



## **Covid-19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Reopening of:**

**St. Brigid's Primary School,  
The Coombe,  
Dublin 8.  
16786H**

### **Introduction**

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe, Dublin 8.

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 re-opening and to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

It is important that any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol and to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

**\*\*Update 24/02/2021\*\***

A revision of the COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools is necessary to ensure that it is in compliance with the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the 'Work Safely Protocol'.

The 'Work Safely Protocol' is a revised version of the 'Return to Work Safely Protocol' and contains many of the elements and features of the original guidance but is updated to reflect the latest advice issued by Government and National Health Emergency Team (NPHET) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

**The updates made to our Covid-19 Response Plan are in compliance with the revised 'Work Safely Protocol' and are evidenced through out this document in purple font.**

**\*\*Update 25/08/2021\*\***

**Additional updates for the 2021-2022 school year are in compliance with the Governments "Recovery and Resilience: The Path Ahead" and the revised 'Work Safely Protocol'. They are evidenced through out this document in green font. Where no green font has been noted there have been no updates to these procedures and the response plan remains as is read in the purple or black font.**

This document aims to provide details of:

- 1) **St. Brigid's Primary School COVID-19 Policy**
- 2) **Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
  - 2.1) Induction Training
  - 2.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
  - 2.3) Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
  - 2.4) Display Signage
  - 2.5) Making Changes to School Layout
  - 2.6) Update Safety and Risk Assessment
  - 2.7) Access to the School and Contact Log
- 3) **Control Measures – To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools**
  - 3.1) Know the Symptoms of COVID-19
  - 3.2) Respiratory Hygiene
  - 3.3) Hand Hygiene
  - 3.4) Physical Distancing
  - 3.5) Use of PPE in Schools
- 4) **Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**
- 5) **Hygiene and Cleaning in School**
- 6) **Dealing with a suspected case**
- 7) **Special Educational Needs**
- 8) **Staff Duties**
- 9) **Absence Management**
- 10) **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

**Note:** The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from [www.Gov.ie](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);

## **1. St. Brigid's Primary School COVID-19 Policy**

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

### **COVID-19 School Policy Statement**

St. Brigid's Primary School, The Coombe 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
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- 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 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), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson of BOM)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (School Principal)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School**

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be 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 restrictions and controls are outlined in this document.

### **2.1 Induction Training**

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health;
- Covid-19 symptoms;
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school;
- Outline of the Covid-19 response plan.

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

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.

Covid-19 induction training for primary schools can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd7fb-induction-training-for-reopening-schools/#primary-schoolinduction>

- All staff will be reminded to refresh themselves with this training on their return to school on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> 2021. Staff will be reminded to review again the training materials provided by the Department to include knowledge of symptoms, hand and respiratory hygiene, how to manage a suspected COVID-19 case as well as the specific module for SNAs, cleaners and lead workers.
- All new and returning members of staff will be provided with induction training/ be reminded to refresh themselves with this training in preparation for school reopening on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. Staff will be reminded to review the training materials provided by the Department to include knowledge of symptoms, hand and respiratory hygiene, how to manage a suspected COVID-19 case as well as the specific module for SNAs, cleaners and lead workers.

### **2.2 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 electronically or from the Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 1**.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace. The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

On receipt of the completed form the principal will provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace 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.

Reviewed Return to Work (RTW) Form for the re-opening of schools on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 is attached at **Appendix 1a**. This RTW form will be distributed to all staff by the principal and should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Our school will also request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Return to Education Forms will be made available to all parents via Aladdin Connect. Hard copy forms will also be made available in the school. Parents are to complete these forms after 3pm on the Sunday prior to their child's return to school i.e. February 28<sup>th</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup>. See **Appendix 1b** for the Return to Education Form.

Reviewed Return to Work (RTW) Form for the re-opening of schools on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 is attached at **Appendix 1a**. This RTW form will be distributed to all staff by the principal and should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Our school will also request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays as they occur throughout the school year.

Return to Education Forms will be made available to all parents via Aladdin Connect. Hard copy forms will also be made available in the school. Parents are to complete these forms after 3pm on the Tuesday prior to their child's return to school i.e. August 31<sup>st</sup>. See **Appendix 1b** for the Return to Education Form.

There are some school staff who may be unable to return to school. Current public health guidelines have identified these people as being in groups who are defined as being at **very high risk**. This will be updated in line with public health advice. The list outlined below corresponds to the latest health advice posted on the <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html> webpage and correlates to its most recent update on February 24th 2021.

