



St Vincent's Special National School



### **St Vincent's Special National School Covid-19 Response Plan**

This document has been prepared on the basis of current public health advice and will continue to be updated as further public advice is received.

This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in St Vincent's Special National School. The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE and the Department of Education 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 pupils and staff 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.

The assistance and co-operation 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.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).



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## **COVID-19 Policy Statement**

St Vincent's School 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 and updated 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: Cathy Cawley

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021



## **Planning and preparation for returning to school/work.**

### **Staff returning to work**

- Staff will complete the COVID-19 Return-To-Work (RTW) form 3 days before their return to work.
- New staff will undertake the Department of Education online induction training
- The In School Management Team will hold an induction meeting for staff returning to work.
- Staff will be advised of the availability of the supports of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) occupational health and wellbeing programme facilitated by *Spectrum Life*. The Employee Assistance Service is available as a supportive resource for employees. The free phone confidential helpline is 1800 411 057 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

### **Lead Worker Representative**

A Lead Worker Representative, Claire Goode and Assistant Lead Worker Representative (TBC) has been appointed to help staff and to monitor compliance with COVID-19 control measures in the school. The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows:

- Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
- Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace. If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.
- 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.

### **Risk assessment and safety Statement**



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 school settings is attached.

### **Teaching and learning**

- Upon our return to school there will be a particular focus on Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), mental health and wellbeing and Physical Education.
- PE and Home Economic timetables will be readjusted to provide for pupil bubbles/pods.
- Integration and social skill training is an essential aspect of the curriculum. In as far as possible we will strive to continue with these programmes if it is safe to do so.
- Pupils can continue to carry out 'jobs' if it does not involve accessing other classrooms. E.g. messages can be inserted into folders on the classroom door.
- Anyone with a message to the Principal or Secretary's office use post box outside or alternatively email or ring.
- If you require immediate action, knock on the office door and wait for a response. Alternatively, staff can ring the school mobile in the event of an emergency.

### **Bus procedure**

School Transport Scheme services operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department will fully operate as normal, in line with public health advice, when schools re-open. Pupils from the school and DEC will travel on the same route as before.

Observing hygiene requirements will be a key priority for all travelling on school transport as set out below:

- Do not to use school transport if displaying symptoms or unwell.
- Staff to maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport.
- To always sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or child from their class group (this should be the same child at all times). Due to behavioural or care needs, pupils may have to sit in specific seats.
- To use hand sanitiser on boarding the bus.
- To observe respiratory etiquette at all times.
- To disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
- For evening dismissal pupils will embark the bus in their class groups.
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs are not required to wear face coverings.
- Parents should supply their child with a hygiene pack for use on the bus. This should include tissues and hand sanitizer for use on the bus only.
- The Bus operator should have a Covid response plan and this should detail the procedure if someone is unwell on the bus.
- If a pupil is ill on the bus and arrives to school, under NO circumstances will they allowed entry to the school building and will wait in the car park until collected. The



Bus Escort will ring the parents and request that they arrange collection ASAP. The Bus Escort will inform the Principal via phone.

- Confidentiality is paramount in the event that someone becomes unwell and this information should only be disclosed to relevant parties i.e. parents of sick child, Principal, Bus Escort. HSE protocols and contact tracing will apply.
- Parents must be available to receive their child in this instance at short notice.
- In line with the HSE Contact Tracing Process, the HSE will contact anyone who may have come into close contact with a diagnosed Covid-19 case via the contact tracing process. The HSE instructions should be followed and confidentiality is essential at all times.

### **Arrival and Dismissal of pupils**

- Pupils who avail of school transport will be offloaded at the usual time of 9.10am and go straight to the classroom through the front door.
- Pupils from the DEC will be offloaded at 9am and 2.50pm.
- One bus will be offloaded at a time to avoid large numbers of pupils and staff congregating at reception.
- Arrival and dismissal for pupils of the school will be on a priority need as opposed to the order in which the bus arrives at school. The needs of the pupils are paramount and the In-School Management Team will oversee the order in which buses are offloaded.
- Pupils who are dropped off by parents will be received by a staff member upon arrival in the car park. Parents are asked to wait in their car and ring reception. 01-8245491
- Dismissal time for pupils will remain the same at 3pm. There is a ten-minute period until 3.10pm for pupils to safely access the bus.
- The Deputy Principal will oversee pupil arrival.
- The Assistant Principal will oversee pupil dismissal.
- Bus Escorts must not wait in the lobby or reception area to reduce contact tracing.
- Bus Escorts must ring 01-8245491 to make necessary arrangements if a meeting is required with the Principal.
- Bus Escorts can pass important information onto the Deputy or Assistant Principal who will oversee arrival and dismissal.
- A contact tracing log will be completed daily by Bus Escorts for each journey.

