**Galbally N.S. Covid-19 School Response Plan**

# 1. 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 Galbally N.S.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government’s ‘*Return to Work Safely Protocol’*, the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET).

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 NPHET 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 (Appendix 1)**
2. **Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
3. (Appendix 2)
4. **Lead Worker Representative(s**) **(Appendix 3)**
5. **Safety Statement and Risk Assessment (Appendix 4)**
6. **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
7. (Appendix 5)
8. **Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19**
9. (Appendix 6)
10. **Control Measures**
11. (Appendix 7)
12. **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19 (Appendix 8)**
13. **Staff Duties**
14. **Covid related absence management**
15. **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.

**Note:** The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidancefrom [www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie](http://www.gov.ie/) [www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie,](http://www.hse.ie/) [www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie;](http://www.hsa.ie/)

#  2.Galbally N.S. COVID-19 Policy

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management

 and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

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| **COVID 19 Policy Statement** Galbally N.S. is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following 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 in relation to summer provision
* inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
* adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills
* keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
* ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
* implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
* provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
* implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.  This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  |

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# 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:

* Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage

 before being used again;

* Have bin collections and other essential services resumed

## b. Signage

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

[https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/ S](https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/)chools can download the posters and display in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets. Schools do not need to do this now as the posters may be updated during the summer and further information will issue on signage closer to planned reopening.

Appendix 2

**Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available online or from the principal. A copy is attached***.***

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.

Appendix 3

At Galbally NS Covid Response meeting on 5th August 2020 it was agreed by staff members that Claire Byrnes would take on the role of Lead Worker Representative and Faustina Noonan would take on the role of Deputy Lead Worker Representative.

LWR will keep up to date with the latest COVID –19 advice from the Government by checking posts on DES website, IPPN, Circulars

Keeping fellow workers up to date with latest advice from Government on COVID –19: Group text message, email, staff meeting

Regular communication with person with overall responsibility for the school COVID – 19 plan: text message, email, phone, in school meeting

If staff have concerns or suggestions in relation to any of the COVID – 19 controls they can raise the concerns with the LWR.

The LWR will keep staff informed of the availability of Support for school staff wellbeing 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’

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

The role of the worker representative) is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

* Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health

and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.

* Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory

etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.

* Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
* Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
* Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
* Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Lead Worker representative:  | Contact details  |
|  Claire Byrnes  |   |
|  Name of Deputy Lead worker representative  |  Contact details  |
|  Faustina Noonan |   |

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.

Appendix 4

# Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in the school is attached.

**First Aid/Emergency Procedure**

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

**Access to School and Contact Log**

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

Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

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 will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found here:

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2020-07/Data%20Protection%20implications%20of%20the%20Return%20to%20Work%20Safely%20Protocol.pdf>

Schools are reminded that all school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school (or ETB) in their role as data controller.

Appendix 5

Signs and Symptoms of COVID – 19 in children aged >3months up to 13 years

(Source HSE)

* Fever of 38.0⁰C or higher without another medical reason (such as chickenpox or a urine infection)

OR • new cough or difficulty breathing or worsening of an existing breathing problem,

OR • loss of sense of smell, change in sense of taste, or loss of sense of taste (if your child is able to say this)

OR • other minor breathing or chest problems in a child who has been in contact with an ill person, is part of an outbreak or is a contact of someone who has COVID-19

• Other symptoms associated with COVID-19 include fatigue, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis, sore throat, headache, muscle/joint pain, skin rash, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea, chills or dizziness.

muscle or joint pain (aches and pains)

Signs and Symptoms of COVID – 19 in Adults and children from their 13th birthday

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are

• Fever

• Dry cough

• Fatigue

Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include:

• Loss of taste or smell,

• Nasal congestion,

• Conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes)

• Sore throat,

• Headache,

• Muscle or joint pain,

• Different types of skin rash,

• Nausea or vomiting,

• Diarrhea,

• Chills or dizziness.

Symptoms of severe COVID‐19 disease may include shortness of breath, loss of appetite, confusion, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, high temperature (above 38 °C). Symptoms may present differently in different age groups and with different variants of the virus. Some symptoms may also be confused with common cold, hay-fever or flu. If you have any new symptoms, even if mild, self-isolate and arrange a COVID-19 test by either phoning your GP, booking online or going to a test centre

You may not have all of these symptoms or your symptoms may be mild. Symptoms may vary for different age groups or variants of the virus.