#### **People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):**

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have Down Syndrome
- have cancer and are being treated with chemotherapy or similar drugs other than hormone therapy
- have lung or head and neck cancer and are having radical surgery or radiotherapy
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer or head and neck cancer
- are having certain complex cancer surgery, for example surgery for lung cancer, head and neck cancer or oesophageal cancer
- have advanced cancer or cancer that has spread to another part of the body
- are on dialysis or have end stage kidney disease and an eGFR less than 15
- have a condition affecting the brains or nerves that has significantly affected your ability to breathe, meaning you require non-invasive ventilation (such as motor neurone disease or spinal muscular atrophy)
- have unstable or severe cystic fibrosis, including people waiting for a transplant
- have severe respiratory conditions including Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have uncontrolled diabetes
- have had an organ transplant or are waiting for a transplant

- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the last 12 months, or are waiting for a transplant
- have a rare condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as APECED or errors in the interferon pathway)
- sickle cell disease
- have been treated with drugs such as Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Alemtuzumab, Cladribine or Ocrelizumab in the last 6 months
- have certain inherited metabolic disorders (such as Maple Syrup Urine Disease)
- have obesity with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 40 • are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

The list outlined below corresponds to the latest health advice posted on the <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html> webpage and correlates to its most recent update on May 7th 2021.

**People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):**

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have Down Syndrome
- have cancer and are being treated with chemotherapy or similar drugs other than hormone therapy
- have lung or head and neck cancer and are having radical surgery or radiotherapy
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer or head and neck cancer
- are having certain complex cancer surgery, for example, surgery for lung cancer, head and neck cancer or oesophageal cancer
- have advanced cancer or cancer that has spread to another part of the body
- are on dialysis or have end-stage kidney disease and an eGFR less than 15
- have a condition affecting the brains or nerves that has significantly affected your ability to breathe, meaning you require non-invasive ventilation (such as motor neurone disease or spinal muscular atrophy)
- have unstable or severe cystic fibrosis, including people waiting for a transplant
- have severe respiratory conditions including Alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have uncontrolled diabetes
- have had an organ transplant or are waiting for a transplant
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the last 12 months, or are waiting for a transplant
- have a rare condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as APECED or errors in the interferon pathway)
- sickle cell disease
- have been treated with drugs such as Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Alemtuzumab, Cladribine or Ocrelizumab in the last 6 months

- have certain inherited metabolic disorders (such as Maple Syrup Urine Disease)
- have obesity with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 40

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Details of the arrangements that will apply for these staff, which will be in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, will be updated by the Department of Education following consultation with management bodies and unions and a circular will issue to all schools.

An employer should, where an SNA or teacher has been categorised by the Occupational Health Service (Medmark) as at High Risk of serious illness if he/she contracts COVID-19, during this phase and on a temporary basis, facilitate more flexible working arrangements made possible by the presence of significantly reduced pupil attendance.

An SNA or teacher who is over 60 years of age should also be temporarily facilitated by these arrangements. This may include reassignment of an SNA or teacher to other duties within the school or at home. This may include the reassignment of SNA or teacher roles within the complement of SNAs and teachers available to the school. The Government made the decision that temporary facilitation of the above arrangements for a teacher or SNA over 60 years of age would cease from 30/06/2021. The reassignment of an SNA or teacher over 60 years of age to other duties within the school or home will no longer be possible unless otherwise stated by the Government.

During this period of partial re-opening, a pregnant SNA or teacher should consider themselves in the High Risk category and the SNA or teacher should temporarily continue to work remotely. The current position based on the updated HSE guidance is that a pregnant teacher or SNA up to 14 weeks gestation who is medically fit for work can safely attend the workplace, unless categorised by the OHS/Medmark as "very high risk" due to an underlying medical condition unrelated to their pregnancy. A pregnant teacher or SNA are required to attend the workplace unless OHS/Medmark sanction otherwise.

Circulars 05/2021 & 06/2021 reflect the changes made to the very high risk and high risk categories during this period of phased return to school with circular 49/2020 outlining temporary duties and tasks that may be taken on board to facilitate working remotely. These circulars have been distributed to staff. Circular 0042/2021 "Coronavirus 19: Arrangements for Teachers and Special Needs Assistants employed in recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools" addresses changes made for the 2021-2022 school year.

### **2.3 Lead Worker Representative (LWR)**

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 management.

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. 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.

