



School Policy on Covid-19 September 2021

Introduction

This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Our Lady of Fatima School.

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
 - c. School layout
 - d. Induction Training
 - e. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
 - f. Lead Worker Representative
 - g. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
3. Infection Prevention Control Measures - To Prevent introduction and spread of Covid-19 in School
 - 3.1: Know the symptoms of Covid-19
 - 3.2: Respiratory Hygiene
 - 3.3: Hand Hygiene
 - 3.4: Physical Distancing
 - 3.5: Use of PPE
 - 3.6: Cleaning Arrangements
 - 3.7: Access to School Building & Contact Log

4. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
5. Staff Duties
6. Covid-19 absence management
7. People at Risk
8. 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. Our Lady of Fatima School 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

Our Lady of Fatima School 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
 - 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.

Signed: William Swan ADM Date: 15th September, 2021
 Chairperson BOM

Signed: Colenda Byrne Date: 15th September, 2021
 Principal

2. 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 are required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. Please see link below to these posters. Any such supply can be sourced locally.
<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/information-for-schools-preschools-and-third-level-institutions-on-the-coronavirus.html#1> Schools can arrange to display the posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.
- c. School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key infection prevention control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is detailed below (Measures: Physical Distancing)

The School will reconfigure classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance.

d. Induction Training (to be completed by new staff)

All new 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 will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities

e. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is delivered and collected digitally. Link to Form here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/dfCzwgFkQX>

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work.

Schools should request staff to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by new staff 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.

Details of the working arrangements that apply to the very high risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Department's website (Circular 0042/2021)

f. 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:

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, 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 school management with implementing infection prevention control measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Note: In all Special Schools, the Assistant Lead Worker Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Assistant LWR will be to:

- Assist the LWR in their duties as set out above and
- Deputise as LWR where LWR is absent.

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 who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

Name of Lead Worker representative and contact details	Niall Bridges nbridges@ladyoffatimaschool.ie
Name of Assistant Lead Worker Representative and contact details	John Tyrrell jtyrrell@ladyoffatimaschool.ie

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 infection prevention control measures. Full details of the arrangements which will apply for the LWR in primary and special schools is set out at Appendix 3 (Covid-19 Response Plan - V4 August 2021)

g. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
 COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment
 A review of our 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 Response Plan will be carried out. Any changes to the school's existing emergency procedures will be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.
 The school's existing risk assessments will be reviewed 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 will also be documented and incorporated into the school safety statement.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in school. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, schools should call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

3. Infection Prevention Control Measures – To prevent Introduction and Spread of Covid-19 in School

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; pupil-pupil, teacher-teacher and teacher- pupil and must be managed in all settings.

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 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 and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

Staff 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.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into School:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms

- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- 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, to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/ confirmed case of Covid-19.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff and pupils are advised to consult and follow latest Government advices in relation to foreign travel.

- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details below**)
- 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;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

3.1 : Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know and recognise the symptoms of coronavirus (which includes the DELTA variant).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

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

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

- sore throat
- headaches
- runny or stuffy noses
- feeling sick or vomiting
- diarrhoea

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of [cold](#) and [flu](#).

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), [self-isolate](#) (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need [a free COVID-19 test](#).

3.2: Respiratory Hygiene

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.

3.3: Hand Hygiene:

- Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.
- Links to videos that promote good hygiene will be shared (website, school newsletter, Microsoft eams) and posters will be displayed throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>
- Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean)
- Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins will be managed so as to avoid congregation of pupils and staff waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.
- Hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands. Hand Washing facilities are provided outside main entrance (at basketball court)
- Hand sanitiser dispensers are deployed at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms.
- Use of warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing.

- Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.
- Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.
- Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and can be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve.
- Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).
- Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol. Non-alcohol based hand sanitiser may also be used. However, in choosing a hand sanitiser, it is important to ensure that it is effective against Coronavirus.
- Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff will perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.

3.4 Physical Distancing:

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace, It must be applied in a practical way. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff 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. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

Where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout and should be used by schools to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom:

1. Class spaces are reconfigured to maximise physical distancing
2. All available space in the school is utilised and reconfigured in order to maximise physical distancing.
3. All rooms, especially classrooms are clear of any unnecessary furniture/shelves(including those on walls

The teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.

Decreasing interaction:

- A common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils. A distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils

- Where possible work stations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.
- The risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into Class Bubbles.
- There will be limited contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles.. .
- Pupils and teaching staff will consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.
- Different school sections (Junior, Middle and Senior) will have separate breaks and remain in bubbles on yard.
- Pupils will eat in their separate classrooms
- Sharing educational material between classes should be avoided/minimised where possible.
- Limited movement of staff members who move between class bubble (floating SNAS will work with a specific1 bubble weekly)

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

One-way system of travel around school building.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) is discouraged.

Movement around classroom by pupils is discouraged, but if necessary, it should be organised to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation.

Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.

Encourage pupils 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 surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

Staff

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work.

Physical distancing to be observed between staff members within the staff room (limited to 4 persons), GP Room, Courtyard, through the use of staggered breaks etc.

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

Corridors and Stairwells

Continue with use of One Way system

Yard/Supervision

Consistent groups (class bubbles) are kept on yard

Break times and outdoor access is staggered and timetabled.

Children to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities - use of washing facilities outside or in classroom

No sharing of equipment between classes. All classes have individual sports equipment (e.g. basketball, soccer ball, kipping ropes. If necessary, (e.g. Tennis rackets), equipment must be cleaned before and after use.

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*'. 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. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors.

Monitors (10 in total) to be supplied before return to school. These devices are self-contained, pre-set and require no adjustment. The CO₂ Monitor is a device used to measure the concentration of CO₂ in a room. They can provide a general indication if rooms are not adequately ventilated. They are electrically powered.

3.5: Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category
- Administering first aid

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

It is a requirement that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.

The wearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they may be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face coverings coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

All staff wearing face coverings are reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering. Information found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdplfSqw>

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Disposable face masks are available for staff.

Disposable face masks are available for students in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Medical Grade Masks

Medical grade masks in the EN14683 category are available to all SNAs and teachers and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Wearing of Gloves/use of Aprons

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.

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19

3.6: Cleaning Arrangements

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 (daily) 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. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.

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.)

3.7 Access to the school building and 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 should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts.

In addition see visitor contact log at Appendix 5

4. 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 Our Lady of Fatima School will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

The designated isolation area within the school is the **Shower Room**

Should there be more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 additional cases will use the **Personal Care Area**.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Our Lady of Fatima School the following are the procedures to be implemented. The staff member must go home.

If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately by Principal/LWR:

- mask student, if not already, and move, immediately, in a socially distanced fashion, to Shower Room.
- Should there be two unwell persons, the Personal Care area will then be used.
- This student must be at least 2 metres away from other people.

- A window should be opened for ventilation.
- After depositing student leave immediately, wash/sanitise hands.
- Make sure signs are in place.
- Let Principal/LWR/Assistant LWR know.
- Phone parent to organise speedy collection.
- PPE should be worn by staff caring for the student (Principal/LWR/Assistant LWR - no one else should enter isolation area) while they await collection and extreme caution should be exercised if direct personal care is needed and a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- After any contact with someone who is unwell, remove PPE according to protocol i.e. take off and put into pedal bin in isolation area, wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds (with soap).
- 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 (see below). 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.

PROTOCOL WHEN CLEANING ISOLATION AREA

- Cleaning personnel must wear mask, gloves and apron.
- Clean the affected area thoroughly with available cleaning products.
- Leave signs in place during and after cleaning.
- Disinfect by fogging overnight
- Dispose of waste such as disposable cleaning cloths, tissues and PPE as follows:
 - put waste in a plastic rubbish bag and tie it when full;
 - place the plastic bag in a second bin bag and tie it;
 - put it in outside holding area for storage for 72 hours.
- Possible Covid-19 contaminated waste should not be put in bins until it has been stored for at least 72 hours.

5. 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. 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. In this regard and 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.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- New staff 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.
- 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 COVID-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

- Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

6. Covid related absence management

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

7. People at Risk

Very High Risk Group

Previous categorisation of Very High Risk ceased on 30th June 2021

Staff who believe they are in the Very High Risk Category must

- ⇒ Complete OHS Covid Assessment Questionnaire
- ⇒ Download and have completed a "Medical Report from Treating Consultant"
- ⇒ Inform the BoM immediately, or on diagnosis

Where OHS categorises a member of staff as being at Very High Risk

- ⇒ The person will complete Appendix E of Circular 42/2021 and give it to the BoM
- ⇒ BoM will arrange alternative working arrangements
- ⇒ BoM may employ a sub while the staff member is working from home
- ⇒ If medically unfit to work, the terms of Sick Leave will apply
- ⇒ Record on OLCs as Personal Leave - Covid 19 - Very High Risk Group

High Risk Group

- o Special Leave does not apply
- o Unless ill, must attend the workplace and take extra care

Pregnant Staff

- o Carry out a workplace pregnancy risk assessment
- o Consult Appendix G of Circular 42/2021

Pregnant staff working in Special School or Special Class setting

Must be reassigned if:

- ⇒ Over 14 week's gestation
- ⇒ There are 3 or more adults working in the same room
- ⇒ There is no opportunity for physical distancing

Alternative Working Arrangements to be applied to staff:

- o Have been advised to restrict his/her movements, but are fit to work
- o In the Very High Risk category of contracting Covid, but are available for work
- o Section 4.6.3 gives examples of suitable alternative work for teachers
- o Section 4.6.5 gives examples of suitable alternative work for SNAs

8. 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 individual staff members 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).

The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

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. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.