### **Break and lunch times**

- Breaks must be taken in a timely manner.
- Teachers are responsible for ensuring their room is available in a timely manner to facilitate staff breaks.
- Staff who are taking a break in a classroom are responsible for leaving the room in a timely manner to ensure a swift changeover to class time.



- Staff will have access to their relevant classroom for use as a staff room, but will have to be self-sufficient in terms of off site food preparation, and providing their own crockery, cutlery etc.
- Staff wishing to avail of a hot drink or food should be self-sufficient and bring a flask.
- The staff room will remain closed except for official break times to reduce contact tracing. E.g. staff are not to eat breakfast in the staff room before or after school.
- Each individual is responsible for wiping down break area after use (chair, table, gadgets used)
- Staff must bring home unused food and food packaging.
- A contact tracing log will be available for designated break times. Staff must bring their own pen.

#### **Pupil break time hygiene procedure**

- Pupils must be self-sufficient and provide their own utensils daily. These will be sent home to be washed daily.
- As far as practical pupils must manage their own lunch box, contents and utensils.
- Pupils who prefer a hot lunch e.g. noodles or soup must be self-sufficient and bring food to school prepared in a flask.
- Pupils must bring home unused food and food packaging.
- Reusable water bottles, lunch boxes etc to be washed daily
- The Housekeeper will dispense sandwiches provided by Dublin City Council daily by leaving in a container outside classroom door.

#### **Hygiene measures:**

- In terms of the school building and equipment, a revised and expanded cleaning and sanitising regime will be implemented.
- The importance of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette will continue to be a major focus in the school.
- Everyone upon entering and leaving the school will be requested to use hand gel at the front lobby.
- Staff and pupils will be requested to wash their hands upon arrival and dismissal, before/ after break and lunch, after playing outside, when physically dirty or after coughing and sneezing.
- Pupils will have a personal hygiene bag in school with tissues and x5 small hand towels for personal use only. This will be stored in school and returned home parents to wash.
- A bottle of hand gel will be available in each classroom.
- Anti-bacterial spray and blue roll or disinfectant wipes will be available in each classroom.
- For health and safety reasons, hand gel and anti-bacterial spray must be stored in a locked press.



- It is advisable not to wear jewellery, nail polish or fake nails and tie long hair up in order to reduce the risk of infection.
- For health and safety reasons, school staff must not carry their own bottles of hand sanitizer. Bus Escorts will be provided with hand sanitizer for use on the bus only.
- Staff and pupils must use their own stationary.
- Visors and goggles will be available for staff working with pupils who engage in spitting or flicking saliva.
- In order to reduce contact tracing staff and pupils are requested not to use facilities in the DEC.
- Soft toys and equipment that cannot be wiped clean will not be used at this time.
- The class phone should only be answered by the class teacher and should be cleaned after each use. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure the phone is cleaned if a pupil is using the phone as part of their programme.
- Phone at reception to only be used in the event of an emergency.
- COVID-19 posters will be displayed in suitable locations highlighting the signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

#### **Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

- Appropriate Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) will be purchased for staff, including hand wash and hand sanitizer. Please note the use for PPE for pupils with Special Educational Needs is not mandatory and will not always be practical due to the needs of the pupils.
- Face masks will be available for staff to wear. It is best practice to change disposable masks after taking off for break and lunch time. Staff are welcome to wear their own masks.
- 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. Washing or use of hand sanitiser on gloved hands is not appropriate.
- PPE must be disposed of at the end of the day by double bagging and placing in the bin. The bin must be emptied daily.

#### **Visitor policy**

- St Vincent's Special National School will operate a strict **no visitor policy** in order to reduce the footfall within the school.
- Parents must contact the school office 01-8245491 if they wish to speak to the Principal or Teacher.
- If parents wish to collect their child early they must ring the school office, remain in the car and a staff member will facilitate the handover of the pupil.
- The Multi-Disciplinary Team provide an essential service to the pupils and their support will remain operational. MDT members are asked to contact the school office



01-8245491 with details of when they will visit the school. Where possible, the use of Zoom, phone calls, emails are encouraged. MDT must complete the contract tracing logs on arrival.

