



St Catherine's National School
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Distance Learning Plan

Relationship to the characteristic spirit/ethos of the school

St. Catherine's National School is a primary school located in Dublin 8 and is under the patronage and ethos of the Church of Ireland. Our school aims to provide a happy, secure and friendly learning environment where children, teachers, SNAs, ancillary staff, parents, the Parents' Association and the Board of Management work in partnership, whether in person or virtually.

Each individual is valued, encouraged, celebrated and respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere. We also aspire to enabling all students attending our school to realise their potential.

Introduction and Rationale

The public health restrictions which resulted in the closure of schools in March 2020 and again in January 2021, highlighted the absolute necessity for schools to be agile in providing continuity of schooling in the future. All schools were asked to create a brief, concise action plan for supporting the continuity of pupils' learning, using digital technology where possible.

It is important that all members of staff, parents and management are fully aware of, and understand, the way in which the school will communicate and provide distance learning should there be a further lockdown or if a class should be closed for Public Health reasons.

Where pupils and/or teachers are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements, local contextual factors mean that no one-size solution will fit all classes or schools. The staff in St. Catherine's NS will provide for continuity of schooling to the greatest extent possible, however this may not always be a practical option.

Class teachers and SETs (Special Education Teachers) will continuously liaise and collaborate to provide plans and continuity of learning for individual students or classes.

Background & Preparation

The Board of Management has provided finance to set up Microsoft Teams accounts for all students in 5th and 6th classes and to provide training to the relevant teachers on an annual basis.

The Board of Management has provided all teaching staff with a new iPad for their class. These are to replace older Android devices which were unable to be updated. These will allow staff to fully utilise the features of the online platforms in use throughout the school.

The Board of Management has also paid an annual subscription for Wriggle Connect, an online platform for class teachers to avail of CPD in relation to technology and fully utilising the many features available on individual learning platforms.

Croke Park hours have been reduced for staff over the past 2 years, in recognition of the personal time staff have spent on upskilling and participating in CPD.

Seesaw profiles have been rolled over from the previous academic year and all teachers are utilising the platform in a variety of ways. Teachers are also using the Seesaw platform in school with students, so they are used to the features available on it. Senior class teachers will set regular homework tasks using Teams to ensure the children have a good grasp of using this platform before a school or class closure. Online video tutorials have been sent to parents to assist them in the setup of these platforms. Staff have also sought advice and assistance from GDK, the school's IT providers. Staff will ensure that students are given opportunities to practice :

- Accessing and navigating the platform(s)
- Engaging with teaching and learning materials
- Uploading their own work independently

Parents were surveyed in October 2020 to ascertain what level of technology was available in the home. The school has cleared a number of older devices in preparation for loaning to families who may not have the means to provide these for their children in case of a school closure. An agreement document has been created for the parents/guardians in such a case, to sign. Many parents offered to provide extra devices from their place of work should they be needed.

Regular Teachmeets have been established again, for staff members to collaborate with one another and share knowledge. Cover has been provided by the Principal and support staff to release class teachers for these Teachmeet sessions.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) Digital Technologies Team has developed a comprehensive range of blended learning professional development programmes for teachers and school leaders which are available at www.pdst.ie/blendedlearning

The SEN Co (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) will coordinate videos/links/articles on a variety of different SEN topics and needs for the SNAs to work through. SNAs will also assist as the second adult on Zoom calls.

Staff are all using sharepoint for their planning. This allows for plans to be accessed by a substitute teacher or any other staff member at any time.

Parents have all been asked to make sure their contact details are all fully updated and correct on the Aladdin system.

All parents have signed up to using the Aladdin Connect app, this will allow for the speedy dissemination of information should a class or the school be closed by Public Health.

The Chairperson of the Board of Management has access to all up to date contact details for staff members should all members of the leadership team be absent.

All teaching staff have access to contact details of all students and staff members via sharepoint should the leadership team be absent, and a call comes in from Public Health in relation to a class or school closure.

All relevant policies have been reviewed and updated as necessary. All parents and staff have received copies of these documents.

Aims

The following plan will focus on the following four points.

1. Digital communication with and between staff
2. Digital communication between staff and pupils
3. Digital communication between school and parents/guardians, including designated email address or attended phone number for contact during school closures
4. Communication with external agencies.

Policy Content

1. Digital communication with and between staff

Staff are encouraged not to respond to emails after working hours. All staff, including management should be mindful of contacting staff outside working hours, unless absolutely necessary. Staff are encouraged not to use their personal phones and other personal devices for work related business. Staff should be respectful of all members of the school community when communicating with each other. Staff should also be mindful of other staff members

circumstances when communicating with each other. Staff should not be contacted, unless absolutely necessary, if they are sick and unable to work. During a school closure, staff members may have elderly relatives to care for, they may have children of their own to look after and distance learn with or may have loved ones who are ill therefore preventing them from communicating immediately with other staff members. This should be respected.

The SETs (Special Education Teachers) will continue to plan and liaise with class teachers to provide a distance learning plan for the relevant classes. Plans on sharepoint can be accessed by all staff members if and when necessary.

Whole staff virtual 'coffee breaks' will be encouraged every fortnight to keep everyone together and maintain rapport and staff morale. Staff challenges may also be encouraged – fitness challenges, cooking challenges etc.

Staff meetings will be held once a month unless one is needed sooner and delivered using the Microsoft Teams platform when teaching staff are needed. When all staff are needed for a virtual staff meeting the Zoom online platform will be used.

ISM meetings will continue once a month, on the last Thursday of the month on the Microsoft Teams platform.

The Deputy and Principal will liaise regularly.

Board of Management meetings will also continue as planned using the Zoom online platform.

2. Digital communication between staff and pupils

Scenario 1 - A pupil has been advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements. No other pupils in the school are affected.

A selection of worksheets in literacy, numeracy and other subjects will be sent to the parents of this child by the Principal, along with a list of suggested activities that the child can take part in and practice during this period.

Scenario 2 - A pupil is staying at home because of a high risk member of their family.

The class teacher will send a weekly, broad outline of the work being covered in class to the child's parents using Aladdin. Any templates or worksheets that may be necessary or are being used by the class may be attached. It is up to the parents to monitor this.

Scenario 3 – The pupils in a number of pods in the classroom are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements. Some of the pods in the classroom are deemed to be unaffected and can continue to attend school.

The class teacher continues to teach pupils who are in attendance. An outline of the lessons planned for the week will be emailed on Aladdin to the parents with pupils at home. A daily Zoom or Teams (5th & 6th class) call will be set up for all students to work on a project collaboratively or just to check in with each other. This could be a time for the students at home to show or present the work completed at home to the rest of the class and vice versa i.e. art work created during an art lesson.

If a child is self-isolating that would normally have SNA access the SNA can phone the pupil using the school phone. If the school phone is unavailable at the time the SNA should make sure their personal mobile phone number is blocked when making a call.

The SET assigned to the class will step back from Team Teaching whilst in this scenario and will plan with the class teacher and then monitor the learning of the pupils at home over MS Teams and/or Seesaw.

Scenario 4 – All pupils in one or more classes are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements

The class teacher and SET will collaborate on planning for all students. The class teacher will be required to provide distance teaching to all pupils in the class. If the class teacher does not need to restrict their movements, they may do this from the school.

A detailed plan of work will be sent home by the class teacher with expected deadlines for submission. The class will be split into smaller groups of approximately 6 students and each group will have a scheduled daily 30 minute Maths, English or Irish online lesson organised by the class teacher and the Team teacher. One online session will be to check in with the students and to check if pupils had difficulty with any aspect of the assigned work. These sessions cannot be recorded and sent to parents at a later date due to Child Protection reasons.

If a pupil would normally have access to SNA support a daily phonecall to the parents with suggestions that may assist parents will be arranged. This phonecall might also be used for the SNA to 'check in' with the pupil and maintain the relationship they have with each other.

Scenario 5 – A teacher/number of teachers in the school are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements

Where teachers are required to self-isolate, they will avail of special leave with pay, in line with Circular 0042/2021. These teachers should follow the advice outlined in the Circular in this instance. Any teacher who is medically fit for work but has been advised to restrict his/her movements is available to work remotely. If the teacher's class group is still attending school a substitute teacher should be arranged to cover this teacher's teaching responsibilities in the

school for this period, but the work assigned to the teacher restricting his/her movements should support the work of the school in developing and delivering its programmes of teaching and learning for pupils as per Section 12 of Circular 0049/2020. If the teacher's class is also self-isolating or restricting their movements the class teacher(s) will be required to provide remote/distance teaching to all pupils in the class, using the school's digital platform(s) or other agreed method as needed.

Scenario 6 – The school is required to close on foot of Public Health advice

In this case, all teachers who are medically fit to work, including SETs, are available to work remotely and should provide remote teaching and learning to all pupils in their class or on their caseload. Substitute teachers should be arranged to provide remote teaching for pupils in classes where the teacher has been diagnosed with Covid-19 and is medically unfit to work. Schools should ensure substitute teachers have access to appropriate digital technology.

SNAs will be guided by their class teacher(s) in supporting any child who would normally have access to an SNA. SNAs will support the teachers in making sure each child will have the ability to access the distance learning for that class. If a pupil would normally have access to SNA support a daily phonecall to the parents with suggestions that may assist parents will be arranged. This phonecall might also be used for the SNA to 'check in' with the pupil and maintain the relationship they have with each other. Itemised bills showing call charges can be submitted to the school secretary for reimbursement.

