitised, using Clinell wipes (to be double-bagged) and Neomist sanitizer. Cleaner to wear plastic apron, surgical mask and household gloves.
- Assessment of the incident is carried out.

If Staff Member is Suspected Case....

- Assessment will be made as to whether the adult who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home where they will call their doctor and continue self-isolation. Public transport should not be used.
- If staff member needs to wait to be transported home by a family member or friend, s/he will be assisted, while maintaining at least 2m distance, along the isolation route to the chosen isolation room. S/he will be facilitated to call their doctor. A mask will be worn at all times.

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 and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

Communications when there is a Suspected Case (pupil or staff) in School

Schools do not need to inform parents that a pupil or teacher has been removed due to their symptoms. **Other pupils or staff do not need to be removed from class. HSE Departments of Public Health will take action if the person has confirmed Covid-19 infection on testing, which will include HSE advice and guidance on communication to school pupils and staff where needed.** The parents / legal guardian of the sick child should contact their GP as usual, to discuss clinical concerns. If it is determined by the GP that the child/pupil requires to be tested for Covid-19, any other household contacts should be removed from the school setting.

St. Joseph's has current lists of staff and pupils, by classes with contact telephone numbers for parents and guardians. These are in the required Excel format, ready to be shared with Department of Public Health, if required and requested under Infectious Diseases legislation, 1981, as amended.

Covid-19 Test Results Covid-19 not detected result

If a symptomatic child or staff member has a Covid-19 'not detected' result, the child should remain at home until he/she is clinically well enough to return to school, unless parents are specifically asked by HSE Public Health for their child to remain excluded because of other investigations e.g. if the child is a known close contact of a now confirmed case. All diarrhoea symptoms need to have been resolved for 48 hours prior to return to school.

Teaching and Learning

As a school, we are very aware of the negative impact of prolonged school closure on our children. 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 this will be considered when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for schools, as we work with all the children during the return to school. There has been a particular focus on Language, Numeracy, SPHE and PE. As advised by the National Educational Psychological Services we have needed to “Slow down to catch up”.

Wellbeing

We have been working on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- A sense of hope

Staff Wellbeing

In conjunction with the Department of Education, Spectrum (Employee Assistance Service- EAS) have recently launched online staff wellbeing supports ***Digital Wellbeing Series*** and ***Digital Gym*** for the school community. Staff at St. Joseph’s have been informed about this initiative.

COVID-related Staff Leave

There are some school staff who may not be able to work on-site during the COVID pandemic. Since August 2020, public health guidelines have identified some **very high risk** staff as being entitled to work remotely. More recently, during the phased reopening of schools, staff in the **high risk** or **over-60** category and staff who are **pregnant** have also been given entitlement to work from home. The school assigns various duties to these staff, including the provision of remote teaching and communication with pupils who are not presently attending school.

Teacher Absence and Substitution

In the event that teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/SNA. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction train

