

Covid-19 Return to School Plan



St. Brendan's NS, Clonfert

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School Re-opening

31st August 2020

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1. Introduction

As a school community we have successfully navigated our way through what has been the most challenging time in the history of modern Irish education. As we look forward in excitement to re-opening our school on 31st August we need to be aware that there will be challenges ahead.

Our school will operate under new norms. As a school community we will have to adapt quickly to new and revised practices and procedures many of which are detailed in this policy. The Health, Safety and Well-being of all members of our school community is of paramount importance to us all.

Procedures have been put in place in line with HSE and Department of Education and Skills advice and guidance and are subject to change as new advice or the changing needs of our school dictate. All members of the school community, irrespective of circumstance, are expected to adhere fully to the procedures put in place in an attempt to minimize the risk posed by Covid-19. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that all members of the school community must adhere fully to the practices and procedures put in place to ensure all of our safety. Any instances of non-compliance will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management.

Each and every individual must play their part. We all have an obligation to do what we can to ensure the safety of our school community. Breaches of procedure by any individual will not be tolerated. Covid-19 poses a serious risk to us all.

2. Aims

Through the implementation of the practices and procedures as outlined in this policy our school community aims to:

- Do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school.
- Reduce the likelihood of the spread of Covid-19, insofar as possible, within our school if introduced.
- Detail for all members of our school community how our school will reopen for all students from 31st August and what the operation of our school will look like so as to be sustainable in a COVID-19 context.
- Balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning.

3. Covid-19 Policy Statement

Clonfert National 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 the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort from all members of the school community will help contain the spread of the virus.

In Clonfert National School 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, **Anne-Marie Hyland**, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners. The Deputy Lead Worker Representative is Niall Kelly.

Signed:

Date: 24/08/2020

4. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The BOM aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Details for the safe reopening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Before reopening schools for the 2020/21 school year each school will need to have processes in place to include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates;
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education (**details at Section 4.1**);
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form (**details at Section 4.2**);
- Identified a Lead Worker representative (**details at Section 4.3**);
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 (**details at Section 4.4**);
- Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing (**details at Section 4.5**);
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment (**details at Section 4.6**);
- Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school (**details at 4.7**);
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:
 - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
 - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
 - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

There are checklists in place to assist schools on the details of what is needed for these arrangements in the Appendices of this plan.

4.1) Induction Training

All Clonfert NS staff completed Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of the training modules 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.

A staff meeting was held on Friday, August 28th to ensure staff feedback and input were taken, and to brief all staff about new timetabling arrangements, protocols etc. 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 BOM.

4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available online or from the principal. A copy is attached also at **Appendix 2**.

A RTW form should be completed and returned **3 days** before returning to work.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

There are some school staff who may be unable to return to school. Current public health guidelines have identified these people as being in groups who are defined as being at **very high risk**. This will be updated in line with public health advice.

People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

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

- are over 70 years of age - even if fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active 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 of 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
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means they 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 are pregnant

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

4.3) 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 employer 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 COVID-19 in the workplace.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in schools. The process for appointment of the lead worker representative in schools has been agreed centrally between the Department of Education and the education partners.

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management/ Education and Training Board and school management.

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 responsibility in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative.

In schools with less than 30 staff, a Deputy Lead Worker Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent.

In schools with 30 or more staff and in all Special schools, an Assistant Lead Worker Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Assistant LWR will be to:

- assist the LWR in their duties as set out above; and
- deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent

<i>Name(s) of lead worker representative:</i>	<i>Contact details:</i>
Anne-Marie Hyland	info@clonfertns.ie
<i>Name of Deputy Lead worker representative:</i>	
	info@clonfertns.ie

All staff, pupils, parents, 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.

Full details of the arrangements which will apply for the LWR in primary and special schools is set out at **Appendix 3**.

4.4) Signage

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

The Department will provide printed posters to schools, with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc.

Please see link below to these posters which will allow schools who may wish to have an additional supply of posters available. Any such supply can be sourced locally.

Schools can then arrange to display the posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

4.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Further information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is found at **Section 5.4** below including a link to the suite of illustrative primary classroom layouts (including special classes).

Schools should reconfigure classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening. Clonfert NS has changed all classroom and SET room layouts, so that age appropriate physical distancing, can take place between pupils, and between pupils and staff.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at **Appendix 4**.

It is important that schools review their 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 school's existing emergency procedures should be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

Schools should also review their 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 should also be documented and incorporated into the school safety statement.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

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

4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all. As much maintenance work has been carried out in the weeks prior to the school re-opening. From August 31st, 2020 Clonfert NS has identified the following essential visitors:

- *NEPS Psychologist*
- *HSE personnel*
- *Departmental Inspectors*

Clonfert NS is to accommodate one student from third level colleges on work placement this academic year. Transition Year placements are deemed as non-essential and so Clonfert NS will not be accommodating Transition Year placements this academic year. 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. Leitrim NS will maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts. A sample contact log is available at **Appendix 5**. All staff / personnel entering Clonfert NS are required to sign the Contact Log. This includes parents who attend a meeting by prior arrangement.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found here: <https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/news-media/data-protection-implications-return-worksafely-protocol>

All school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school in their role as data controller.

5. Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

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, pupils, 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, pupils, 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.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Schools:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms (**details at Section 5.1**);
- Advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and pupils not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact for person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details at Section 8**);
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

5.1) 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

5.2) Respiratory Hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately 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.

5.3) Hand Hygiene

Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Schools should promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

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

- Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).
- Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins needs to be managed so as to avoid congregation of people waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.
- There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.
- Hand sanitiser dispensers can be deployed more readily at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.
- Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water should be used.
- Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities should be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.
- Hand washing facilities should be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels should be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.
- Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing should be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and can be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve.
- Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

- Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs can be used too.
- When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.
- Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- ✓ On arrival at school;
- ✓ Before eating or drinking;
- ✓ After using the toilet;
- ✓ After playing outdoors;
- ✓ When their hands are physically dirty;
- ✓ When they cough or sneeze.

The Department has arranged for a drawdown framework to be established to enable schools purchase hand-sanitisers and any other necessary PPE supplies for use in the school. The procurement process for this framework is at an advanced stage and it is intended that these materials will be available for drawdown in early August. Further guidelines will be issued shortly. The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with hand sanitising and PPE requirements in schools. This funding will be available in advance of school reopening at the end of August.

Physical Distancing

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19.

Physical distancing will be usefully applied in our school allowing for some flexibility when needed. It will be applied in a practical way that recognises that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing in our school 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.

However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down. Staff will wear suitable face coverings while at work.

All adult visitors to the school, as scheduled by appointment, MUST maintain a 2m distance from school staff and wear suitable face coverings.

Our school community is committed to the two principles of physical distancing, namely, increasing separation and decreasing interaction, as a means of minimising the risk of the introduction of Covid-19 to our school.

Increasing Separation

- When pupils are dropped at the designated time they must proceed unaccompanied (apart from exceptions listed above) to their classroom/designated area on the yard.
- Pupils must arrive as close to class starting time as possible. No pupil should be on school grounds before 9.00 am.
- Parents **MUST ENSURE** that appropriate arrangements are put in place for assembly and dismissal of pupils.

Assembly/Dismissal Routes

The BOM will ask the bus to park adjacent to the hall parallel to the timber gate and bus children will get access to the yard directly from here and line up inside the gate in the evening.

Parental responsibilities on assembly/dismissal:

- Parents must arrive on time for dropping off and collecting their child.
- Only parents 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 who is in a high risk category should not drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves.
- Parents must not congregate in groups.
- Parents who are permitted on school grounds (Infants and pupils with additional needs) must ensure their child remains at their side at all times and that their child does not interact with other children in the other two bubbles.
- Parents who are permitted on school grounds (Infants and pupils with additional needs) must wear suitable face coverings
- A drop and go/collect and go policy will be in place. Under no circumstances are parents to congregate on or outside school grounds.
- At arrival and departure times of children, social distancing is to be maintained by children and parents.

Decreasing interaction

Due to the layout of and available space in our school we are fortunate to be in a position to decrease, insofar as possible, interaction between pupils in different Bubbles. In doing this we will adopt a common-sense approach while recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils. We will have 3 bubbles in our school. Bubble 1 will have 21 students in the junior room, Bubble 2 will have 15 in the middle room and Bubble 3 will have 20 in the senior room.

Breaktimes and playing will remain the same for our pupils. We already have designated play areas for pupils that will continue. These areas will be reinforced and reviewed. Contact games may be allowed but will be restricted to playing within their own Class Bubble. This will be open to review.

Yard Area Allocation for Class Bubbles

J I/SI/1st Class Play Area

2nd/3rd/4th Class Play Area

5th/6th Class Play Area



6. Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

The Department will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on certain schools activities in advance of school reopening.

Choir/Music Performance

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

Sport Activities

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

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

Shared Equipment

Toys

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

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

Art – Where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use and consideration could be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

Library Policy – Where practical pupils should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

7. A-Z of school practices and procedures

Books etc.

