



**St Catherine's National School**  
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## **Covid 19 Return to School Plan**

### **Introduction**

The Minister for Education has published and updated their documentation regarding returning to School [gov.ie - Back to School \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie) 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.

This document has been developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC). [Novel Coronavirus - Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(hpsc.ie\)](http://hpsc.ie)

Each school is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in St. Catherine's NS and it provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of pupils and society as a whole.

This plan is **subject to change** and is underpinned by our risk assessment and Covid19 policy (both available on website).

### **School Covid 19 Policy Statement**

The school's Covid 19 Policy Statement can be viewed on our website.

### **Planning and Preparation for the return to school**

A lot of planning and preparation has happened over the last number of weeks by staff and management to ensure St Catherine's N.S. is ready for a full return to school on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

1. **Induction Training** – all staff will be provided with induction training for a safe return. This training is provided by the Department of Education.
2. **Lead Worker Representative** – a member of staff has been identified as our LWR. They will work closely with school 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 Covid -19 in the workplace. To this end, it is vital that parents download the Aladdin Connect app and keep communication details up to date – phone numbers, home address, email addresses and emergency contact details.

3. **Signage** – Display signage will be displayed outlining the signs and symptoms of Covid 19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. This signage is to be provided by the Department of Education.
4. **Making changes to the School Layout** – teachers have worked over the last number of weeks to rearrange classrooms as best we can. As you know the classrooms in St. Catherine’s N.S. are all different sizes and smaller than an average classroom.
5. **Health and Safety Risk Assessment** – this has been carried out and can be viewed on the school’s website.
6. **Access to School and Contact Tracing Log** - Access to school is strictly reserved for essential purposes only. As per Department guidelines a detailed Contact log will be kept. Parents must not enter the school premises without a prior appointment.
7. **Control measures** - We must work together to ensure that we do not allow for any infection to spread in our school. Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser. All staff and pupils will know the protocol for managing a suspected case of Covid 19 in the school. We ask that parents explain and discuss good respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene practices with their children before a return to school. All classrooms will have a supply of soap, handtowels, and hand sanitiser. Some but not all classrooms have warm water. The soap we use emulsifies. Children will be asked to sanitise or wash their hands on entry and exit of the building, before and after eating, after the use of the toilet, after playing outside, when they sneeze or cough and when their hands are physically dirty.

In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms of coronavirus (which includes the Delta variant).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include :

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
- Fatigue
- Aches and pains

Other uncommon symptoms of Coronavirus include :

- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Runny or stuffy noses
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- diarrhoea

**Families who have travelled from countries outside the island of Ireland should adhere to recent and up to date government guidance regarding travel.**

8. **Physical Distancing** – physical distancing must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various classes and will look different in different schools. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times. It will not always be 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 1 metre distance and where possible 2 metres.

Physical distancing will be achieved in two ways :

**Increasing separation** – this will be achieved by re-configuring the classrooms to maximise physical distancing. Each class will be referred to as a bubble and we will ensure as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles. Within these bubbles/classes, children will be organised into pods. A pod is a group of children (between 6 and 8) who will sit together and who will stay in their pod/group while in the classroom.

**Decreasing Interaction** – this will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There will be separate, supervised routes for various bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. Bubbles will have different break and lunchtime access to the yard areas. We will make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

Sharing educational material between Pods will be avoided or minimised where possible. Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble will be limited as much as possible. Coats and school bags, (from 2<sup>nd</sup> class to 6<sup>th</sup> class) will now be stored in classrooms to avoid congregating in areas. Lunches will be stored in the child's own schoolbag as trolleys can no longer be used from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class.

9. **Staggered break times** – Each class will have their own designated yard space which will be supervised by an adult at all times. There will be 2 short breaks and 2 lunch breaks to facilitate 4 classes in the yard at each time. Staff will eat with the children in their classrooms before bringing the class outside to their designated space and supervisor. This will minimise congregating in the corridors and at the exits and hall.
10. **School drop off and collection** – We request that parents do not enter the property at these times. We appreciate that dropping off Junior and Senior Infants to their line in the yard may be needed but for all older classes a drop off at the gates or from your car is desirable. We would ask that parents familiarise themselves with the gates. We will use both the front gate and the back gate to ensure that there is no overcrowding or congregation.

**The new procedures are as follows :**

- Gates will be opened for children at 8.40am
- Teachers will be present to supervise the safe entry to the school property for their own class.