It can take up to 14 days after you are infected for symptoms to show. You can spread COVID-19 during this time.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be similar to symptoms of [cold](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/common-cold/), [flu](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/flu/) or [hay fever](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/hay-fever/).

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation/how-to-self-isolate.html) (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need [a free COVID-19 test](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/how-to-get-tested.html).

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

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE [Website](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html). Symptoms may be subject to change so regular review of the HSE Website is advised. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a [COVID-19 walk-in test centre](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/covid-19-walk-in-test-centres.html).

**New Covid Arrangements for Schools:**

These arrangements will commence on Monday ,29th November.

The Department of Education and the HSE, working in collaboration with the Department of Health, have developed a programme in which antigen tests will be made available to the children in a primary school pod, where a child in the pod has had a PCR test that detected COVID-19. Where two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 occur in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing will be offered to the full class.

The tests will be sent to the children’s parents by the HSE.

**How the programme will work:**

 • When a parent receives a ‘detected’/positive PCR COVID-19 test result on their child, they should notify the school principal immediately.

 • The school principal will inform the parents of the children in the case’s pod that they are close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case. The name of the case or any other details will not be shared.

• The school principal will offer the opportunity to order antigen tests from the distribution company.

• The antigen tests will be posted to the parents of the children in the pod.

 • Parents carry out the antigen test on the day that they receive it and every second day until three tests have been done.

• The children in the pod can continue to attend school as long as they remain asymptomatic and their antigen test results show a negative result.

**If a child’s antigen test indicates a positive result:**

• If an antigen test is positive, the child isolates at home and the child’s parent/guardian logs onto the HSE to request a PCR test.

• The antigen test distribution company will record the numbers of antigen tests distributed, batch numbers and the names of the relevant schools.

**If a child develops symptoms of COVID-19:**

 • If at any stage a child becomes symptomatic they should isolate at home and organise a COVID-19 PCR test if indicated. A 'not–detected' antigen test holds no value in the situation of a symptomatic child.

**If two or more cases arise in a class, outside a single pod:**

 • In a case where two or more cases arise in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing will be offered to the full class.

It is not mandatory for children to participate in antigen testing. Children who are in a pod where a child has tested positive for COVID-19 can continue to attend school, whether they participate in antigen testing or not, **provided that they are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19**. The principal will not be required to gather evidence of participation or of antigen test results.

**COVID-19 Tracker App**

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that will:

* alert you if you have been in [close contact](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/close-contact-and-casual-contact.html) 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

You can download the free app from [Apple's AppStore](https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/covid-tracker-ireland/id1505596721) or the [GooglePlay store](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.covidtracker.hse)

**Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis.** Public Health information on [close contacts, casual contacts and testing](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/close-contact-and-casual-contact.html) is available from the HSE website.

Appendix 6

**Preventing the Spread of Covid – 19**

**Be responsible, be safe**

You should:

* [wear a face covering](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html)
* only use public transport for essential journeys - walk or cycle instead, if you can
* avoid places where you can't keep 2 metres apart from other people, where possible

**Do not ignore or delay seeking medical treatment for abnormal signs or symptoms that you may be experiencing.**[**Get medical help if you need it**](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/get-urgent-medical-help-for-non-coronavirus-symptoms.html)**.**

**Social distancing**

You should:

* keep a space of 2 metres (6.5 feet) between you and other people
* avoid any crowded places
* not shake hands or make close contact with other people, if possible

**Do**

Wash your hands properly and often.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze.

Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

**Don't**

Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

Do not share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups.

**When you should wash your hands**

You should wash your hands:

* after coughing or sneezing
* before and after eating
* before and after preparing food
* if you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
* before and after being on public transport, if you must use it
* before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
* when you arrive and leave buildings including your home or anyone else's home
* if you have handled animals or animal waste
* before having a cigarette or vaping
* even if your hands are not visibly dirty
* after toilet use

Keep your hands in good condition. Moisturise them often. Any basic product that is not perfumed or coloured is OK. Do not wear disposable gloves instead of washing your hands. The virus gets on them in the same way it gets on your hands. Also, your hands can get contaminated when you take them off.

**Respiratory Hygiene**

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.

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

**Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing will applied allowing for some flexibility when needed. It will be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. Care should be taken 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**.

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

A distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. 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 should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.

