

# Plan for Re-opening of St. Patrick's N.S.

## Underlying Principles

- The school has a responsibility to make effort to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

## Junior Infants

Unfortunately, parents will not be permitted to enter the school with their child on the first day. To help with the transition, parents and children will have a school visit on Thursday August 27th. We will go through all the entrances and intended routines for those children on that day. It is not ideal and not the first day you imagined. However, as a staff we feel it is a priority to give our newcomers and their parents that time together and reassurance before formally beginning the new school year.

## Assumptions

- All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system
- The school is split into 4 groups (Naíonáin, R1 & R2, R3 & R4, R5 & R6)
- The day will include 2 breaks. 11am to 11.15 am and 12.30 pm to 1pm.
- Within each class from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>, the children will be further divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all class and support rooms
- Covid Log Book- for authorised entry to school
- Parents must follow all public health guidelines with regard to social distancing and there should be no congregation outside the school gate.

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## Key to Entrances & Exits

### Infants

The infant classes will enter and exit via the front door of school facing road.

### 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> classes

These groups will enter and exit via the main entrance at side of school.

### 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Classes

These classes will enter and exit via the play-area in front of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class block.

All rooms will exit at different times, with five-minute intervals for each class.

Náionáin will finish at 2 p.m. and will be led to the gate by their teacher.

Children on buses will exit first at 3.00 and will be led by each classroom teacher to the gate.

Each group will observe social distancing until all children have boarded the buses.

Teachers will then return to accompany the remaining children to the gate to be picked up by parents in the following order:

Rang 1&2 will exit at 3.00

Rang 3&4 will exit at 3.05

Rang 5 will exit at 3.05

Rang 6 will exit at 3.05

All classes will be led to the gate by their teacher where they will be picked up by parents/guardian/child-minder.

At lunch breaks each class will be taken by their teacher to the designated area for their class group.

## Entrance & Exit Points for builders and sub-contractors

All deliveries to the school in the guise of materials necessitating to the building of the General-Purpose Building will be arranged by the builder before 9am and after 4pm each day.

Outside personnel will not have access to the school. Any issues will be communicated to the principal. Builders, tradesmen and subcontractors will not be permitted to walk in and out or through the campus during break-times and during the time where children enter and exit school campus as per times mentioned already in this document.

Building personnel will be asked to wear high vis jackets so that they can be easily identified to staff and children.

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## **Arrival at school**

- As children usually arrive at different times during the morning this will not necessitate any major restructuring.
- Each child will proceed to their classroom as normal with social distancing observed.
- No adults, other than staff members, should enter the building.
- Messages for teachers can be sent by email or by phoning the school office before 9.30, between 12.30 and 1.00 or after 3.20.

## **End of School Day**

- Adults, who are collecting their children from school at the end of the day, should wait outside the school perimeter while observing social distancing and there should be no congregation outside school during this phase or at any stage,
- The teacher will accompany their class to the school gate at the times outlined above. While exiting the school the school each class will observe social distancing rules.
- The same applies to the collection of infant classes at 2pm. The class teacher will accompany the children to the school gate. While waiting for their child all parents are asked to observe social distancing rules. There should be no congregation outside school during this phase or at any stage.

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

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply. The Parent is to contact the school stating the time that they are collecting their child.

- When the adult arrives at the school, they should phone the office to alert the Secretary that they have arrived. They are to remain in their car or outside the school gate.
- The child will be brought from their class to the adult by a member of staff.
- There is no facility for the minding of children between 2pm and 3pm. Children must strictly remain with their class and cannot move between classes.

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

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following are the procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times
- A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
- Visors and masks will be provided to staff assisting the child.
- An assessment will be made as to whether the child who is displaying symptoms can immediately be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home

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- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP 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, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed.

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

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

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell

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

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

This can be done using email or by through other online platforms (Class Dojo).

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

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19

- The parents of all children in the class will be notified
- Public health advice will be sought and followed

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## **Personal Equipment**

- All children from Junior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class will bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment.
- A mesh folder will be supplied to each child for the storage of pencils, crayons, glue sticks, scissors, markers, whiteboards where applicable etc.
- Boxes will be provided to all children to store their books.
- It is further requested that all items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.

## **Update March 2021:**

When children from Junior Infants to Second Class return on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, books that were sent home during the school closure will be quarantined for 72 hours in one of the unused Senior classrooms. The same will apply when the Third-Sixth Class return on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2021.

## **Shared Equipment**

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

In the case of sports equipment this will be cleaned and wiped after use.

## **Photocopying**

Every time the copier is used it will be wiped down by the person using it using the anti-bacterial wipes provided.