Name(s):	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Worker Representative: Anne Marie Keane</li> <li>• Lead Worker Representative: Grace Cowman commenced with the appointment of acting AP1 position.</li> <li>• Assistant Lead Worker Representative: Leanne Byrne</li> <li>• Deputy Lead Worker Representative: Ger Tuohy</li> </ul>	<p><b>St. Brigid's Primary School 01-4547734</b> Aladdin Connect</p>

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

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to Covid-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest Covid-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress Covid-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to 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.

## 2.4 Display Signage

The Department has provided the school with printed posters outlining the signs and symptoms of Covid-19, with age appropriate key health messages such as hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc. These posters are displayed in prominent areas of the school such as glass doors, reception, the office, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets, with appropriate social distancing boundaries on the yard.

In preparation for our return to school on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 it was agreed that signage needs to be increased outside the school/in the courtyard. This signage has been ordered on 23/02/2021 and is expected to be delivered to the school by Friday 26<sup>th</sup> February.

Signage continues to be displayed throughout our school for the commencement of the 2021-2022 school year.

## 2.5 Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of Covid-19. St. Brigid's Primary School has reconfigured classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening. Further information on how physical distancing has been implemented in our school environment is found at **Section 3.4** below.

## 2.6 Health and Safety and Risk Assessment

Covid-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 in our school is attached at **Appendix 2**.

We have reviewed emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's Covid-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures are documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

We in St Brigid's Primary School have also reviewed our existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's Covid-19 Response Plan. Any changes are documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

In response to our return to school on March 1<sup>st</sup> we have reviewed our Risk Assessment Template at **Appendix 2** and have ensured that it continues to comply with the health and safety requirements as set out in the COVID-19 Response plan.

In response to our return to school on September 1<sup>st</sup> we have reviewed our Risk Assessment Template at **Appendix 2** and have ensured that it continues to comply with the health and safety requirements as set out in the COVID-19 Response plan.

## First Aid/Emergency Procedure

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

## 2.7 Access to School and Contact Log

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 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. A copy of this contact log is available at **Appendix 3**.

All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

In response to level 5 and new guidance issued to schools **no** in person meetings are to take place with parents on the school premises. This is to be reviewed after Easter 2021.

Due to guidance issued to schools whereby schools are to continue with covid 19 restrictions and procedures that have been in place, no in person meetings are to take place with parents on the school premises. This will be reviewed after October mid-term break 2021.

### **3. Control Measures-To prevent introduction and spread of Covid-19 in school.**

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

*Staff, in particular, 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.*

Staff and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus. Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. St. Brigid's Primary School will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

#### ***How to minimise the risk of introduction of Covid-19 in our school:***

- Promote awareness of Covid-19 symptoms (**details at Section 3.1**);
- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and pupils not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact for person with Covid-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Advise staff and pupils to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test
- Advise staff and pupils not to 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.
  - Advise staff and pupils to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school.

In the event that a member of staff who is fully vaccinated becomes in contact with someone who tests positive for Covid 19, they do not need to restrict their movements as long as they do not have symptoms of Covid 19. Further clarification on this is available from <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/close-contact/>

- Mandatory staff temperature checks will take place each morning prior to the onset of classes. Each staff member will take their own temperature and use the sanitizing equipment whilst doing so. If the case arises

where a staff member is concerned about their temperature they will inform the principal straight away. This protocol remains in place for the 2021-2022 school year.

- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of Covid-19 in school (**details at Section 6**);
- Everyone entering the school building is required to use the hand sanitiser provided at entry and exit points and engage in hourly handwashing and regular hand sanitising thereafter.
- Adhere to our new one way system and entry and exit points for specific classes.
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point i.e. the glass doors/reception area. As noted in Section 2.7 no in-person meetings are to take place on the school premises. All contact is to be made by phone, text or email. Visitors on essential purposes to the school e.g. maintenance/emergency works will be permitted and prior arrangement will be made with the school principal. This protocol remains in place for the 2021-2022 school year.
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.
- The use of visors are made available to all staff and should be worn where necessary, especially in the morning upon the greeting of children and at home-time. In line with the most recent health and safety guidelines blue 2r masks to be worn by all staff at all times. A box of 50 will be provided to each staff member on March 1st morning along with a pack of antibacterial wipes. Staff members returning to their classrooms on March 15<sup>th</sup> will receive the same. Masks from home are not to be worn by any member of staff. This is to be reviewed after Easter. Masks must be worn by all staff all of the time, including in the classroom even if a 2 metres physical distance from the children can be maintained.