- Parents must ensure that all books/writing equipment are sanitised using alcohol wipes before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books cannot and will not be shared.
- We are asking parents to ensure your child has a pencil case for home use and another one for school use. The pencil case used at home will not be brought to school and the pencil case used in school will not be brought home.
- For the start of the school year all books will remain in school. For the month of September there will be no homework assigned that will involve books going home. We will review this at the end of September. All that will go home in the bags to be cleaned each day are the lunch boxes.

Clothing

- Ensure your child can/teach your child to open/close their own coat and tie their own shoes. Shoes with Velcro should be used where pupils are unable to tie their own.

Face Coverings

- Staff members will wear face coverings, similar to those worn in shops or on public transport, when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- There is no requirement for pupils to wear face coverings.
- All adult visitors to school grounds MUST WEAR suitable face coverings.

Handshaking/Hugging

- While we will all be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

Home/School Communication

- All communication between home and school will take place using e mail. (Please ensure email address is correct and up to date).
- Face to face meetings will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Homework:

- Homework will not be assigned until later in September, however, we would strongly encourage each pupil to read as extensively as possible during this time. This will be reviewed at the end of the month.

Hygiene and Cleaning

- Sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at each entrance, in each classroom and support room, and in offices.
- Emulsifying soap is available in all toilets.
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.
- In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned by a cleaning company and daily cleaning will continue after that.
- Frequently touched surfaces – door handles, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities will be cleaned on a rotational basis at the end of the school day by a cleaner employed by the Board of Management.
- All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.
- Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school. We have removed the lids from our bins to allow hand free access and these will be emptied daily.
- Pupils may bring their own 'Hygiene Pack' in their school bag if they wish e.g. Small hand sanitiser, wipes, tissues etc.

ICT

- A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common devices. Devices must be cleaned after use and before they are returned for charging.

Inability to attend school due to Covid-19

- Pupils who are unable to attend school on medical grounds, due to Covid-19, must provide the school with a letter/report from their GP/Consultant stating that they can not attend on health grounds.
- In the absence of medical certification of non-attendance the school is obliged by law to implement the terms of The Education Welfare Act as normal.

Lunches

- Parents must ensure that all lunch boxes/water bottles are sanitised using alcohol wipes before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Parents MUST ensure that pupils have sufficient lunch/drink coming to school each morning as we will not be in a position to accept and distribute lunches during the school day.
- Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children.
- Please make sure your child is self-sufficient i.e. they can open/peel any lunch/drink you pack for them. Please pay particular attention to any drinks that require a straw.
- Children will eat their lunches at their desks. No food will be allowed onto the yard.
- All leftovers/waste must be stored in each pupil's lunchbox and must be disposed of at home.

Office

- Parents can contact Jacinta in the office to use bank transfer to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled. Please email info@clonfertns.ie requesting the school's IBAN number from Jacinta you can make payments using online banking using your name as the reference.
- Attendance at school office is by pre-arranged appointment only.
- In general pupils will not have access to offices. A designated pupil will be assigned the job of going to the office should the need arise.
- As far as possible, staff members should minimise their entry to the office area, only one person shall enter the office at any time.

Photocopying

- Any staff member who uses the photocopier must clean it down after use with the wipes provided.

Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

- Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Teachers will organise lessons that require very little if any equipment. Staff members and pupils will be encouraged to take additional breaks outside during the school day. While these breaks are taking place all windows in the classroom should be opened to allow for ventilation. All PE equipment if used must be sanitised after use.

Punctuality

- It is essential that parents/pupils adhere strictly to the times allocated for assembly and dismissal. Children can be dropped at school between 9:05 and 9:20 and must use the front gate of the school to enter.
- Infant parents can walk their children into the yard if they feel it necessary. The infant children will be walked to the front gate at finishing times and we would ask that you still step out of your cars and take them from the teacher at the school gate for health and safety reasons. No infant child will be allowed outside the school gate until there is someone to collect him/her.
- Parents of pupils who present late for school must contact the school office by phone to arrange entry to the school. Pupils remain the responsibility of the parents/guardians until they have arranged access to the school.

Returning from abroad

- Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List must not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period which commences on the date of return to Ireland.

Staffroom

- All staff members must 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.
- Staff meetings will be held in the GP Room, maintaining a 2 metre distance

- Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible.
- Staff members should bring any waste/leftovers home.
- Staffroom will be used as a tea station and staff will eat in the main GP area when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

Substitute Teachers

- The sequence for covering all teacher absences will be in accordance with DES circular 0045/2020. A copy of the Covid-19 Return to School Policy will be provided to each substitute teacher. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction training.

Teaching and Learning

- As a school, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 12th. We really appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families.
- Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2020/2021 school year.
- The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for schools, as we work with all the children during the return to school. Initially there will be a focus on Language, Numeracy, SPHE and PE. As advised by the National Educational Psychological Services we will need to “Slow down to catch up”.

Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers

- Staff members (particularly Support Teachers and SNAs) may rotate between areas/classes. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.
- In keeping with our Special Education policy, support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal.
- The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble (class)
- 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.

- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean by the SET in between different pupils or small groups attending.

Uniforms

- There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is not practical for most families. However children's uniforms must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.
- As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms only for school related activities. Uniforms should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc. Children may wear track suit pants as an alternative to school pants if they wish once they are not branded.
- We will **not** have classroom slippers for the beginning of this year as changing into and out of them causes too much congregating. We will review this as the year progresses and may return to slippers as the weather deteriorates if we feel it is safe to do so. If pupils plan on playing games on the pitch we would ask that they bring boots or a change of runners. They can change into them outside.
- Children will be allowed to hang their coats in the area assigned to their pods to avoid congregating and some pods will be allowed to hang coats on the back of their school chairs.

Ventilation

- To ensure that classrooms are well ventilated, windows will be kept open as often as possible, and will be opened while children are taking breaks in the playground.

Visiting Teachers/Coaches

The Board of Management will ensure the safety and wellbeing of all visitors to the school premises.

Visits to the school will be severely restricted and visitors will be asked to:

- ✓ Make a prior appointment before visiting the school
- ✓ Remain at home if they have any Covid-19 symptoms
- ✓ Follow the agreed Covid-19 protocols for the school
- ✓ Sanitise before entering the premises
- ✓ Attendance to be recorded on entry to building
- ✓ Wear PPE if instructed

- ✓ Adhere to social distancing requirements
- ✓ Not to loiter – complete their business and leave premises

Wellbeing of the School Community

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff.

These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- A sense of hope

Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

- The Stay Safe programme will be taught in all classes at the start of the school year.
- Increased emphasis will be placed in all classes on SPHE / PE and outdoor activities.

8. Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

Prior to reopening the school employed the services of Deco Cleaning Services to carry out a deep-clean of the school building. This company will also clean the school daily after school until Halloween. This will be reviewed by the BOM.

The Department of Education will provide additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. Details of the funding supports will be provided to schools by way of circular and will be updated as required. The funding will be provided in advance of reopening.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and will be covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate.

- Schools are reminded to take particular care of the hygiene arrangements for hand washing and toilet facilities.

- In summary, each school setting should be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning if available should be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.
- All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.
- Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.
- There should be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.
- Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)
- Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present
- The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.
- Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.
- Disinfection only works on things that are clean. When disinfection is required it is always as well as cleaning.
- Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.
- Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).
- Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.
- If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a canteen, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

9. Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

We love to see all of our children at school every day. However, under the current circumstances, if children are sick they must not be sent to school.

- Parents/guardians must keep children at home if they display any Covid-19 Symptoms. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>
- Staff must not attend school if they display any symptoms.
- The corner of the GP room is cordoned off and is the Designated Isolation Area for anyone feeling unwell. A chair is set down there, it is just outside the office to the right so children can be collected from there and will not feel overly isolated. We would ask parents to enter the school through the door on the school yard at Mr Kelly's classroom.
- If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:
 - The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation area. A distance of 2 metres will be maintained. The person accompanying the child must wear a face covering.
 - If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone. Parents must make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times. If we are unable to contact a parent/guardian it will be considered a serious breach of Health and Safety.
 - Staff members who are symptomatic should immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and go to the isolation area.
 - A face covering will be provided to the staff member/child who is symptomatic.
 - The staff member or child who is symptomatic should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
 - If the staff member/child is well enough to go home, arrangements will be made for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible.
 - Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
 - If the staff member/child 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.
 - The isolation area and work areas will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.
 - 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.

- It is important to remember that any of us can get sick or unwell, and if we do, we need understanding and support from those around us. It is essential that anyone who feels unwell makes that known to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

10. Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

Hand hygiene

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

The following points can guide the development of such cleaning schedule:

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean;
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water.

- Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child e.g. toileting aids;

If equipment is soiled with body fluids:

- First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
- Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
- Rinse with water and dry.

11. 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. 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. In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- Must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

12. COVID-19 related Absence Management

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

13. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home). A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

This policy was sanctioned by the Board of Management of Clonfert National School on 24/08/2020.

Signed:

Fr. Declan McNerney

Chairperson

Date: 24/08/2020

Signed:

Niall Kelly

Principal

Resources

General Support Websites & Helplines for Parents

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/>

Back to school advice for Junior Infants to Second Class

https://youtu.be/92MLB_0ng8Q

Back to School advice for Third to Sixth Class

<https://youtu.be/MVlb0jAm55Y>

Department of Education Website Support for Parents:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/guide-for-parents-supporting-children.pdf>