



# St Joseph's National School

Covid Response Practical Arrangements 2021-2022

updated 16/11/2021

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**Underlying Principles**

- The school has a responsibility to make efforts to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the cooperation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- If you have any concerns for your child's medical welfare, please contact your GP or relevant medical professional. Please note that the school cannot give out health advice, please ensure that you get any health advice needed from an appropriate source such as the HSE or a health professional e.g. your GP.

**As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented. Please be patient with us as we endeavour to ensure the safety of everyone involved.**

*Please be aware that this is a working document. Changes will be required on an ongoing basis. When changes are made to the document, it will be communicated via email. Staff and parents will be obliged to keep themselves informed on the contents of this document as well as government and HSE guidelines.*

**Lead Worker Representatives**

Aisling Murray has been appointed as the Lead Worker Representative.

The deputy Lead Worker Representative is Aine McGrath.

**Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

***Pupils should not attend school if displaying any 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). These are subject to change, we will endeavour to update this list and inform parents when we are notified by the Department of Education or Department of Health.

## Symptoms

### 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

**Please Note: Symptoms may be subject to change so regular review of the HSE Website is advised.** <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

**Advice for parents during Covid-19:**

### Symptoms to look out for

If your child has any of the following symptoms of Covid-19, do not send them to school and contact your GP:

- A temperature of 38 degrees Celcius or more
- A new cough
- Loss or changed sense of taste or smell
- Shortness of breath or an existing breathing condition that has become worse
- Fatigue
- Aches or pains
- Sore throats
- Headaches
- Diarrhoea
- Runny or stuff nose
- Feeling sick or vomiting

For more see [gov.ie/backtoschool](https://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

Coronavirus COVID-19 Public Health Advice

An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

**If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following are the procedures will be implemented:**

- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area by a member of staff. The

staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.

- A mask may be provided for the child presenting with symptoms if necessary.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately on the numbers provided. Please provide us with 3 contacts (preferably 2 parents and one back up person). If the secretary cannot contact the parent/guardian then the backup person listed by the parent will be contacted. (Please ensure the details you provided us with are up to date and if you have changed numbers/back up contact, let the office know by email)
- We do request that parents ensure that someone is available to pick up the child as soon as possible should they have symptoms. As a staff member is needed to care for the child whilst in isolation, they will have been removed from other duties thus impacting on other children in the school. It is also and more importantly, necessary in order to limit the spread of infection throughout the school.
- Parents are advised to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved. Should a second child become ill on the same day, the same isolation unit will not be used prior to cleaning. The teacher will organize to have the child isolated within his own classroom/in a separate designated area keeping a 2metre distance from all other pupils and from the teacher and a mask will be provided while awaiting pick up by parents.

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.

### **Children who should not attend school**

***Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.***

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school

- Children who are displaying any of the Covid-19 symptoms.

- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been advised by HSE to restrict their movements
- Household contacts who are fully vaccinated and showing no symptoms should restrict their movements until they have 3 negative antigen test results within 5 days.
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad from countries outlined on the HSE website. Please note that there are different guidelines for those whose parents are vaccinated as to those who are not vaccinated. Parents are asked to ensure that they stick to the guidelines rigidly. Please see the following website for advice:  
<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/75d92-covid-19-travel-advice/>
- Children who have had an episode of vomiting or diarrhoea in the last 48 hours (as per HSE guidelines: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/diarrhoea-and-vomiting.html>)
- Children who are generally unwell

### **Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school**

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, suggested activities to support the child's learning at home will be shared with parents by the class teacher (and the support teacher where relevant).

### **Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class**

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 Public health advice will be sought and followed.

### **Practical Arrangements**

- All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system
- Staff interaction with children will be limited as much as possible
- The school is split into 2 groups, junior classes and senior classes with staggered break and lunch times.
- Children in the junior classes (Infants-Second class) will operate in "class bubbles" and these whole class bubbles will be kept separate from other bubbles(classes) to minimise the risk of infection as much as possible.
- Within each class bubble from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, the children will be further divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods where possible.
- In line with updated public health advice, pupils should be seated near close friends to minimise contact - this will be done where possible, it will not be possible at all times.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all class and support rooms
- Water and soap will be available in all classrooms for handwashing and hand washing will be encouraged frequently, in particular before children eat.
- **Please remind your child how to wash their hands properly. Remember that sanitiser only works on visibly clean hands. Dirty hands should be washed with soap and water. A child friendly video is available on:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDjcJ-fSUgg>

- All classrooms will have windows open for as long as is possible but at a minimum for two periods of at least 15 minutes per day to improve ventilation and minimise risk.
- CO2 monitors are shared one between two classrooms and one shared between support rooms – these will be monitored and if needed windows and doors will be opened (if closed) or if necessary classrooms will be vacated if levels are raised to amber/red levels. Using the monitor will give teachers an idea of when air becomes stale in the classroom and how frequently it is needed to ventilate the room. The aim to keep the monitor within the green range <800ppm as much as possible.
- Please ensure your child has all equipment necessary each morning as we will not be able to facilitate the dropping of lunches, sports equipment etc. to classrooms. This is in order to keep external visitors to the school to a minimum.
- Should you need to speak to a teacher, please send a note or contact the office via email and a time will be arranged for the teacher to make contact. Face to face meetings with parents should not take place, unless in exceptional circumstances and with prior approval from the principal.
- Children are not requested to wear masks, however, if they would like to wear masks they can. Please give your child a plain colour mask and change it daily.
- Regular cleaning will be undertaken – this will include all door knobs, tables, chairs, handrails.
- Any child who does not adhere to school rules (e.g. coughs on another child purposely) will be dealt with through our Code of Behaviour policy
- *HSE guidelines will be strictly adhered to*

### **Break times**

We have altered our break times as follows.