- Children will enter the yard and line up with their class at their designated spot
- Teachers will sanitise all hands.
- The daily roll will be taken by all staff at 8.50am inside the classrooms.
- Junior Infants, 2<sup>nd</sup> class, 3<sup>rd</sup> class and 4<sup>th</sup> class will use the back gate accessed via St Catherine's Avenue.
- Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup> class, 5<sup>th</sup> class and 6<sup>th</sup> class will use the front gate. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class will enter the yard via the vehicle gate and Senior Infants and 1<sup>st</sup> will use the pedestrian gate.
- At collection time this will be the same except for Junior Infants who will use the front gate with Senior Infants and 4<sup>th</sup> class who will be collected or leave from the church carpark on St Catherine's Avenue.
- Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate families with siblings in different classes to enter or leave through the same gate, please have arrangements in place for such a scenario.
- For the first 4 days (31<sup>st</sup> August, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>) Junior Infants parents will drop their children to school at 9am and can escort the children to their classroom if needed. This will be controlled so that there won't be more than 5 additional parents in the room at any one time. As soon as you are happy that your child has settled please leave the property.
- For infection control and cross contamination reasons, it is vital that your child is in their class line at 8.40am. Lateness cannot be tolerated or accommodated.
- If for any reason your child is late, regardless of what class they are in, they must use the front gate. The child should enter the property and ring the doorbell. The parent should wait outside the gate.
- **Lateness will be monitored very closely this year because it will have a significant effect on the running of the school at this time.**

**11. Sharing of equipment/resources** – each desk from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 6<sup>th</sup> has been fitted with a basket underneath where the children will store all of their equipment and resources needed for the day (copies, books, scissors, glue stick, individual whiteboard and marker, paintbrush etc). These resources will be stored in a plastic 'tuff bag' which teachers will give to children on the first day. Junior and Senior Infants will have a similar 'tuff bag' and a tray to store their resources which will also include an individual pot of playdough for each child. We ask that all children have **2 fully stocked pencil cases**, one for home and one for school. Pencil cases will remain in school every day. **Colouring materials should be twistables, crayons or colouring pencils NOT markers or sharpies.** Sharpies are permanent markers and destroy desks and work. This will minimise the cross over of infection between settings. Children will be asked to only have a lunch box and a refillable beaker (**no cartons can be brought to school from**

**now on as there is no storage area or trolley for them)** and their reading book in a homework folder in their bag.

12. **Use of PPE in St. Catherine's N.S.** - Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. We have been advised that children should not wear face coverings. Teachers will wear masks. Gloves will be used for cleaning of resources, first aid or intimate care needs only.
13. **Orchestra** – Following Department of Education guidelines an additional risk assessment must take place before any wind instruments or singing in groups takes place. The Orchestra Programme will be revised this year due to and in accordance with government guidelines and restrictions.
14. **Kid's Club with Juliet** – Juliet will be in contact with all parents as to her own plans and policies for this. The school will continue to rent a classroom and the hall to Juliet to continue this service.
15. **After School Activities** – Outdoor sports may recommence following the specific Governing body's restrictions and guidelines.
16. **Library books** – if a child needs to use a library book they will be wiped down using disinfectant wipes. Shared reading books are covered in a wipeable covering and will be isolated between users for 72 hours.
17. **Shared PE and sports equipment** – these will be wiped down after use.
18. **Shared IT equipment** – these will be wiped down after use.
19. **Homework** – homework for September will be limited to reading, spellings and Number Facts. After this, further homework will be limited to online work. Further details on this will be given to students and parents during the month of September.
20. **Water fountain/tap** – this will not be in use this year in school. Children must have their own water bottle filled up each day. We will have plenty of bottled water and spare beakers for refills if a bottle is forgotten.
21. **Enhanced Cleaning** - The Department of Education has provided limited additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the [HSPC health advice for schools](#) and will be covered in the induction training for cleaning staff. 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.
22. **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid 19** - A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building - the front office. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils. If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:
  - if the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately – all parents **MUST** ensure up to date contact details are on the Aladdin system and that they are contactable during school hours.
  - isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others

maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.

- if it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres, a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin
- provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms
- if they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect
- carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.
- **In line with government guidelines, contact tracing is the responsibility of the HSE.** The HSE and not the school 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.

The HSE sets out the latest criteria for restricted movement, where an individual has been advised by the HSE they are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. Please refer to HSE link at: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contacttracing/close-casual-contact/>

- 23. Return to Work Form** - All staff will be asked to complete the Return to Work form provided by the Principal after each lengthy school closure.
- 24. Ventilation and CO2 monitors** - The guidance is for schools to have windows open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. Classroom doors should be partially opened at all times to create a cross draft. Children should have extra layers of clothing in their school bags. The Department is procuring a number of portable CO2 monitors that will be distributed to schools in August and September.
- 25. Vaccinations** - Where an employee or a student has a COVID-19 vaccination appointment during school hours, the absence will be treated in the same manner as other medical appointments.
- 26. Return to School Declaration** - After any school closure (bank holiday, day off, mid term, holidays) or any period of sickness parents are asked to submit a Declaration to Return to School form – this is a tick box on your Aladdin app. This should be completed before the child comes back to school. Reminders will be sent digitally via Aladdin – we ask for everyone’s cooperation with this paperwork.