## **Yards**

Following consultation with staff, it was decided that there will be no staggered breaks as space around the school is sufficient to cater for all classes to play at both break times.

The school yard will be divided so that each class groupings will have their own designated play area.

Yards will be supervised by class teachers, learning support teachers and SNAs working within those bubbles.

To minimise contact, designated yard areas will be the closest available space to each classroom.

## **Learning Support**

In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. However, the withdrawal of children will be reviewed and communication channels will be set up with teachers, parents and the child to see if in-class support can be used in light of the current climate.

## **Update September 2020:**

Following consultation with staff and after reviewing DoE guidelines on best practice, it was decided that it was in each child's best interest to continue with the current support model prior to CoVID-19 (Children withdrawn in small groups to support Numeracy and Literacy).

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Due to the amount of time children have missed from school, Learning Support will be crucial in the coming year in order to provide support for those who need it.

The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble.

- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- Where children from the various classes receive support in one of the SET rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group where possible. A portable screen has been provided for use by the SET teacher.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending.

## **PPE**

Staff who are attending to particular care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves and face masks.

The school will have a supply of masks, gloves and aprons if required.

**September 2020:** Staff members in general, are not required to wear PPE. 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. This might include roles such as:

- 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.
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with learning needs.

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment, they will apply standard precautions as per usual.

**Update: October 2020:** Each class teacher will have their own first aid kit for their own class and this is to be kept in each classroom and used when required.

## **Masks**

The children are not required to wear masks or face coverings.

**September 2020:** The latest guidelines recommend that staff wear masks or face coverings if the 2m social distance rule cannot be met. The school will provide these for staff.

**Update March 2021:** Revised HPSC guidelines for SNAs published on 7 January 2021 recommended surgical grade masks for all SNAs 'Guidance for Schools Regarding Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) Supporting Children and Young People with Additional Care Needs in the Context of COVID-19'. The Department is confirming this level of PPE should be provided for all teachers in special schools and special classes also. As set out above, medical grade masks in **EN14683** category have been provided to this staff cohort. We have also

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decided that all other staff members will be provided with medical grade masks in *ENI4683* category from March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

## **Gloves**

There is no need for the children to wear disposable gloves. They are considered inappropriate under the guidelines.

Staff members do not need to wear disposable gloves unless they are looking after a pupil's intimate care needs or administering first aid.

There will be an emphasis on hand hygiene rather than on the wearing of disposable gloves.

## **Teacher Absence and Substitution**

In the event that teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances the SET may be placed with that group but if that is not possible then it may not be possible for the class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

## **PE**

Where possible, PE should take place outdoors and use of equipment should be confined to the sets that have been distributed to class groupings. Equipment will be wiped down after use.

## **Extra-curricular Activities**

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored. Further updates will be provided in September.

## **Cleaning**

Each member of staff will be responsible for cleaning their own work surface at the end of each school day. As previously stated, rooms where groups of children attend for short periods e.g. Learning Support/Music/Gaeilge, those surfaces will be cleaned/wiped before the next group arrives. All other surfaces including children's desks and chairs will be wiped and cleaned by the school cleaner as per normal. In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day (bathrooms cleaned thoroughly/rooms hoovered etc.). Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, chairs/arm rests, sink and toilet facilities. A fogger (disinfectant machine) will also be used twice a week.

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.

Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.

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Dispensers will be placed in every room and at the entrances to every classroom, staffroom, toilets, kitchen and front and back entrances.

Each room has access to water and soap & sanitizing gel

The children's toilets have soap and disposable paper towels with bins provided.

## **Return to work questionnaire.**

A RTW form will be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Schools should 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. All staff will complete a return-to-work questionnaire at least 3 days before returning to work.

## **Isolation room**

An isolation room has been set aside to deal with anyone who displays symptoms. This room is the SET room located in the main school building (inside front door of school facing road). The following items will be available in this room; tissues, hand sanitiser, disinfectant/wipes, gloves, masks, waste bags and a bin.

## **Risk assessment.**

A risk assessment was carried out in by school management in August 2020 and ratified by the Board of Management (to be reviewed March 2021)

## **Lead Role worker.**

A lead role worker will be appointed. Their role will be

Represent the staff.

Work with school management.

Keep up to date with latest Covid-19 public health advice.

Promote good hand hygiene practices

Monitor measures put in place.

Conduct regular reviews.

Report issues of concern to school management.

Assess any follow up actions required following any incidents of children/staff being sent home with symptoms

## **Signage.**

Proper signage will be displayed outlining the social distancing, proper hygiene protocol etc. Signage is displayed in all classrooms and all areas around the school.

## **Changes to Classroom and School Layout and to School Routines**

The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

The children will be seated to take social distancing into account in every classroom.