- A COVID-19 Contact Tracing Log will be used to support Health Service Executive (HSE) tracing. There will be a system in place for all visitors who need to come to the school to make appointment, arrange to contact a central point and to record their visit using the Contact Tracing Log.

### **Contact tracing**

- Everyone who enters the school building must complete the contact tracing log.
- A contact tracing log will be available and to be completed in the event of staff changes e.g. substitutes

### **Staff cover**

- **Teacher absence-** the following will be invoked to provide cover for teaching staff in the event a substitute teacher cannot be sourced.
  1. The class that has Home Economics will go to the HE room and the class teacher will cover the absence
  2. Resource teacher will cover the absence
  3. Principal will cover the absence
  4. Classroom will be closed if no cover can be sourced. Parents will be notified as soon as possible on Textaparent.
- **SNA absence-**
  1. Where possible a substitute will be sourced and placed in the most appropriate class.
  2. SNA staff from other rooms will be redeployed to cover in the class or provide assistance with pupil needs as per Circular 30/14.
- **Bus Escort absence-**
  1. Where possible a substitute will be sourced
  2. If a substitute cannot be sourced, the bus will be cancelled and parents notified via Textaparent as soon as possible.
- **Ancillary staff absence**
  1. Where possible a substitute will be sourced

### **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing can be usefully applied allowing for some flexibility when needed. It 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.





It is 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. In special schools a distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation in the first four years of primary or special schools, is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary or special school for all pupils.

The following measures will be in place to facilitate social distancing:

- Where possible work stations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.
- In as far as practical staff and pupils must remain within their class. In order to provide adequate supervision levels staff and substitute staff might be required to rotate to other classrooms. To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should consistently be in the same Class although this will not be possible at all times due to supervision and care needs.
- The objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different 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.
- Sharing educational material should be avoided/minimised where possible.
- Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.
- Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.
- Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.
- 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**

- **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.
- Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the staff or break room through the use of staggered breaks etc. Refer to break timetable.
- Staff meetings will be held in small groups, in large spaces or online to facilitate physical distancing.



- Staff are requested not to gather in within the school premises before or after school. Staff are welcome to go directly to their classroom if they wish to work at school. For example, teaching staff may use their classroom for planning and preparation.
- Unless otherwise specified Croke Park hours must be carried out within the class.
- Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this should be minimized where possible.
  
- ***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.
  
- ***Yard/Supervision***
- The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.
- Adjust play time/outdoor activities to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.
- It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary or special schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical we will stagger access to the yard.
- Pupils and staff must perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.
- The use of equipment sharing will be minimised and shared equipment will be cleaned between each use.
  
- ***Access to the Principal/ Secretary Office/ Reception area***
- An essential visitor only policy is operational.
- All essential visitors must make an appointment through the Office in advance
- The office remains open for First Aid; please ring 5491 and a First Aider will go to the location of the person requiring first aid.
- We are operating a cashless system for payment of school fees.
- Parents can contact the teaching staff by ringing the Office 01-8245491
- Staff can access the Secretary's Office or Principal by ringing 01-8245491
- All meetings to take place on Zoom or via phone call
- Visitors must wait outside and ring 01-8245491 to announce their arrival.
- When collecting their child parents must ring 01-8245491, remain in the car and a staff member will facilitate a handover in the car park.
- MDT are essential visitors but must make an appointment in advance and adhere to protocols.
- Bus Escorts must not wait in the lobby or Reception area to reduce contact tracing. Any requests for a meeting should be done by ringing the office 01-8245491

**Restricted Movement following Non-Essential Travel Overseas**



- In relation to foreign travel it is advised to log on to [www.dfa.ie](http://www.dfa.ie) and [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) immediately prior to return to Ireland to ensure they are fully informed of any changes and any necessary requirement to restrict their movements.

