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## **COVID Response Plan for the return to the school from August 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 and Going Forward**

Our Lady's N.S. is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for our school community. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. All teachers, special needs assistants and ancillary staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus.

All 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)

Employees must be au-fait with all new and updated policy documents, protocols etc and realise that the information regarding COVID 19 is evolving and that advices from public health office and the government are constantly being updated. It is thus important therefore to recognise that flexibility will be required from staff, management and parents to meet the measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

### **This document aims to provide details of:**

1. Covid-19 School Policy
2. Planning and Preparation for Return to School
3. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)
4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
5. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus
6. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
7. Control Measures
8. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
9. Staff Duties
10. Covid related absence management
11. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

**Note:** This 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.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie), [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## COVID-19 Policy Statement

Our Lady's N.S. is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed:



Date: 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

### Appointment of dedicated COVID 19 Health & Safety Representative

As part of regulations the board has appointed one lead worker representative who will work in collaboration with the principal and the Board of Management to ensure that all protocols, policies and procedures are being implemented and followed by all stakeholders. This includes:

- Working collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- Promoting good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
- Assisting with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitoring adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consulting with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Making representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

Name(s) of the Lead Worker Representative (LWR): (to be completed)	Contact Details
1. _____	_____
2. _____ (Deputy LWR)	_____

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.

**Induction Programme:** It is understood that the department will provide a webinar for all members of staff which they must complete.

### General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

COVID-19 can be a mild or severe illness. Severe illness is much more common in older people (especially older than 70) and in people vulnerable for other reasons. Severe illness is much less common in children and young adults in good health.

### The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:

- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
- Shortness of Breath
- Breathing Difficulties

- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- Gastroenteritis

People with symptoms of infection are very important in the spread of the disease. Symptomatic people appear to be most infectious for other people in the early days after symptoms begin. Infection can also spread from people in the day or two before they get symptoms and it can spread from some people who get an infection but have no symptoms or such mild symptoms that they take little notice of them (asymptomatic spread). People are no longer infectious for other people 14 days after they have developed symptoms.

**Best practice:** In order to prevent the spread of the virus and especially

- if you have been in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms
- If you have coughed or sneezed
- if you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- if you have been on public transport,
- if you have been in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- when you arrive and leave buildings including your home or anyone else's home
- if you have handled animals or animal waste
- after using the toilet
- before having a cigarette or vaping before and after eating
- before and after preparing food
- before and after eating your own food – breaks/lunches
- after assisting a child to use the toilet or using the toilet themselves
- if you move from one room to another room or from inside to outside areas
- if you have physical contact with a child from another group other than their own group
- after contact with bodily fluids (runny nose, spit, vomit, blood, faeces)
- after cleaning tasks
- if your hands are dirty
- if you have physical contact with a child from another group other than your own group

**You must:**

**Wash your hands with soap and water (which is the best method to get rid of germs) and or use a hand sanitiser.** Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities. They will be available at entry and exit points in each classroom.

**Practice good respiratory hygiene** that is, when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

**Maintain social or physical distancing,** that is, leave at least 2 metres distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.

**Not engage in handshaking or hugging.**

**Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth** – if you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself.

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 and pupils adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

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

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups, which include people who:

- are over 70 years of age-even if you're fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage or treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and you are pregnant

Staff members who fall into the very high-risk category, should notify the Board of Management at the earliest opportunity.

### **Control Measures**

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 .

These control measures are outlined in this document.

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.*

### **Entering the school daily (Staff):**

- On entering the school grounds staff members must use the hand sanitiser placed at the front door.
- On arrival staff should proceed to their own rooms, open the classroom windows and doors to ventilate the room.
- Prior to leaving the school building, staff must use the sanitiser.
- On leaving the building, staff must use their elbows to press the release button and are to use elbows to push open and close the door.
- The use of elbows to open/close doors is to be practiced throughout the whole school building where possible.