In line with the most recent Department guidelines, practices implemented in the school year 2020-2021 will continue through to the 2021-2022 school year. Staff will continue to be provided with blue 2r masks, antibacterial wipes and hand sanitiser as well as Dettol sprays for table surfaces. The blue 2r masks provided by the school are to be worn by staff at all times throughout the day, including in the classroom even if a 2m physical distance can be maintained. Masks from home are not to be worn by any member of staff.

- Parents are given a half hour window, from 08:50-09:20 to drop their children off to school. Formal teaching begins at 09:20 with infant home time at 13:40, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes at 14:30 and 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class at 14:40. To further reduce the possibility of congregation in the school courtyard the Early Start morning group will now be allowed to be dropped off at 8:50am also. In review of this procedure it has now been decided that the drop off period be reduced to 20 minutes for the 2021-2022 school year. Parents/Guardians can choose to drop their children off to school anywhere between 09:00-09:20. Formal teaching will commence at 09:20. Collection times remain the same as the 2020-2021 school year i.e. infant home time 13:40, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> classes at 14:30 and 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes at 14:40.

- Children adhere to their pods and bubbles. In review of our stance on pods and bubbles it has been decided that pupils up to and including second class operate in a bubble as per Department guidelines for schools. Classes from 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> will operate in pods.
- Special arrangements have been made for the incoming Junior Infant's first day of school. Junior Infant pupils in each class will enter the school in groups of 6 at fifteen minute intervals 10:00, 10:15 and 10:30. As Junior Infants are operating in bubbles, Junior Infant classes will enter school on Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> September at 10am. From 2<sup>nd</sup> September to the 10<sup>th</sup> September the Junior Infant day will formally commence at 09:20 and finish at 12pm. From Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September Junior Infant pupils will begin at 09:20 and go home at 13:40 as per normal. Parents are not permitted into the class unless there is a case where the child is very distressed. In this event, one parent may enter the classroom. They will be required to wear a mask and fill out their details in the school contact log.
- Additional yard times to accommodate a maximum of four classes on the large yard and two on the junior yard at any one time with physical barriers present to help pupils adhere to social distancing. Due to an increase in staff allocation for the 2021-2022 school year there will be a maximum of four classes on the large yard and three on the junior yard. However as pupil numbers are low in the Senior Infant classes the number of pupils on the junior yard remain similar despite the yard being split into three bubbles are opposed to two.
- Accommodations made to the SEN team timetables in order to ensure the SET is exposed to no more than two classes (bubbles). In light of vaccinations playing an imperative part in helping to prevent the spread of Covid 19 and the exiting of level 5, SET's will be exposed to no more than 3 classes (bubbles).
- Formal Power Hours and Maths Hours will not proceed in term 1. The possibility of Power Hour and Maths Hour recommencing in term 2 will be decided closer to the time. Formal Power Hours and Maths Hours will not take place in term 2. This will be reviewed again after Easter when we commence term 3. Power Hours and Maths Hours did not take place for the 2020-2021 school year. Power Hours and Maths Hours will commence in the 2021-2022 school year. This will be reviewed again at Christmas 2021.
- Change in the delivery and collection of homework to accommodate a 72 hour window before correction and redistribution of readers. In line with our return to school on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> it has been decided that no homework in the line of copies/books/folders will be sent home. Homework will constitute as one seesaw activity to be completed on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening. This activity will consolidate and build upon the learning that has been taking place in the classroom that week. This decision was reviewed in May where it was decided that bookwork could be sent home for homework as long as the 72hour window was accommodated. We will continue to operate homework with the 72 hour window in place before correction and redistribution of resources.
- Staff to take their breaks in the library where social distancing can be maintained. Each member of staff is to bring their own cup, cutlery and utensils, wash them in the classroom after use and have them ready for the following day. Seating arrangements in the library reflect the 2m physical distancing health and safety guideline. Windows and door are open to ensure good air flow and ventilation. This has been reviewed and remains the same. A sanitising station is made available in the library and will be kept fully stocked.
- The staff room will be available for the traffic wardens to use for a cup of tea between 1:40 and 2:30/2:40 home times. Traffic warden can socially distance in the school reception area and continue to use the lockers provided. (1 locker per traffic warden) Traffic wardens will be asked to provide their own cup, cutlery and utensils also.
- Pupil's mobile phones will no longer be collected at the office. Due to changes in our mobile phone policy- pupils from 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> classes inclusive can leave their phone in the office with their parent's permission. Phones are kept in individual plastic pouches to ensure the highest hygiene and sanitization practices are met.
- Each pupil is equipped with a basket for their school books so as to avoid the distribution and collection of books throughout the day. Baskets are to be kept under their tables, in the event of school closure pupils will take the baskets home with them and be ready to partake in the remote learning platform decided by the school. Pupils will return to school with their basket of books on March 1<sup>st</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>. These baskets are

- not to be touched for 72 hours. Teachers will design tasks that do not involve the use of these books for the first 72 hours on their return to the classroom. Pupils will continue to be provided with the baskets and they will be used in the same way they were originally planned for.
- Pupils will now wear their school tracksuit on Wednesday and Friday every week and regular uniform on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Parents will be advised that children should change out of their uniforms when arriving home from school. Parents of children with visibly dirty uniforms will discreetly be reminded by the school principal that uniforms must be clean on arrival to school.
- Pupils are no longer permitted to take pencil cases between home and school. Pens, pencils, colours etc. for school will be kept in a wipeable case supplied by the class teacher and will be kept in school at all times. The sharing of these items between pupils is not permitted. Pupils are asked to have a second set of pens, pencils and colours at home for homework purposes.
- As per usual, pupils are not permitted to bring toys to school. This rule will be strictly adhered to. Keyrings and baubles attached to the zips of school bags are no longer permitted in order to reduce the possibility of cross contamination.
- Student committees will not be in operation. This decision will be reviewed at October mid-term break. Student committees will continue to not be in operation. This decision will be reviewed after Easter when we commence term 3. The forming of Student Committees is under review at this time and a decision will be made on this by the end of September 2021.
- One person at a time is permitted in the lift. If a pupil requires the use of a lift they must be supervised by another staff member. Both the pupil and staff member are to wear a mask.
- School Completion Programme services will continue to take place remotely and be reviewed after Easter. School Completion Programme services were reviewed and began taking place on site. On site services will resume for the 2021-2022 school year.
- The purchase of Perspex screens have been made and are available for use in the reception area and parents room. An additional screen has also been purchased should there be a need for it to be used.

### 3.1 Know the Symptoms

In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. In light of the prevalence of the Delta variant in Ireland the list of symptoms can be divided into two categories: common and less common.

Common symptoms include:

- a High temperature
- b Cough
- c Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- d Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

Less common symptoms include:

- a Fatigue
- b Aches and pains
- c Sore throat
- d Headaches
- e Runny or stuffy nose
- f Feeling sick or vomiting
- g Diarrhoea

•  
Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu. If your child has any of the listed symptoms do not send them to school. Contact your GP. Less common symptoms should not be ignored they are indicators of coronavirus.

In addition to the above symptoms, please do not send your child to school if they have:

- been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
- been living with someone who is unwell and may have COVID-19
- If having travelled abroad, parents must ensure that their child has complied with the government rules and regulations on foreign travel prior to their child's return to school

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household (unless fully vaccinated -Section 3) 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.

Any staff member displaying these symptoms should immediately inform the principal. They will not be permitted to attend work if they have any of the symptoms listed.

Staff and Parents will be reminded of the symptoms of Covid 19 prior to our return to school. Latest guidance on Covid 19 symptoms are available here <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/>

### 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 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 or the GooglePlay store

### 3.2 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. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19. Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as 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.

#### Do Not

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices. Guidance documentation and information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility.

### 3.3 Hand Hygiene

#### ***Wash your hands frequently***

In order to kill viruses that may be living on your hands, regular and thorough cleaning of hands with soap and warm water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser (if hands are clean i.e. not dirty or soiled, as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands) is required.

The school will provide classrooms with hot water, soap and hand sanitiser. In addition to this, standalone hand and mounted sanitiser stations are set up at various locations in the school building with mandatory hand sanitising on arrival to school and hourly washing with soap and warm water required. Disposable hand towels are provided in each classroom and in toilet facilities in order to dry hands properly. When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic. As advised by the Department of Education and Skills and by the National Poisons Information Centre (NPIC) young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel. Any child that brings their own hand sanitiser to school will be told to leave it in their school bag and to avail of the school's handwashing and hand sanitising facilities where possible.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to washing and sanitising facilities around the school. 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.

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/howto-wash-your-hands.html>

#### **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school. **Extended to include when entering and exiting school buildings**
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors **and certain sporting activities**
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.
- **When exiting and entering vehicles**

It is agreed, along with regular hand sanitising, all children will engage in hourly handwashing with soap and warm water in addition to the criteria listed above.

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

### 3.4 Physical distancing

Physical distancing must 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.**

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

***Increasing separation***

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout has been distributed to staff members and is used to increase separation to the greatest degree possible.

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, our school has:

1. Reconfigured class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilised and reconfigured all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

[A link to the suite of illustrative primary classroom layouts is available here.](#)

[A link to illustrative special classes is available here.](#)

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

Pupils will leave two steps between themselves and another person on the stairs. ***Decreasing***

***interaction***

A common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils.

A distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation up to an including 2<sup>nd</sup> class is not a pre-requisite to reopening St. Brigid's Primary School. However our school has taken the decision that all classes from Junior Infants-6<sup>th</sup> Class will maintain this physical distance where possible.

It is preferable that teachers organise work stations so that they should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.

The risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into class bubbles (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.

All classes in St Brigid's will be divided into pods, there should be at least 1m distance between individual pods within the class bubble.

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 will have separate yard times with a maximum of four class bubbles on the senior yard and two class bubbles on the junior yard. Social distancing measures will be in place on the yard in the form of a physical barrier in order to limit the mixing of class bubbles when playing outside.

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. SEN teaching staff timetables are limited to two class bubbles.

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

St. Brigid's Primary School has made amendments to arrival and departure procedures in order to limit interaction in hallways and other shared areas. There will be no morning assembly, pupils are free to enter the school building between 8:50-9:20 where staff will be present to ensure hand sanitising, maintenance of our one way system, social distancing and supervision in classes upon arrival is adhered to.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) is discouraged and no longer permitted.

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**

***School drop off/collection***

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils is arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible. Parents are no longer permitted to engage in discussion with teachers at the glass doors. Parents have been informed that their child's teacher will communicate with them via phone call, Aladdin connect or class email. Appointed exit doors for classes and staggered home times along with a half hour window for morning drop off, have been arranged to ensure physical distancing between class bubbles and minimise congregation of parents at arrival and departure times at the school gates.

Our commitment to Green Schools remains and walking/cycling to school is encouraged as much as possible.

Regular announcements to parents and guardians re the compulsory use of masks whilst on the premises and avoidance of congregating on the yard at drop off and collection will be delivered on the schools intercom system.

***Staff***

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed. *Face covering will be observed by all staff on the school premises irrespective of whether a 2 metre distance can be observed.*

Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the library through the use of staggered breaks etc. In St Brigid's Primary School, there will now be four break times in addition to normal Early Start break times. Morning break will take place from 10:45-10:55 and 11:00-11:10 and afternoon breaks will take place from 12:15-

12:45 and 12:50-13:20. Staff are to take their break in the school library which will be equipped with kettles and a microwave. Staff who have breakfast in school will be required to ensure social distancing is adhered to and that, as outlined at Section 3, all staff are required to supply their own cups, cutlery and utensils. This applies for breakfast as well as lunch breaks.

Staff meetings will now take place in the school hall where physical distancing is attainable. **In Level 5, staff meetings will take place on Zoom. Guidance from the CPSMA permits staff meetings to be held in person in a well ventilated area.**

A no hand shaking policy is implemented in St. Brigid's Primary School.

Gathering of staff at the beginning or end of the school day is minimised through our new staggered drop off and collection times.

### **Corridors and Stairwells**

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions. St. Brigid's Primary School has implemented a one way system, so that no passing of staff or pupils will occur on stairwells. Ciúinas ar an staighre will continue to be a rule on the stairs.

Lanyards are now being provided to all teachers and will be given to children if they're going on a message. This will include giving out the milk, getting something from the office etc. No child should be wandering around the school without the lanyard. Reminders are given to all SET teachers that children should be collected and dropped back to their classes at all times.

### **Yard/Supervision**

The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. Play times have been adjusted in order to reduce congregation on the yard and at entry and exit points to and from the yard. (See details under **Staff** above)

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary school play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups. Therefore pods within class bubbles can interact on yard, however one class bubble does not have permission to interact with another class bubble on yard.

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

The minimising of the sharing of equipment and cleaning of shared equipment between uses by different people will be considered by all staff members especially when organising activities for class bubbles on the yard. It has been decided that the use of the slide and play facility in the junior yard will be used by one class bubble on a week on week off basis.

### **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 document 'Practical steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools v2' is available at **Appendix 8.**

**C02 monitors are being delivered to schools. They will be placed in each mainstream class.**

### 3.5 Use of Protective Personal Equipment (PPE)

In line with the Public Health Advice, the use of face coverings/masks by pupils in primary schools by pupils should not occur. All school staff and all teachers are required to wear a face covering when a physical distance of two metres cannot be maintained from students or other staff.

PPE other than a cloth face covering will not be required to be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

Such include roles where:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- 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 on the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with those who are in the very high risk category.
- [Administering first aid](#)
- [Parent Teacher meetings](#)

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre) Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

The Department has published "[Guidance to Primary and Special Schools on PPE consumables and equipment](#)" 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 full and safe reopening of schools.

#### Face coverings:

For staff, face coverings should not be required if physical distancing is possible and practiced appropriately. The use of a visor as an alternative may be considered where there is a concern regarding prolonged close contact and exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets. All staff members will be supplied with a visor to wear when greeting pupils in the morning and at home-time. Staff members may use masks if they wish to do so.

All staff members must wear the medical grade masks provided to them on their return to school. No personal masks from home are to be worn. Mask wearing must be worn at all times on the school premises regardless of whether a 2m distance can be maintained in the classroom. Visors, on their own, are no longer permitted to be used as a face covering.

NOTE Surgical Face Masks are the same as Medical Face Masks and they are both classified as conforming to EU EN 14683. Each member of staff will receive their own box of these medical face masks that they will keep in their room on their return to school.

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

- Primary school children
- 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.

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

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 intimate care settings. 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.

Sanitization Materials: Gloves, additional anti-bacterial wipes, additional sprays and hand sanitizer, liquid soap will all be available from the office as needed.

**4. Impact of Covid-19 on certain school activities**

*Choir/Music Performance*

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration should be given to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained. *Sport Activities*

Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sport-protocols/>

Irish Dancing will resume from March 8<sup>th</sup> due to its non-contact nature. Irish dancing takes place in a well ventilated hall with high ceilings and slots are no more than 15 minutes. The children are provided with markers placed 1 metre apart so they are reminded of and stick to social distancing measures. The use of pods within the class bubble will be adhered to in so far as possible during Irish dancing. Hurling and football will be postponed for now and reviewed after Easter. Hurling and football commenced in the final term of 2020-2021.

Continue with Irish dancing, hurling and football as arranged in the previous school year.

*Shared Equipment*

All toys should be cleaned on a regular basis for example weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.

Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids should be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.

When purchasing toys choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary).

If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable.

Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils to those with special educational needs may be inclined to put into their mouths should be capable of being washed and disinfected.

All play equipment should be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they should be discarded.

Clean toys and equipment should be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.

At this time soft modelling materials and play dough where used should be for individual use only.

#### Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Some hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water that is electronic or wind up should be wiped with a damp cloth and dried.
- In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. Toys/equipment that have been soiled with blood or body fluids or toys where a case of Covid-19 has been identified.
- If disinfection is required: A chlorine releasing disinfectant should be used diluted to a concentration of 1,000ppm available chlorine. The item should be rinsed and dried thoroughly.

Art – Where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies or limited to sharing within pods.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices should be cleaned between each use.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses. Teachers should retain the equipment/instruments used in their class until 72 hours since last contact has been observed. Equipment/instruments can then be returned to their central storage area.

Library Policy – Where practical pupils should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item. Whilst classes will be invited to use the school library for story time, it will not operate as a school library in the same way as pre covid-19. Teachers may take a selection of library books to their classroom and distribute them to pupils, ensuring to log details. Library books are to be kept separate from the books in the class library, and returned to the school library after 72 hours of return to the class teacher. The class teacher may wish to hold onto the selection of library books for a few weeks and swap them between pupils in his/her class before returning the collection to the library.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people/classes. Teachers are informed of the PDST links on socially distant PE activities. Teachers are informed to plan PE lessons with little use of resources and to make use of both yards. If a teacher uses PE equipment they have been informed to take the equipment back to their class with them once the lesson is over. They can chose to devise a PE scheme with this equipment for the weeks leading up to the Easter holidays or to return the equipment to the PE storage room once 72 hours have passed.

Homework: Written homework will be administered on a Tuesday and handed back to the teacher on a Friday. This is to allow for a 72 hour period where the virus can no longer survive and ensure safe correction by the class teacher and the changeover of readers between pupils. Homework journals will no longer be in use, class teachers will set homework for the week on a Tuesday and/or post the homework on Aladdin Connect.

No homework for first two weeks back to school in order to allow the staff and pupils time to adapt to the changes in the school environment and prioritise settling into school and adhering to new routines and safety measures.

There will be no physical homework sent home for the month of March. One activity will be assigned for homework on seesaw on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to consolidate work learned in the class. This will be reviewed after the Easter holidays.

Homework will be administered in the same way as it was pre March.

SEN and In Class Support: SEN teachers will be exposed to no more than **three** class bubbles. The formal arrangement of Power Hour and Maths Hour whereby additional SEN teachers are required will not take place for term 1. This decision will be reviewed in term 2. **The decision has been reviewed and no changes have been made. To be reviewed again after the Easter holidays. Power Hour and Maths Hour did not take place.**

**It has been decided that efforts will be made to implement Power Hour and Maths Hour for this school year although some amendments such as an independent station may have to be introduced. It will be reviewed again at Christmas.**

School Closures: In the event the school has been directed by the HSE and Department of Education to close for a certain period remote learning will take place. Children will take their basket of books home with them and engage in the schools online learning platform of choice i.e. a blend of SeeSaw and Zoom. Ongoing contact with parents via Aladdin Connect and class teachers work email addresses will help the transition from classroom to remote learning. Pupils in senior classes will be made au fait with log in details etc. in preparation for this event.

## **5. Hygiene and cleaning in our school**

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school has been made. Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, lifts, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty. All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. 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 will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility. 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 should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible. Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. Disinfection only works on things that are clean. When disinfection is required it is always as well as cleaning. Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron. Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach). Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids. 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 staffroom (library), play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible. The person appointed to accompany the symptomatic person to the designated isolation room cleans and disinfects the isolation room. Cleaners will give this room a thorough clean after school also.

## **6. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

**School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.**

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how St. Brigid's Primary School will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the school day.

As outlined by the Department of Education each school must designate an isolation area. **Our school has identified The area beside the fish tank as our designated isolation space.**

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while present in St. Brigid's Primary School the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- a) -The class teacher arranges for an SEN teacher or SNA to escort the pupil to the isolation area.
  - b) If an adult member of staff is not available to the class teacher, the class teacher will send a pupil to the office with the purple card. The purple card discreetly highlights to office staff that a child needs to be escorted from the class and to avail of the isolation area.
  - c) An arrangement will be made for a member of staff to escort the pupil to the isolation area.
  - d) The pupil will be provided with a mask before exiting the class room and making their way to the designated isolation area.
  - e) The person accompanying must keep 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and must make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.
  - f) Due to an increase in staff allocation the designated isolation area is now the two blue chairs next to the fish tank in the school reception area.
  - g) A box containing a thermometer, masks, disinfectant, wipes, tissues etc. will be left in the cupboard under the fish tank as will the checklist for dealing with a suspected case of Covid 19. A waste bin will also be provided.
  - h) The child is not to be brought to the office. The adult will stay with the child in the isolation area, take their temperature, inform the office and liaise with other members of staff until a decision has been made.
  - i) If in doubt, the child will be sent home.
  - j) The isolation area will be included for cleaning each evening by Liz/Evelyn.
- In the event the class teacher has a suspected case the assigned SEN teacher for the class will cover for the teacher.
  - If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately.
  - 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.
  - 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.
  - Go through the 'Checklist for dealing with a suspected case of Covid 19' that is left available in the isolation room.
  - Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.
  - Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved (as outlined in Section 5.)

School staff will not inform members of the school community of speculated cases. The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff confidentiality is essential at all times.

## **7. 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.

#### *PPE Equipment:*

Surgical and medical grade masks are to be worn by SNA's on the staff premises and are provided by the school. The school also has a supply of KN95 masks available for use by SNA staff (and others) in the office where requested.

### **8. 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. 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 Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- 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.
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

Additions to the above list of staff duties as we return to school on March 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>: These additional duties continue into the 2021-2022 school year.

- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus and HSE determines that you must self isolate
  - if latest Government guidelines demand a quarantine period on return from foreign travel
- 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 in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

#### **9. Covid-19 related absence management**

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

#### **10. 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'.

Under the EAS, employees have 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. 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 which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is 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. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

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.

Signed: Amanda Mc Garry  
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Signed: Michelle Stedman  
School Principal

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021