



**COVID RESPONSE PLAN**

**St. Mary's Special School**

**Roll No: 19560T**

**Revised**

**March 2022**

## **Introduction**

St. Mary's Special School over the past two years has had in place a comprehensive Covid Response Plan under the directive of the Department of Education and the HSE/NPHET. Our Response Plan has guided us and we have been able over the intense pandemic period to maintain a programme to assist with the mitigation of the spread of the corona virus within the school.

As a school we are guided by the department of health's public guidance for best practice in mitigating the risk of Covid 19. We will continue to implement practices appropriate to the school environment giving consideration to our higher risk student population.

Our goal as a school is to minimise the chances of introducing and spreading the virus in the school.

Although the present Covid Response plan has been modified due to the ongoing assessment and evaluation of the HSE/NPHET the Response Plan for the Special Care Unit classes remains the same.

## **APPENDIX 1**

## **COVID-19 Policy Statement**

**St Mary's Special School** is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed and updated the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene, respiratory etiquette and adequate ventilation as advised
- ensure staff engage with the induction/familiarization briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**

As per Information Note SD 0003/2022 St Mary's Special School is now following the advice issued by the Department under the guidance of NPHE.

The following was taken from HSE Health Protection Surveillance Center. [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)

### **Public Health Advice for the management of COVID-19 cases and contacts V1.1.**

**Publication Date: 10/03/2022**

Following Government decision, from 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022, the following public health measures will **NO LONGER APPLY**

1. Mandatory mask wearing in settings where it is currently regulated for, including: public transport, taxis, retail and other indoor public settings, and staff in hospitality settings.
2. Public health measures in early learning settings, school-aged childcare, primary and secondary schools. These measures include physical distancing measures such as pods, and mask wearing. It is recognised that there will be some children who will wish to continue wearing masks. It is important that any child who wishes to wear a mask should not be discouraged.

However, the following is **STILL ADVISED**:

- ***continued wearing of masks, adherence to basic hand and respiratory hygiene, practicing of physical distancing and avoidance of crowded poorly ventilated environments based on individual risk assessment with a continuing focus on protecting others.***
- *the continuation of mask wearing on public transport. This is a setting where physical distancing can be difficult and where those who are more vulnerable to the severe impacts of COVID-19 do not always have a discretion to avoid.*
- ***the continued adherence to infection, prevention and controls measures including mask wearing in healthcare settings in line with evolving national guidance.***
- *the continuation of public health measures including hand and respiratory hygiene, ventilation, advice to stay home if symptomatic, and maintenance of good basic cleaning schedules to reduce the risk of spread of all infections, in all settings including in early learning settings, school-aged childcare, primary and secondary schools. These measures are important for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 but also for mitigating the spread of other viral infections.*
- *Everyone is encouraged and supported to complete their primary and booster programmes of vaccination.*
- **Government also indicated on 22/02/22 that, “during this transition phase, the current arrangements in place in respect of the schools’, early learning and school-aged care facilities antigen testing programmes will also continue”**

## Health & Safety

### Ventilation, Doors & Windows

Where possible, doors will be left open to minimise handling of doors and of common surfaces and as a consequence minimise infection being spread.

To ensure adequate ventilation, windows will be kept open as much as possible and all windows should be opened fully to ventilate the room while children are on yard break.

***The use of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) monitors.***

***The use of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors can provide a useful general indication that areas/rooms within a building may not be adequately ventilated and can enable occupants to become familiar with the impact that activities, outdoor weather and window openings have on levels of good ventilation within a room. This information can be used to inform strategies for improving ventilation. These have been recommended by and funded by the DES.***

*Five CO<sub>2</sub> monitors were installed in the school on 08th September 2021.*

*Since January 2022 eleven more monitors have arrived. So all significant rooms will have a monitor. If ventilation is measured to be inadequate then corrective measures can be taken. In February we had a visit from Eddie Doyle Who assessed the ventilation measures in the school. Eddie went back to the Department of Education and we are currently waiting for him to create a plan for the school to maintain optimal levels of ventilation and heat.*

### Hygiene & Cleaning

Sanitisers have been installed at all entrances and inside each classroom, staff rooms/entry point etc.

Hand washing facilities are available in each classroom, classroom toilets and staff toilets.

The hand hygiene message will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.

As per DES & HSE guidelines, particular attention will be given to frequently touched surfaces with extra cleaning provided as necessary. These surfaces of door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, desks, lunch eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain the cleanliness of their own work area. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

## Control Measures

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/guardians 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.**

*Staff, in particular, 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.*

The following control measures have been put in place:

- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school

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 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.

## Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers will be available at multiple locations within the school facility and will be available in each classroom.

**Staff Wearing of Visors/Masks is no longer mandatory however as we teach vulnerable pupils it is recommended that as staff we continue to protect the pupils and each other. The impact of the virus within the school since January 6th 2022 has been unprecedented. This has greatly impacted the teaching and learning in the school.**

## **Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid.

This will be updated as appropriate in line with advice from the HPSC. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment, they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

## **Wearing of Gloves:**

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

## **Cleaning**

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, door handles and kitchens.

Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty. All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area.

Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day. There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

Staff must **bring to school, use and clean their own equipment and utensils** (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)

### **Access to the school building/contact log**

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

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. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts.

### **First Aid/Emergency Procedure**

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St. Mary's S.S. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999

### **Temperature check**

- The decision of St. Mary's to have staff and pupils take their temperature has come from the perspective that this is one way in which the control measures can be implemented. Additionally, all pupils are by HSE standards and definition within the 'High Risk' group.
- Thermometers will be shared by bubbles and will be taken soon after arrival.
- There will be no need to record the reading but you need to record that the temperature has been taken. However, if a pupil has a temperature it is to be reported to the LWR/Principal & recorded
- If staff have a temperature they must report to the Principal/LWR

### **1. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how St. Mary's S.S. will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contact tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

**A nominated member of the school management team will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to. (Jean Marie Thompson)**

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building (SENSORY ROOM). The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 has been considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases is in place. The second designated isolation area is in the School Gym.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St. Mary's S.S. 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
  - Isolate the person and the FAR (First Aid Responder) familiar member of the staff will accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route (shortest way possible and may include a partly outdoor route if the person is well enough) 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
  - Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
  - Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home
  - Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag/bin provided
  - If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
- Public transport of any kind should not be used**
- 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 (incident recording sheet required)
  - Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved

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 confidentiality is essential at all times.

## Additional Note

If a pupil presents with any signs of being unwell and is required to go to the isolation area the Principal will be informed immediately or in her absence the Deputy Principal. If both are absent the AP2 will be advised. Calls made home will always be in consultation with the above named in that order. A pupil will never leave the premises without the foreknowledge of the Principal/Deputy.

### 1b Close Contacts

- All confirmed cases should **self-isolate** for 7 full days from date of onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic, from the date of a positive test result (either a Rapid Antigen Detection Test (RADTs) or RT-PCR test). On receipt of a positive test result, no further testing is required.
- Any individual with a positive RADT should regard it as confirmed COVID-19 and **register it with the HSE**. A confirmatory PCR test is not required. This individual should now be managed as a case and continue to **self-isolate** from the date of onset of symptoms or if asymptomatic, from the time of the positive test result.
- Confirmed cases can exit self-isolation after 7 full days, once symptoms have substantially or fully resolved for the final 2 days (48 hours) of the self-isolation period.
- On exiting self-isolation after 7 full days, cases should continue to adhere to the following public health protective measures until day 10
- Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 or other viral respiratory tract infection, regardless of vaccination status, should immediately self-isolate until 48 hours after symptoms have substantially or fully resolved. *Please note children can have persistent minor symptoms e.g. a cough. However, if all new or acute symptoms have substantially or fully resolved, children can return to school or crèche. If their condition significantly deteriorates, please contact your GP for further advice.*
- Public health indications for testing will differ between those at high risk of severe disease who may benefit from early detection or treatment, and other groups/people. However, based on a clinical risk assessment, and clinical judgement, testing may be appropriately requested in certain situations.
- Testing will no longer be needed for clinical or public health purposes for otherwise healthy people with symptoms, with the exclusion of the following, for whom PCR testing is recommended (through the **HSE portal**)

o Those who have not had booster vaccination and are aged 55 years and older

o Those with a high-risk medical condition

o Those Who Are Immunocompromised

Those Who Are Pregnant

## Asymptomatic close contacts

- **Asymptomatic close contacts do not need to restrict movements, regardless of vaccination status.**
- **If they develop symptoms, they should self-isolate until 48hrs after the symptoms have fully or substantially resolved.**
- **Asymptomatic individuals, including close contacts, other than healthcare workers who are household close contacts, do not need PCR or Rapid Antigen Detection Testing (RADTs).**
- **Healthcare workers, identified as household close contacts, do not need to restrict movements but must undertake 3 RADTs over a 7-day period, (the first RADT should be performed as soon as possible, the second 3 days later and the final test on the 7<sup>th</sup> day). The requirement for testing does not apply if they have recovered from COVID-19 in the previous three months.**
- **Any asymptomatic individual who has a positive RADT result should consider this result definitive and self-isolate.**

## 2. 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. 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. 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.

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 or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.

- i. If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- ii. Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- iii. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- iv. Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with the same.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.