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

- In keeping with the guidelines from the DES, it is recommended that staff in primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2 meters from other staff or children cannot be maintained.
- PPE (Personal protective equipment) is also recommended in roles where:
  - performing intimate care
  - a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

### **Wearing of Gloves:**

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It 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.

### **While in the school building/classroom:**

- All staff must adhere to social distancing rules- keep a space of 2 meters between you and other people at all times if possible.
- Movement throughout the school is to be kept to a minimum.
- Doors and windows are to remain open at all times if possible so that you do not touch door handles and also to allow ventilation.
- Staff members are not to congregate in areas on arrival/leaving or around the photocopier.
- Staff must maintain distance if using the photocopier. Each person must wipe it down with wipes after use and use the hand sanitiser. (Children are not to be asked to photocopy)
- SNAs will bring and collect children to and from the SEN rooms
- All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

## **Children & Staff:**

- While it is recognised that young children need physical contact and comfort for their safety, their wellbeing and to attend to their personal care needs, it is recommended that staff do not hug children and minimise touch as much as possible
- The importance of handwashing and respiratory good practice is to be taught and continuously highlighted by staff in SPHE classes throughout September. Staff must complete demonstrations on how to wash hands correctly or show the NHS video which is a child friendly video demonstrating handwashing  
<https://youtu.be/S9VjeIWLnEg>
- In the SEN rooms that do not have sinks, hand gel or liquid sanitiser under the supervision of staff will be used. Pupils will use the hand sanitiser located at the entrance to each room where a SEN teacher is located before entering the room.
- SNAs will bring children to and from the SEN rooms apart from during their break times (if the SNA is on their lunch break).
- Teachers are asked to leave the staffroom promptly to collect children after breaks from the yard and to adhere to staggered entrance to the school following yard times (keep class bubbles apart).
- Staff should implement social distancing of 2 meters while they are working with the children in as far as possible, whilst ensuring children are kept safe and well cared for within their settings.
- Where staff have to move between rooms to supervise breaks and ensure teacher-pupil ratio, staff must wash hands on entry and leaving a room or use a hand sanitiser located at the entrance to all classrooms.
- Staff will be organised into teams who consistently work together e.g. with a particular age group in a children's room.
- Staff are not to share equipment such as pens /resources but should have these items for their own personal use.
- Staff will educate children how to wipe down equipment such as Chrome Books, laptops etc after use.

## **Access to the school building/contact log**

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

## **Dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19**

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how Our Lady's N.S. will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Our Lady's N.S. the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately

- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 meters away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and 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.
- 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.

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.

## **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. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play
- 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 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
- 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
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

#### **Use of the Staffroom:**

- The staffroom will relocate to the kitchen upstairs.
- Staff members must adhere to social distancing in the staffroom at all times.
- Staff should put aside their own cup, plate, bowl and cutlery for their continued use. Staff members will have a designated area to keep their own personal items. They are to either wash their items after each use, bring the items home to wash or place them directly into the dishwasher.
- Staff are to use hand sanitisers before/after using any equipment or touching any handles e.g. microwave, toaster etc. while in the staffroom.
- Staff are to wash down and then wipe down their eating area with sanitiser.
- Staff must maintain the two meter distance if you are queueing up to use the hot water/fridge or microwave etc.

### **Covid related absence management**

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

### **Staff Wellbeing: Supporting staff through Covid 19**

COVID 19 is a stressor, which has interfered with elements of everyone's life. It puts increased demands on us from many angles and invades many areas of our lives. It reduces our control over our and our loved ones' lives, our health, changes how we work, alters our financial wellbeing, and it decreases our access to regular social support from activities enjoyed with friends and family. It can put strain on our relationships, can alter our roles. It has and continues to change our lives, thus bringing mental health challenges.

As this is an entirely new situation, there are no 'tried and tested' remedies for overcoming this particular stressor. We have been faced with many new demands resulting in altered work systems, social isolation and new ways of thinking.

The Board of Management acknowledges the many and varied challenges that lie ahead and wishes to reassure staff that they are doing and will do all in their power to support staff.

