



COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Glenstal Abbey School

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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie, www.education.ie, or agreements with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

1) Introduction

The Minister for Education published *The Roadmap for the Full Return to School* on the 27th July. It sets out what the operation of schools will look like and the range of supports which will be available in a COVID-19 context.

It was developed in line with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the *Return to Work Safely Protocols* developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health, with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. This document sets out the information needed to implement Glenstal Abbey School's COVID-19 Response Plan.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation of the school through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole.

This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in the school to minimise the risk of infection while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The documentation and templates in this policy are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities. (That report is available [here](#).) Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face coverings in educational settings is available [here](#).

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

The Department of Education and Skills has worked intensively with the education partners to develop consistent plans, advice, protocols and guidance for schools, including the School COVID-19 Response plan. There is a suite of documentation available to support schools to reopen safely and fully including guidance on learning, school programmes and wellbeing for the 2020/21 school year. All of the documents will be available at gov.ie/backtoschool

2) What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

The COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's *Return to Work Safely Protocol*, the Department of Education plan for school reopening that will aim to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of schools complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to students, staff and others. The response plan

supports the sustainable reopening of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice and any other relevant agreement with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

In line with the *Return to Work Safely Protocol*, the key to a safe and sustainable return to work, and reopening of the school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the management, staff, students and parents. The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

3) School COVID-19 Policy

The school's COVID-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and the Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of the staff, students, parents and others.

*Glenstal Abbey School is a member school of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA). Along with schools throughout the world, Glenstal has undertaken to adhere to the BSA **Covid-Safe Charter**. Details of the charter can be accessed [here](#).*

4) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management 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 and the applicable controls are outlined in this document. (Specific steps or procedures adopted in Glenstal Abbey School are noted in **green**.)

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

- Means of keeping up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates
 - ◊ *The relevant news and social media sources are monitored daily*
- Means of passing on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required
 - ◊ *Information will be shared with parents and staff via email and Compass and with students in house/class briefings, email, and physical and electronic signage*
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education
 - ◊ *DES training video will be circulated to all staff by email before return to work and will be followed up during the two-day staff Forum before term starts*

- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form
 - ◊ *RTW form will be circulated to all staff by email by Monday 24 August*
- Identified a Lead Worker representative
 - ◊ *The Lead Worker Representative for the school is Ms Daniela Leahy*
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19
 - ◊ *Posters, electronic signage and floor markings are displayed in key areas throughout the school*
- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing
 - ◊ *The previous 5th Year Study Hall, the Computer Room, the Gallery, the Cinema Gym, the 'Green Room' and the 'Molonium' have all been converted and equipped as teaching spaces, providing for distancing of 1 metre between students and two metres between teachers and students; refectory and serving arrangements have been modified and lunch time extended to provide for distancing before, during and after meals; beds in dormitories will be allocated according to a strict plan to ensure maximum distance between students*
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school but take into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
 - ◊ *Additional furniture and teachers' personal resources have been removed from classrooms and stored in alternate locations*
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment
 - ◊ *Done*
- Made necessary arrangements to restrict access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school
 - ◊ *Arriving day-boarders will be checked in and temperature-checked at the door beside the School Reception office each morning*
 - ◊ *Operations staff must enter, sanitise, sign in and temperature-check electronically via the door beside the Art Room*
 - ◊ *Teaching staff must enter, sanitise, sign in and temperature-check electronically via the door opposite the Biology Laboratory*
 - ◊ *Catering staff must enter, sanitise, sign in and temperature-check electronically via the kitchen door*
 - ◊ *Monks must enter via the Castle door from the 'Ring'*
 - ◊ *All visitors, including parents and contractors, must enter, temperature-check and sanitise at School Reception and sign the Contact Tracing Log there*
 - ◊ *Parents may not enter boarding areas under any circumstances*
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:
- Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease
 - ◊ *Water system was active throughout closure period and has been flushed*
- Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again
 - ◊ *Yes*
- Have bin collections and other essential services resumed
 - ◊ *Collection was never discontinued*

4.1) Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete COVID-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- COVID-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 at school
- Outline of the COVID-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the COVID-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal who is supported in this role by the Board of Management.

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 can be completed online. The RTW form should be completed **3 days** before returning to work.

Staff must also view the **Induction Training** video produced by the Department of Education and Skills in full, prior to the return to the workplace and will be informed in advance of the additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

Some staff 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**. 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. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared obligation in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

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, students or others, they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management.

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the school, regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice
- 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
- Consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19
- Promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, 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
- Monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week)
- 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

<i>Name of Lead Worker Representative:</i>	<i>Contact details:</i>
Daniela Leahy	dleahy@glenstal.com

All staff, students, 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.

4.4) Signage

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

- ◇ *Appropriate posters and signs are displayed at entrances, refectories, offices, corridors, 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.

- ◇ *The school has reconfigured classrooms and other areas to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening*
- ