

Holy Family Junior School



COVID 19 Response Plan **August 2020 / Revised August 2021**

SCHOOL POLICY

Holy Family Junior School is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our students. 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 providing up to date information to our staff and students on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct handwashing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan in relation to summer provision
- inform all staff and students of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the public health guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and students 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 students 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: _____ Date: _____

1: INTRODUCTION

The Minister for Education has published “The Roadmap for the Full Return to School” on the 27th July 2020. It sets out what the operation of schools will look like and the range of supports which will be available in a COVID-19 context. It has been developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the “Return to Work Safely Protocols” developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work.

This document sets out the information that Holy Family Junior School has implemented to facilitate a safe re-opening of our school, including a COVID-19 policy, lead worker representative/s (LWR) and a process to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19. The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation of post primary schools through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole. This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in Holy Family Junior School School to minimise the risk of infection while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The contents of this document are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities.

One of the key challenges is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. This document identifies the steps Holy Family Junior School is taking to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school and the steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself in the event that COVID-19 is introduced to the school.

2: WHAT IS A COVID 19 RESPONSE PLAN ?

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support our staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our school environment. Our COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for our school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol' and the Department of Education plan for school reopening that will aim to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of schools complies with the public health advice to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school. This is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice and any other relevant agreement with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools. In line with national advice and guidance, the key to a safe and sustainable return to work, and reopening of schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of Management, staff, students and parents. The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

3: PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL

The return to the workplace will be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education. Details for the safe reopening of our school and the applicable relevant controls are outlined in this document. Before reopening schools for the 2020/21 school year Holy Family Junior School will have processes in place to include the following:

- Means of keeping up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates;
- Means of passing on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required;

- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form
- Identified a Lead Worker representative (Ciara Heffernan)
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19
- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school but take into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
- Updated the Health and Safety Risk Assessment COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of post primary schools
- Made necessary arrangements to restrict access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school

3.1: 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

3.2: Procedure for Returning to Work: In order to return to the workplace, staff will complete a Return to Work form, which is available electronically. A RTW form should be completed and returned 3 days before returning to work. 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. Further details are available from school management.

3.3: *Lead Worker Representative* The protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the school management and the Board of Management to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID19 in the workplace. Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared obligation in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

3.4: *Signage*: Holy Family Junior School will display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. This will be displayed in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

3.5: *Making Changes to School Layout*: Social distancing is not a pre-requisite for Junior Schools to re-open but the DES advice is that the risk of infection may be reduced by organising classes into pods and decreasing interaction between class bubbles. 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 departure at the end of the school day, while acknowledging that this may not always be possible. Classrooms can be arranged into groups of 4 which allows 1m between each group and 2m around the teacher's desk. Resources can be shared but, again, the aim is to minimise this as far as is possible (i.e. within each pod if possible). The DES advice is that shared resources should be cleaned regularly e.g. once a week. Coats can be hung on the coat hooks but we have to minimise the interaction within the class (e.g. each pods gets coats together).

3.6: *Health and Safety Risk Assessment*: COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. Before re-opening, Holy Family Junior School will review our 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 will be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement. We will also review our existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments will be documented and be incorporated into the school's statement.

3.7: Access to School and Contact Log. In line with instructions from the Department of Education and Skills, access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement 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. In line with Department of Education instructions and as communicated to all Parents / Guardians, non-staff members are not allowed enter the school unless the visit is absolutely essential and organised in advance with the school 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. This will be available digitally for staff.

4: CONTROL MEASURES – TO PREVENT INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF COVID 19 IN OUR SCHOOL

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student - student, teacher - teacher and teacher- student, and must be managed in all settings.

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, students, parents

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

Staff, 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.

4.1: How to minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into schools:

We will promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms / avoidance to include:

- Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and students not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the principal (or Deputy Principal if the Principal is unavailable) promptly;
- Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- Advise everyone entering the school building that they need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitizer
- Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the Principal and should be received at a specific contact point
- Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible

4.2: Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- High temperature

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

4.3: Respiratory Hygiene All members of the school community will be expected / required to 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 and safely into a nearby bin.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

4.4: Hand Hygiene Staff and students should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands. As a school community we will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands.

- Hygiene – Students are expected to wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds using hot water and soap at various points throughout the school day. In line with DES guidelines, children will wash their hands on arrival in school, before eating or drinking, after using the toilet, after playing outdoors, when their hands are physically dirty and when they cough or sneeze
- Hand Sanitising Stations are located as follows – inside each classroom, outside each SET room and office.

4.5: Physical Distancing: Physical Distancing falls into two categories

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Given that each school setting is different in terms of (i) location; (ii) physical layout (iii) available space within the school; and (iv) student numbers; schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate reconfigurations / operational changes necessary to maintain physical distancing.

In Holy Family Junior School, we have complied with the various aspects of advice and requirements from the Department of Education and other relevant agencies including:

1. Reconfiguration of class spaces to maximise physical distancing;
2. Review Timetables (e.g. Literacy Lift Off);
3. Reconfiguring SET timetables to minimise groups;
4. Accessing available spaces within the school e.g. outside classrooms
5. Stagger break times and subdivide playground;

4.6: Use of PPE in Schools:

It is currently recommended that teachers, SNAs and other staff wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained. In certain situations, the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with students with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

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

- 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.

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

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.

5: HYGIENE AND CLEANING IN SCHOOL

Holy Family Junior School has undergone a deep clean of our school during the Summer break. We have also implemented increased cleaning schedules from the start of the new school year. These new measures will include a focus on sanitising touch points i.e. handrails, door handles, in addition to our normal schedule of cleaning.

- Cleaning and Hygiene:

- All touch surfaces and toilets will be cleaned each day.
- Hand-sanitiser dispensers will be in each classroom and outside SET rooms.
- There will be cleaning spray, blue towel and a bottle of hand-sanitiser on each teacher's desk.
- There will be visors available for all staff.
- Signage will be displayed throughout the school. The DES is to forward information posters and packs this week to schools.
- A fogger will also be available for items such as PE equipment.
- Anti-bacterial wipes will be in the photocopying rooms.

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 / surface 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.

5.1: Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a student/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present. The rooms will be cleaned as soon as practicable possible. Once the room is vacated the room will not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. Disinfection only works on things that are clean. Therefore, when disinfection is required it is always in addition to cleaning. Person/s assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and household gloves and a plastic apron. The environment and furniture will be cleaned using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach). Special attention will be paid 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.

6: DEALING WITH A SUSPECT CASE OF COVID - 19

Staff with Symptoms:

The DES advice is that if staff have symptoms, they should not attend school. They should phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation. Also, staff should not attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact of a person with COVID-19 and

to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement. If staff develop symptoms at school this is to be brought to the attention of the Principal promptly (see below).

Dealing with suspected cases:

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

The person with symptoms will be taken to the designated isolation room – contact Enda Hickey or Catherine Moloney to collect the person (this was the music store, opposite Bernadette Ryan’s room). Others should keep at least 2m away from the symptomatic person. The DES advice is “that the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room” and that “gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin”. A mask will be provided for the person presenting with symptoms as appropriate. The advice is then to 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. If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, we will contact 999. 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 and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.**

7: Staff Room

The DES advice is to use and clean your own utensils etc, so that will mean that staff will need to bring their own. Staff will sit at the same seat at each break. The use of the staff room in the morning will be examined when there is time to assess the success of break times

CONCLUSION

This is a living document and this version of the document is focused on re-opening our school on the 31st August 2020.

This protocol will be reviewed during phase in an on-going basis where national medical advice / government decisions will be considered in relation to adjustments for the coming months and beyond.