Classes will be structured into Class Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, to the extent that this is practical.

There should be at least (1m distance) between individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.

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 the 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 Pods within those Class Bubbles is an additional measures, to limit the extent of close contact within the Class Bubble.

Pod sizes should be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context.

To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.

Different Class Bubbles where possible will have separate breaks or separate areas at break.

Sharing educational material between Pods should be avoided/minimised where possible.

Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble should be limited as much as possible.

***Additional measures to decrease interaction include:***

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.

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

Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource.

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**

As described in Appendix 7

**Ventilation**

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice ‘*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools’* The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance 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.

**Use of PPE in Schools**

The Department has published “[Guidance to Primary and Special Schools on PPE consumables and equipment](https://assets.gov.ie/83497/d48ade18-daa1-4610-9390-46e7312a9831.pdf)” on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

This provides schools with the information needed on the appropriate quantities of PPE consumables and equipment to support the safe and sustainable operations of schools.

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended 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 Department has accepted this recommendation.  Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to 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. (Please see note re medical grade masks on page 23)

Workers should be trained in the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE. The HPSC has produced posters and videos on the correct donning and doffing of PPE available on the HPSC and HSA websites <https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/covid-19_business_supports/business_supports/hse-hpsc_posters_and_videos/>

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.

**Face Coverings/Masks**

**Staff**

Thewearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they will 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.

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

* Any person with difficulty breathing
* Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
* Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
* Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

All staff wearing face coverings should be reminded 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.

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.

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

**Children:**

NPHET has recommended the wearing of face masks/coverings by children aged nine years and above on public transport, in retail and other indoor public settings as already required for children aged 13 years and over. They have also recommended that this is introduced for children in 3rd class and above in primary schools. They have advised that this measure is being introduced on a temporary basis and is subject to review in mid-February 2022.

Guidance on face masks/coverings in Primary schools

* Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.
* Pupils from third class and up in primary schools are required to wear a face mask/covering.
* The exemptions to this are set out below.
* Face masks/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 mask/covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Face masks/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.
* Face masks/coverings must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.
* Face masks/coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a face mask/covering cannot be worn clear visors must be considered.

**Exemptions**

A medical certificate to certify that a person falls into a category listed below must be provided to the school on behalf of, any person (pupil) who claims that they are covered by the exemptions below:

• any pupil with difficulty breathing or other relevant medical conditions

• any pupil who is unable to remove the cloth face-covering or visor without assistance

• any pupil who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the cloth face covering or visor, for example pupils with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity. Schools will be best placed to identify those children whose complex needs are such that the wearing of face covering may not be possible for them, and to discuss this with parents as required. In such circumstances a school may not require medical certification to provide an exemption to the wearing of face coverings. In other circumstances where a medical certificate is not provided that person (staff or pupil) will be refused entry to the school.

Directions for effective use of face masks/coverings:

• All pupils should be 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.

• Face masks/coverings should be stored in a designated space, for example, in an individually labelled container or bag.

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

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

Pupils using school transport

Pupils from 3rd class and up on the primary transport scheme are required to wear face masks/coverings subject to the exemptions above.

Mixed classes in single rooms Where there are mixed classes, e.g. 2nd and 3rd class in a single classroom, schools should note that only children in 3rd class and above, are required to wear face masks.

As per previous advice, however, parents of other children who would prefer that their children wear a face mask are not precluded from doing this.

Provision of face masks

Parents should be advised that they obtain face masks for their children which fit properly and are comfortable for the child to wear. In the event that a child forgets, loses or damages their masks during the course of the school day, then the school should have a sufficient supply to replace the mask for the child in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

**Medical Grade Masks**

Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes 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.

**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.

**Dealing with a suspected case of COVID – 19  (ref: DES)**

* Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.
* A designated isolation area is identified within the school building: Sectioned area of Hall
* The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19: Second isolation area: Sectioned area of Staff Room Corridor

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

* If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
* Isolate the person and follow the procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route (see below)
* keeping at least 2m away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2m from the symptomatic person at all times
* If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask.
* Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin
* Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available.
* He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
* Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self isolation at home (Principal and LWR will assess the individual)
* Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor.
* The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
* Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided
* If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
* Public transport of any kind should not be used
* If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect
* Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
* LWR will arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved
* The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process.
* The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made.
* The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

Person to accompany suspected case to isolation area:

Infants: Faustina  Seniors & 1st  : Faustina

2nd & 3rd : Jane 4th & 5th: Mairéad

5th & 6th: Tara  Realtai: Jane

Isolation Route:

* Each class room has individual outside door access. The suspected case will exit their classroom via the outside door and enter the building at the Office door to access the isolation area.

**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. The focus should therefore be 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 should 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. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, 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;
* Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers’ instructions. Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water.
* Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child e.g. toileting aids;
* If equipment is soiled with body fluids:
* First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
* Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
* Rinse with water and dry.

**Appendix 7: Control Measures agreed for Galbally NS**

**Arrival to school**

Each class has a specific gate by which to enter and exit the school grounds:

Junior Infants: Gate 1

Senior Infants & 1st Class: Gate 1

2nd & 3rd Class: Gate 3

4th & 5th Class: Gate 4

5th & 6th Class: Gate 2

Realtaí: Gate 1

Older classes 3rd – 6th to arrive @ 9:05

Junior classes jnr – 2nd to arrive @ 9:15

Zones will be set up in the yard for each class to stay in prior to school.

On rainy days children will proceed straight to their classrooms.

**Departure from School**

Infant classes depart at gate 1 @ 2pm\*

1st class depart at gate 2@ 2:55pm\*

2nd & 3rd class go to gate 3 with class teacher to be collected @ 2.55pm\*

4th & 5th class go to gate 4 with class teacher to be collected @3pm\*

5th &6th class go to the gate 1 to be collected @3pm\*

\*1m social distance to be kept whilst awaiting collection.

**Break and lunch times**

Break times:

11.00 – 11.10 All Classes

Infants – Playground

1st & 2nd – Playground

3rd Class – Lawn (Halved)

4th & 5th Class - Court

5th & 6th Class – Lawn (Halved)

Lunch times

12:30 – 1.00

 Infants – Playground

1st & 2nd – Playground

3rd Class – Lawn (Halved)

4th Class – Lawn (Halved)

5th & 6th Class – Court

**Homework**

It was decided collectively that homework would be assigned, completed and uploaded to the SEESAW app. to reduce books coming into school from home.

Children will also be asked to keep a separate pencil case at home for homework.

**Aistear**

Aistear will be reduced this year and children will have reduced toys to play with.

The Junior room will quarantine toys for 72 hours before alternating between pods.

No soft toys or dressing up equipment to be used.

**SEN**

Our extra shared teacher will be with us for one full day instead of mixed days and times.

**SNA’s**

Mairead and Jane will work in the Realtaí room.

Faustina will work in the Senior Infant and 1st class room.

Tara will work in 5th & 6th class.

**PPE**

Screens for teacher tables are installed where requested.

Hand gel units are installed at all doors.

**Sickness**

Teachers are advised to call the principal prior to 8pm on the evening before any absence.

Children who become sick during the school day: Refer to: Dealing with a suspected case protocol.

**Curriculum**

The children will be brough outdoors as much as possible and a timetable will be created to facilitate this.

Certain subjects are to be given priority namely:

* SPHE and wellbeing
* P.E
* Languages
* Maths

Art supplies have purchased for each room.

Additional **PE**equipment has been purchased. (Extra footballs per class and beanbags from infants to second class.)

There will be no band or choir this year.

**Outside the school building**

 Zones have been created and marked clearly for each class.

Notices have been erected to remind parents that they are not to enter beyond the school gates unless a prior appointment has been made.

A buzzer has been installed at the reception /6th class door to restrict access.

**Inside the school building**

In the staff room teachers supply own crockery and cutlery for break and lunch.

Each teacher is responsible for cleaning their own workspace.

There are no internal doors open between classrooms.

The hall is out of use for the foreseeable future.

**Cleaning**

Each staff member has completed the return to school online training programme as devised by the DES prior to returning to school.

All areas of the school are cleaned daily.

The cleaner has completed a training programme prior to retuning to work.

Teachers are responsible to clean their own work spaces.

All lunch rubbish to be brought home in lunch boxes.

Floors were deep cleaned prior to school reopening.

All classes removed clutter, extra books, shelves and storage boxes which was relocated to the hall.

The lead worker is **Claire Byrnes**

The Deputy worker is **Faustina Noonan**

Cleaning protocols and standard procedures have been created.

**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 publichealth 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

12.Covid related absence management

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

# 13. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people’s personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.