

**UPDATE:** On 17th February 2022, NPHE reviewed the remaining public health measures including the infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings.

**Below is a summary of changes which will take place in our school immediately and over the next few weeks.**

The Government has accepted the recommendations of the NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools. **If members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so.**

**Continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised.**

Critical components of the collective response in relation to COVID-19 continue to apply including **self-isolation if symptomatic** (even if fully vaccinated/boosted) or if having a positive COVID-19 test.

#### **Public health risk assessment arrangements for special schools**

Where a positive case occurs in a special school Public Health will undertake a public health risk assessment if the positive case was in the school setting during their infectious period.

#### **1. Staying at home if you have symptoms**

The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains – for students and staff alike. 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.

#### **2. Hand Hygiene**

Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

#### **3. Face coverings/mask wearing**

It is no longer a requirement for staff or pupils/students to wear a face covering/mask in school. Staff and student/pupils can continue to wear a face covering/mask if they wish to do so on a personal basis and schools should continue to make masks available on request as they are currently doing.

#### **4. School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing**

With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised. All other measures relating to hygiene (including the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning of services) and pre-assigned seating will remain in place subject to further review.

### **5. Physical Distancing**

Schools are no longer required to maintain class pods and bubbles. This will facilitate a return to team teaching, sports, singing and music, breakfast clubs and inter schools activities. Use of changing rooms, PE halls and lockers, staff rooms etc. can resume where there has been limited access in this regard.

### **6. Visitors to schools/Parent teacher meetings**

There is no longer a requirement to restrict visitors to schools and schools should revert to the normal arrangements for visitors

### **7. Return to Work Form/ return to schools form**

Schools no longer need to request staff or pupils/students to complete a Return to Work form or a Return to School form after school holidays/breaks.

### **8. Antigen testing arrangements for children in primary schools and special classes and special schools)**

As part of the transition arrangements the HSE will continue with the current processes to support the provision of antigen tests to primary schools, special schools and childcare settings

The Antigen Free phone number is: 1800 110055 or parents may order antigen tests online via [www.hse.ie/schooltest](http://www.hse.ie/schooltest).