- Should a member of staff have concerns around COVID -19 related policies/procedures, the board asks that you bring these immediately to the attention of the principal.
- The principal may recommend a referral to Medmark or refer the staff member to EAS for support. (This is a free counselling service available to all public servants and their family members)
- The principal will every few weeks, re engage and ask employees about the system of work, get feedback on how it is working and whether they feel they need more – or indeed less.

## Role of Parents/Guardians

It is important that parents have a clear understanding of the benefits and risk and that it is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented in any setting either in a childcare centre, school or in a home.

The following are protocols that are put in place to safeguard the health and safety of each other. Parents/guardians are expected to abide by them and failure to do so may result in a parent being instructed to remove a child from the school building, and or to leave the school premises themselves. If serious breaches of safety measures take place, the Gardaí may be called.

- **Under no circumstances is a parent to bring a child to school if they are unwell, or if the child is exhibiting any symptoms of COVID 19- who has a temperature, is sneezing, coughing, who has been vomiting or has diarrhoea.**
- Only parents/guardians or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised are allowed to drop off and collect children.
- Any parent/guardian who is in a high risk category should not drop off or collect children.
- Only pupils will be allowed to enter the school yard. **No parents** (except Junior infants parents) will be allowed to enter the school yard. Pupils must sanitise their hands at the school gate and then proceed to their class line. No playing on the yard between 8:50 and 9:00am is permitted.
- Junior Infant parents may enter the yard with their son/daughter. Once they enter the yard, they must stand in the line beside their child and remain there until the class has been collected by the teacher.
- Parents are not to congregate in groups or stand around chatting at the school gate.
- Junior Infant parents are not to linger in the yard after the child has been handed over but are to leave immediately.
- In the evening time when waiting to collect a child, a parent must maintain social distancing and wait for their child to go to them.
- No parent will be allowed within the school building without prior approval from the principal.
- Should a matter of urgency arise, they must phone the office and request a meeting with the principal.
- Access will only be permitted once their temperature has been taken and they have used the hand sanitiser.
- Once in the school building they must maintain the required social distance and follow the directions of the principal/staff member.
- Parents must ensure that their child has his/her own hand sanitiser and box of tissues which are labelled coming to school. These must be replaced when empty.
- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books cannot be shared.
- Parents are to ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers prior to returning to school.

### **Children in High Risk Groups:**

Parents must seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in a high risk group. They must make an informed decision if it is safe for their child to return to school on August 27th. They must inform the principal of the advice given in writing.

### **Parents and Uniforms:**

- Children's uniforms must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.

### **Arrival and departure procedures for children:**

- At arrival and departure times of children, social distancing is to be maintained by children
- Two gates entering the yard will now be in operation.
- Gate 1 for Junior Infant-2<sup>nd</sup> class pupils
- Gate 2 for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class pupils.
- The gates will open at 8:50 am. Pupils will remain in the yard in their lines until the class teacher collects them.
- On entering the yard the child will immediately line up on the designated line up area.
- Children are not to play with any other child in the yard.
- Markings on the ground will note where a class can line up.
- Children will maintain social distancing while entering the school building through the designated doors.
- On wet mornings, the pupils will go directly to the classrooms where all teachers/SNAs will be waiting. Principal and SET staff will monitor and supervise the pupils entering the school.

### **Departure:**

Teachers will bring the classes to the designated departure areas.

### **Communication:**

The Board of Management will ensure that all staff, parents/guardians have been provided with a copy of the COVID Response Plan via email. This is to ensure that employees/parents/guardians are aware of what their responsibilities are and are fully aware of the policies, and protocols they must follow on returning to school relating to COVID 19.

Other persons such as visitors, contractors or suppliers who may have business/work in the school will be obliged to abide by all safety regulations in place.

### **Roles & Responsibilities:**

All staff, parents/guardians and the board are responsible for the implementation of the plan.

**Review:**

The plan is a live working document and it will be reviewed on an ongoing basis 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)