

**St. Kevin's National School**  
**Updated Covid-19 Response Plan**

**August 2021**



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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from [www.Gov.ie](http://www.Gov.ie), [www.dbei.ie](http://www.dbei.ie), [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie), [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie), [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie); [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) or agreements with education partners as appropriate for primary and special schools.

## 1 Introduction

Our COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management of St. Kevin's National School in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment.

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary to meet the Government's 'Work Safely Protocol', to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 in our school environment.

This response plan supports the sustainable operation 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 pupils in the school. Our COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice as appropriate for primary and special schools.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the continued success of this 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.*

## 2 St. Kevin's National 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 Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

### COVID 19 Policy Statement

St. Kevin's National 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 COVID-19 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, Ms. Caroline Lennon.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Principal*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Chairperson BOM*

### 3 Reviewing the safe operation of our school

The Board of Management of St. Kevin's NS aims to facilitate the continuation of school based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff. The operation of our school is done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education. Details for the reopening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

#### Induction Training

All staff will revisit 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.

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, which will be sent to them as a Google form by the Principal.

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. We request staff to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

#### 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 LWR is to:

- 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.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

| Name of Lead Worker representative: | Contact details  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ms. Caroline Lennon                 | <a href="mailto:caroline.lennon@stkevins.ie">caroline.lennon@stkevins.ie</a> |

All staff, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors have a responsibility both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

## Signage

Our school displays signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene throughout the building. We also have signage regarding social distancing throughout the school.

## Changes to School Layout

We have reconfigured classrooms and other areas around the school to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening.

## Health and Safety Risk Assessment

We have reviewed our emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences, taking into account any new risks that arise in relation to this updated COVID-19 Response Plan.

## Access to School and Contact Log

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained. The school maintains a log of staff and students contacts.

## **4 Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools**

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.

*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 Schools:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms

- Staff and pupils that have symptoms should not attend school. They are advised to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Staff and pupils are advised 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
- Staff and pupils should not return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- A staff member who develop symptoms at school should to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly. Where a pupil develops symptoms at school, they should let their teacher know straight away.
- We will ensure that staff members know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school.
- Staff and pupils are advised 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 – available at our reception area and throughout the school building
- 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.

### Knowing the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

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

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.

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

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home).

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

### **COVID-19 Tracker App**

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that can be downloaded from Apple's AppStore or the GooglePlay store

The App will:

- alert you if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
- give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms

**Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information from the HSE website as this can be updated on a regular basis.**

### **Respiratory Hygiene**

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors follow good respiratory hygiene.

Guidance documentation and information posters is available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters are 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.

## Hand Hygiene

Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school (ie exit and entry points ) and are available in each classroom. They are managed so as to avoid congregation of pupils and staff waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.

We also encourage hand washing 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 sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas. They are maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels are topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

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

## Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff should 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.

## Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is applied in our school, allowing for some flexibility when needed. We apply it in a practical way and recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. We take care to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

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.

However, 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***

At St. Kevin's we have taken care to reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing and we are utilising all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing.

In each classroom, the teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.

### ***Decreasing interaction***

It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary or special schools, is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary or special school for all pupils.

Where possible work stations have been allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared. We have temporarily decommissioned shared spaces such as our library and computer room to minimise risk to classes/bubbles.

Pupils and their teacher work in Class Bubbles which stay apart from other classes. At our school, from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> classes, pupils within the bubbles are further separated into discrete groups (Pods) within those class bubbles, to the extent that this is practical.

There is at least 1m distance between individual Pods within the Class Bubble.

Generally speaking the objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles) as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.

The aim of the system within our school is that class grouping mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. The Pod system within each Class Bubbles is an additional measure, to limit the extent of close contact within the Class Bubble.

Each Class Bubble has their own separate area in the playground for break times at break or meal times and the sharing of educational material between Pods is minimised where possible.

We have limited movement of staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble as much as possible.

***Additional measures we have put in place to decrease interaction:***

- A staggered arrival and departure schedule is in place. The aim of these arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates. We also ask that parents and guardians maintain a 2m distance between themselves and other parents and between themselves and school staff. Parents are also asked to wear a mask if they need to approach a staff member.
- All access points to the school are utilised for drop-off and collection to avoid congestion.
- Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities teachers have this organised to the greatest degree possible to minimise congregation at the shared resource.
- Staff and pupils avoid sharing personal items as much as is possible.
- Pupils are encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Devices are used by one Class Bubble for a period of half a term so that the devices are not shared among different rooms. When used in the classroom, the contact surface of the devices are cleaned regularly and hand hygiene is encouraged.
- Physical distancing is supported between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks and a limit to the number of staff in the staffroom at any one time.
- 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. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and updated guidance on face covering should be observed.
- Staff meetings are held remotely or in small groups via Zoom.
- We have a no hand shaking policy.

***Corridors and Stairwells***

**Yard/Supervision**

The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.

We have adjusted play time/outdoor activities to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.

Break and play times are staggered and each Class Bubble has their own designated playground area. While it is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in the same class play together outdoors, in so far as practical it is encouraged.