In this scenario, we will ensure that such provision is characterised by :

- **Regular engagement with pupils** : Each class will be split into smaller groups of 5 or 6 students and a digital call will be scheduled using either Teams or Zoom twice a week for each group. A whole class digital call will take place once a week. 5th and 6th class teachers will use Teams to communicate daily with their classes and to ensure that assignments are being handed in at a specific time. All staff will be mindful that some pupils may not be in a position to engage with remote learning every day. All parents should have signed consent for their child to participate in any remote call with staff. Parents must note that there will be two members of staff on each call, this is from a Child Protection point of view. If for some reason a second member of staff is not available the call will be postponed or rescheduled. One member of staff will be the host and will admit pupils onto the call from the waiting room, and to monitor behaviour on the call so the class teacher can get on with the business of the call. All parents will be sent the Virtual Call Etiquette document produced by the school prior to the call.

The Principal will continue to arrange school assemblies – Junior and Senior class assemblies will be arranged on alternate Fridays. These will be short group calls on Zoom.

If the closure is to go on for any length of time staff will discuss the possibility of arranging dedicated weeks such as Fitness week, Wellbeing week, Green Week, STEAM week, Arts & Crafts Week.

- **A blend of guided and independent learning task/experiences** : Teacher-pupil engagement will involve both direct teaching by the teacher and the assignment of independent learning tasks for completion by the pupils. Teachers will ensure, as far as practicable, that direct instruction is provided for aspects of learning that require it, using a variety of approaches including pre-recorded video, audio, presentation software and written instructions. Regular engagement with pupils when they are out of school will also help them to reintegrate when they return to school.
- **Appropriate and engaging learning opportunities:** Teachers will ensure that the chosen learning tasks give pupils an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a clear and concise way. Teachers will adjust the number of tasks usually given in the school setting to take account of the fact that pupils are doing this work from home. Pupils will not be expected to mirror or replicate a school day whilst at home as the school are cognisant that all households are different and this may be impossible for some parents or guardians.
 - **Learning tasks:** All workbooks and/or textbooks will be sent home or a collection of them will be facilitated. Textbooks include Go with the Flow handwriting books, Bua na Cainte or Béal Beo Irish books, Operation Maths Assessment books and Weaving Wellbeing from 2nd to 6th class. Tasks set by teachers will support high quality learning from home in line with the quality teaching ethos in St Catherine's. The tasks chosen will be specifically aligned to the needs of the pupil(s), including learners with SEN, and will enable the teacher to monitor progress and give constructive, developmental feedback to support the next stages in their learning.
 - **Skills development:** Pupils need to be supported to develop age-appropriate self-management and organisational skills so they can engage in remote learning.
 - **Transitions:** For pupils with additional and/or special educational needs who are being supported in their transition back to school, the work being carried out should be continued remotely to ensure progress is not lost and to enable successful reintegration back to school after the period of the partial or full closure.

- **Junior and Senior Infants** : Each class teacher has produced a work pack. These packs contain a range of materials to support engaging and fun early literacy and numeracy skill development. Short videos will be made and sent on Seesaw explaining the worksheets and how they should be completed – especially in relation to Gaeilge. A plan of suggested work will also be emailed to parents weekly, outlining the different learning tasks and opportunities for fun hands on, active development of early literacy and numeracy skills, opportunities to learn from home using the home environment in an experiential way in subjects such as SESE and Visual Arts.

A Phonological Awareness pack has also been produced for Junior Infants.

Parents will be guided on how to upload to Seesaw to share these learning experiences. A tutorial guide has been produced.

- Children with SNA access : Daily Funterval exercise sessions will be facilitated by all SNAs for all children with SNA access. Each SNA will have prepared an exercise for the children to follow along with.
- **Two-way feedback between home and school**: Teachers will provide manageable and accessible opportunities for all pupils to regularly share samples of their work throughout each week. Teachers will ensure that work received is corrected and relevant feedback is provided

3. Digital communication between school and parents/guardians, including designated email address or attended phone number for contact during school closures

All class teachers will continue to communicate with parents using the Aladdin platform for sending emails. This ensures consistency and provides a log of when emails were sent and who has read them. Parents are asked to not reply to these emails but to contact teachers using their direct class email addresses. See below.

juniorinfants@stcatherinesns.net

seniorinfants@stcatherinesns.net

1stclass@stcatherinesns.net

2ndclass@stcatherinesns.net

3rdclass@stcatherinesns.net

4thclass@stcatherinesns.net

5thclass@stcatherinesns.net

6thclass@stcatherinesns.net

SETs can be contacted directly at :

roisnoreilly@stcatherinesns.net

rosepollard@stcatherinesns.net
hazeloconnell@stcatherinesns.net
ciaralyne@stcatherinesns.net

Office :

secretary@stcatherinesns.net
principal@stcatherinesns.net

Should Public Health take the decision to close a class or the school, parents will be sent an Aladdin notification and an email. The text for these messages will be given to the school to send. No further communication from the school in relation to this matter should be expected.

Monthly school newsletters will be produced by the Principal and sent via email to parents.

Staff may create video messages to send to specific classes, pupils or the whole school.

4. Communication with external agencies

During a partial or full school closure, St Catherine's will maintain appropriate contact, relevant to the needs of the pupils affected by the closure, with any necessary external agencies, including the HSE, NEPS, NCSE and Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).