### **Illness protocol for pupils, staff and visitors**

- Everyone should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggest illness and, where symptoms are present, DO NOT attend school.
- Symptoms of Covid: high temperature; cough; shortness of breath or breathing difficulties; loss of smell, of taste, or distortion of taste.
- In the event of someone presenting with a temperature, a non-contact thermometer will be used to record temperature.
- Do not attend school if you are exhibiting any signs of Covid illness, a family member exhibits signs of Covid illness or if you have been identified by the HSE as a contact for a person with COVID-19.
- Anyone who displays ANY sign of illness, COVID-19 or other should not attend school.
- Before returning to school on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 all pupils must complete the return to school questionnaire.
- Parents will be contacted immediately if their child displays ANY sign of illness throughout the school day.
- Parents MUST provide an updated contact list and emergency backup contact details.
- You MUST be in a position to be contacted immediately.
- You MUST have alternative arrangements in place to collect a child within 30 minutes in the event of a call from school.
- In the event of a child developing symptoms, please bring it to the attention of the Principal immediately in order for Public Health advice procedures to be invoked.
- The HSE will inform parents/ staff who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. All relevant persons will be notified by the HSE as opposed to the school. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

### **Checklist for dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19**

This protocol will be invoked in the event of a suspected case of Covid-19. All staff members will be required to manage a suspected case in line with the protocol and training. A nominated member of the In School Management Team will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to.

### **Isolation Area**

- The isolation area identified is the Therapy room or small school yard.
- In the event of more than one suspected case of COVID-19 the second isolation area will be the relax area between room 9/10.



- Isolation packs: Due to needs of the pupils the isolation pack cannot be left in a room without being locked. However, an isolation pack containing the following items are available from the school office
  - Tissues
  - Hand sanitiser
  - Disinfectant
  - Gloves
  - Masks
  - Waste Bags
  - Disposable aprons

### **Isolating a Person**

- In the event of a pupil needing to isolate they will be accompanied by a staff member from their bubble or pod. They will take the most direct route to the isolation room. The class teacher will phone the office 5491 and the Secretary will inform the Principal.
- The pupil will self- isolate in the Therapy room or small school yard and the staff member will supervise through the window.
- If an adult needs to isolate they will leave the area immediately and go to the isolation room. The class teacher or SNA if the teacher is isolating will ring the office to inform the Principal that they are isolating in the room.
- Protocol emailed to staff in advance of reopening and training provided to staff during Croke Park sessions.
- When travelling on the school bus, pupils should socially distance as much as physically possible.
- If a child or staff member becomes unwell on the bus, the bus operator should have a response plan in place. If they arrive to school on the bus they must not enter the school building and wait to be collected in the car park.
- Staff have been advised to maintain a distance of at least 2m from the affected person at all times.
- Disposable masks are available for all staff to wear.

### **Arrangements for the affected person to leave the school**

- Staff will be asked if they feel well enough to travel home. In the event that are unable to travel in their car a family member will be called to collect them.
- Parents will be contacted immediately to collect their child within 30 minutes.
- Parents will have to submit a minimum of four nominated people who must be available to collect them within a 30 minute time frame.
- Due to the nature of this pandemic a medical certificate to attend school must be submitted before returning to school.



- In line with public health guidelines, an affected person must not attend school for 14 days to eliminate the risk of infection.
- Under no circumstances can a pupil or staff member use public or school transport to travel home if they are a suspected case of COVID-19.
- In the event that the affected person is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect

**Arrangements for infection control:** In order to reduce the spread of infection the affected person is advised:

- To avoid touching other people, surfaces and objects.
- To cover their mouth and nose with disposable tissue(s) when they cough or sneeze, and to put the tissue in the bin.
- Not to go to their GP's surgery or any pharmacy or hospital.
- That they must not use public transport.
- Continue wearing the face mask until they reach home.
- Transport home or to an assessment centre will be arranged if the affected person has been directed to go there by their GP.

### **Follow up**

- The HSE protocols will take effect and the In School Management Team and Board of Management will follow HSE instructions.
- An assessment of the incident to identify any follow-up actions required will be carried out by the In School Management Team and Board of Management.
- The In School Management Team and Board of Management will be available to provide advice and assistance if contacted by the HSE/ other relevant authorities.

### **Cleaning**

- The isolation area will be out-of-use until cleaned and disinfected.

### **Procedure in the event of a confirmed case of Covid-19**

- In the event of a confirmed case of Covid-19 the HSE protocols will apply.
- The school will be keeping a list of visitors to schools for the purposes of contact tracing.
- If you have had such contact with a confirmed case, the HSE contract tracing team will contact you through a call from a contact tracer, or an alert through the Covid -19 tracker App.
- The HSE will issue advice in relation to testing and contact tracing. If you are advised by the HSE that you should restrict your movements, you should not attend work or school.