*Juniors infants – 2<sup>nd</sup> Class*

Small Break 10:40 -10.55am

Lunch Break 12:15 -12:40pm

*3<sup>rd</sup> Class – 6<sup>th</sup> Class*

Small Break 11:00 – 11:15am

Lunch Break 12:50 -1:15pm

### **Yard**

The yards will be split into sections or zones for each class grouping to stay in their zone. The back of the staff carpark has been sectioned off to allow for 4 classes to gather there in the morning before school to enable distancing between class bubbles.

### **Entry and Exit Points**

Children are asked to observe social distancing guidelines as they enter and exit the school. Each class has been assigned an entry and exit point for the beginning of the day and the end of the day. Classes also have assigned entry & exit points to and from the yard to their classroom to prevent overlapping of classes in corridors.

### **Arrival at School**

- **We request that children arrive on time to school**
- Pupils go to their allocated yard.
- Doors will open at 9.10am each morning to admit children. Pupils arriving before 9:10am stay within their class bubbles in their assigned yard. Supervision begins at 8:50am please do not arrive before this time.
- Children should enter their classroom in an orderly fashion, in their pods and take their seat.
- Children are asked to sanitise their hands on entering their classroom.

### **End of School Day**

Adults should wear masks at collections. We request that children be collected on time.

The following arrangements will apply at the end of the school day

- Junior and Senior Infants: The teachers will release the children into the care of the adult who will wait at the school wall.
- The class teachers will allow each pod to leave the classroom separately in order to minimise contact.
- Classes should not mix while waiting to leave the school.

We ask that they not delay at the wall/gate to avoid unnecessary gatherings/mixing of groups.

### **Collection of Children during the School Day**

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply

- Please inform the office that you will be collecting your child early (via email, phone or through Aladdin Connect). If possible please let your child know that they will be collected early and they can inform the class teacher of the same.
- When the adult arrives at the school, they should come to the front door of the school to alert the office that they have arrived.
- The child will be brought from their class to the front door
- The child will be signed out by a member of school staff.
- No adult should enter the school building, unless invited to do so.

### **Return to School**

Parents must fill out a return to school declaration form for their child when their child is returning to school after an absence or a school closure.

The form becomes available at 3pm on the day the child has been marked absent and from 3pm on the day before students will return to school after a school closure. If a child is marked absent on a Friday or will return to school on a Monday, the form becomes available

at 3pm on Sunday. This is to ensure the declaration is completed in as appropriate a time for a child's return to school as possible.

### **Personal Equipment**

- Each child should have a pencil case, drinks bottle and lunch box that are easily wiped clean. They must be clearly labelled as any lost property that is not labelled will be discarded. Your child should be able to open and close lunchboxes and drinks bottles themselves. Equally they should not be given any food that s/he cannot open on their own.
- Under no circumstances will children be allowed to share drinks.
- Sometimes children have their sibling's lunchbox/equipment etc. and request that they be allowed to go to another classroom to swap. With the new guidelines this practice will no longer be allowed. Please ensure your child has an adequate lunch and drink each day.
- School bags need to be emptied and washed regularly
- It is requested that all children will bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc. to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment. This pencil case should be left in school.
- A separate set of stationary should be available for home use. **Pencil cases to be left in school to reduce the risk of cross contamination**
- Lunchboxes and reusable water bottles to be washed at a high temperature each night.

### **Shared Equipment**

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including iPads, laptops, readers/books and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Laptops and iPads will be wiped clean after use. Children will be asked to sanitise their hands prior to using shared books or resources.

Cleaning of all shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection. Toys in the infant rooms will be cleaned regularly in line with the guidelines.

### **PPE**

Staff will wear masks when inside as much as possible. Good hand hygiene will be observed at all times.

### **Teacher Absence and Substitution**

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may be necessary for a member of the Special Education team to supervise the class on that day. This will avoid the necessity for class groups to remain at home if their teacher becomes ill and a substitute cannot be found.

## **PE**

Where possible, PE should take place outdoors and any equipment used should be wiped down by the teacher after use. Pupils will sanitise their hands before and after P.E.

## **Assemblies:**

Whole school assemblies will not take place under current circumstances. If needed Mr Gallagher will visit the classes to make any announcements/communicate with children, while observing social distancing guidelines. Where possible the internal intercom system will be used for communication with pupils and teachers to minimise risk.

## **Money Collections**

All collection of money will now be done online to avoid the risk associated with the handling of money. We will continue to use Aladdin e-payments for this purpose.

## **Office**

Children are not permitted to enter the office or the staffroom. They must wait outside the door or at the window of the office until attended to.

Teachers are asked to wipe all shared equipment after use e.g. photocopier, shredder, laminator etc. Teachers should minimise visits to the office and they should not enter the office unless in exceptional circumstances.

## **Visiting Teachers/Others**

- No adults, other than staff members, should enter the school premises without prior arrangement.
- **Student Teachers and TY students** – student teacher placements will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- Due to the spike in Delta cases in the community we will not accommodate TY students this year until after Christmas when we will review the situation.
- TY students will need to adhere to strict hand hygiene measures as well as wearing medical grade masks at all times. They must adhere to HSE and school guidelines at all times. Alternative break times will be arranged to minimise contact with other staff members.
- **Visiting coaches** may visit the school (in the interest of health and wellbeing and given that this activity shall take place outdoors as much as possible) and they shall be given clear guidelines about social distancing/sharing equipment and children will remain in their own bubbles for such activities.

[Aisling Murray](#) Lead Worker Representative

[Dominic Gallagher](#) Principal

31st August 2021