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The tables and chairs will be arranged in a manner so as to try and keep a 1m distance between each other and 2m from the teacher's desk.

If this isn't possible then small pods of 3 or 4 will be formed so as to keep spaced from other children. This pod doesn't mix with others while in class.

The children and their teachers will work in Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until the children go home at the end of the school day.

Teaching and learning will be different than in previous years. The amount of interaction between children in the classroom will be dramatically reduced to coincide with guidelines.

## **Update March 2021:**

All class teachers provide a plan for their classroom showing bubbles/pods. This plan will be kept in a folder in the school Office.

## **Ventilation**

### **Update November 2020:**

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 2 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.

Rooms will be well ventilated before occupancy each day. This will be achieved by ensuring that at the end of the school day each evening, the windows in each room will be opened (as wide as practical and safe while also considering security issues) for at least 15 minutes to ventilate the room fully. Windows will also be opened at break times and at lunchtimes for at least 15 minutes where possible.

## **Staff Room**

All staff members should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not engaged in teaching e.g., when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, face coverings should be worn.

Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

**Update October 2020:** A handwashing dispenser has now been installed above the sink to ensure all staff comply with regular handwashing etiquette.

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## **Kitchen**

Staff members will bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible.

Due to the small space in the kitchen the staff will avoid large gatherings there.

## **Library books**

At the moment children will be able to take a book from the library, read it and return it. When it is returned it will be set aside for 72 hours before being placed in the library again.

## **Update February 2021:**

Our levelled readers (Engage Literacy) can now be accessed on our school website

<https://ballinamuckns.ie/> in the Learning Zone or

<https://online.raintree.co.uk/login/index.html>

## **Homework**

As of yet schools haven't been given concrete advice regarding homework. The whole concept of taking work home and then back in the next day for correction is something that hasn't been affirmed yet. While the senior classes can self-correct some of it, it will take a few weeks to bring clarity to this aspect. Literacy (Gaeilge & English) Mathematics, SPHE (emphasis on wellbeing) and PE will form a large part of the curriculum for the first few weeks.

## **Update October 2020:**

An online homework survey was sent to parents/guardians in October 2020. Following feedback from parents/guardians and consultation with staff, homework will be sent via our online platform Class Dojo. Each teacher will upload the homework on Monday for the week and the children's work will be viewed/given feedback by each teacher via the portfolio section of Class Dojo. Photocopies will not be sent home as part of any homework activities.

## **Update January 2021:**

Homework will be uploaded to Class Dojo learning platform on Monday for the week. It can also be accessed on the school website <https://ballinamuckns.ie/> by clicking on each class level. Each teacher has set up a professional email if parents need to contact them regarding any queries or questions relating to any aspect of remote learning.

## **Update March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021:**

Following the phased reopening of schools, Junior Infants to Second Class will have no homework for the first two weeks back. Homework will resume on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2021. Senior Classes will not be assigned homework until after Easter 2021.

## **Uniforms**

The main advice regarding uniforms at present is that children should not wear their uniforms outside of the school or home settings.

## **Parents**

Parents have a vital role to play. In normal times some children come to school with various flu like symptoms.

This year things are much different. We all understand that this year will bring huge difficulties for working parents but we must not be complacent.

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The following is vital for the safe reopening and continued opening of St. Patrick's N.S. If any child comes to school displaying any symptoms or is feeling unwell then parents will be immediately asked to arrange for their collection. We cannot take any chances.

## **Under no circumstances is a parent to bring a child to school if -**

- **If the child is exhibiting any symptoms of Covid-19.**
- **If the child has a temperature, is coughing, who has been vomiting or has diahorrea.**
- **If a child has been outside of the country in the 14 days prior to August 27<sup>th</sup>, they are not to attend school and must isolate.**
- **If the child has been in contact with any family member and or other person who has Covid-19.**

## **Other Responsibilities for Parents:**

- Parents are encouraged to give their child his/her own hand sanitiser and box of tissues which are **labelled** coming to school. **These must be replaced when empty.** (Please buy boxes of handkerchiefs as opposed to the small packets)
- 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.
- Parents must ensure that all **books/writing equipment/lunch boxes/water bottles** are sanitised using alcohol wipes on completion of homework before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Water bottles are to be filled at home every evening.
- Children are to go to the bathroom **before** they leave home for school daily.
- Children are to wash their hands **before** leaving for school

## **Update March 2021:**

Parents of children attending during this phase from March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 will be asked by the school to complete Return to School Parental Declaration.

This form is to be used when children are returning to the school setting after any absence. It can be found here <https://ballinamuckns.ie/return-to-school-declaration/>