Children are encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

## 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*'.

We have ensured as per the guidance that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times and also at the end of each school day. They are partially open when classrooms are in use. In order to avoid discomfort, particularly during cold weather, we have also installed an air purifier in each classroom.

## Use of PPE in Schools

### Masks

As per the updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education face coverings are worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, pupils, parents or essential visitors. All staff wearing face coverings are encouraged to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, we stock additional disposable medical grade masks in the EN16483 category and clear facial visors available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

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

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

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.

### Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for cleaning, intimate care settings and when administering first aid.

Routine use 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**

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 was present.

## **5 Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

### *Choir/Music Performance*

At present practices and performances for our school choir have been suspended. Classes coming together to sing will do so outdoors, weather permitting.

### *Shared Equipment*

Toys - All toys within a Class Bubble are cleaned on a regular basis to remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs. They are stored in a clean container or in a clean cupboard. Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids are taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.

Art – Where possible pupils will access individually designated art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets and laptops are cleaned between use and pupils are encouraged to practice good hand hygiene before using the device. When devices are returned by a Class Bubble, they are cleaned and quarantined before being used by another Class Bubble.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils within the Class Bubble and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses. Pupils are encouraged to practice good hand hygiene before using the instruments. When instruments are returned by a Class Bubble, they are cleaned and quarantined before being used by another Class Bubble.

Library Policy – Our school library is currently not in use and each class has been issued with additional books from the school library for their class libraries. Pupils are encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Each class has been given a collection of sports equipment for use by their Class Bubble. Where there is sports equipment available in our sports hall, the

equipment is cleaned between uses. Pupils are encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after using any shared equipment.

## 6 Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

Prior to the return to the school building by pupils and staff, we have arranged for all surfaces in the school to be bio-misted which provides an anti-viral barrier throughout the school.

As well as this, arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school have been made. Along with our regular cleaners who clean the school each day, our Board of Management employs additional cleaners who move through the school during the day focusing on communal areas, frequently touched surfaces, toilets, the controls of our lift, door handles and staffroom are areas of focus. Cleaning is performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

All staff have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

There is regular collection of used waste disposal bags from classrooms and other areas within the school facility.

Staff must provide, use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)

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

The room will be cleaned as soon as practicably possible. Once the room is vacated it will not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

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 the staffroom, the hall or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas will be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

## 7 Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 at school

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how we at St. Kevin's deal with a suspected case that may arise at school.

A Designated isolation room and two further isolation spaces have been identified within the school building away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member or pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following procedures are implemented:

- First and foremost, staff should remain calm and exercise common sense. At all times, the wellbeing and dignity of the person being supported is to be maintained.
- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents or guardians are to be contacted immediately;
- The child's teacher will contact the school secretary via our internal phone system request that she contact one of the two Covid Support Staff to come to the classroom with a child's mask (which are kept in the isolation rooms).
- The person who is being isolated will be given a mask to wear away from the classroom, not in the classroom in front of other pupils.
- The person will be isolated in one of the designated isolation rooms which they will be brought to via the isolation route, the shortest route to the isolation rooms from where they collected the person to be isolated, by a staff member (ideally one of the Covid Support Staff members if available) who will keep at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and will also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times. The staff member will supervise the person from outside the isolation room until they leave the building.
- The person will be asked to continue to wear the provided mask whilst moving through communal spaces in the school en route to the isolation room and whilst in the isolation room.
- An assessment will be made as to whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home (staff member) or be brought home by parents (pupil), to call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home.
- The person presenting with symptoms will remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and we will facilitate them calling their doctor (staff member). The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the person is a pupil who is well enough to go home, we will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise their parents to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- Where a parent or family member arrives to collect them, the parent/family member should go around to the side of the school and the inner pedestrian gate opened for them, using the keypad. They should then proceed to the large foyer doors and the pupil should be brought down the stairs from the isolation room to them by the supervising staff member. They should leave the grounds via the inner pedestrian gate.
- We advise parents to seek advice from their GP.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, we will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.

- We will then carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery, if necessary.
- Appropriate cleaning by the two Covid Support Staff of the isolation area and work areas involved will be arranged.
- Where the classroom needs to be cleaned, the class teacher should move the class outside for outdoor activities while the cleaning is happening. If this is not possible, because of the weather, they will need to switch out with a class scheduled for PE in the hall and should arrange this directly with that class teacher using the class phone to call the teacher who is scheduled in the hall either in their classroom or in the hall.

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.

## 8 Special Educational Needs

### Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement, depending on the child. The focus is therefore on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

### Hand hygiene

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves will be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

### Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment.

## 9 Staff Duties

Staff members 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.
- Staff members 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.
- Staff members must revisit and complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Staff must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Staff should coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- They should make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Staff should self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
- They should not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Staff should not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they are identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Staff are expected to keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- They are also expected to 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
- Staff members should undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

## 10 COVID-19 Related Absence Management

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed

procedures with the Department of Education.

## 11 Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of '*Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile*'.

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

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

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided.

As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.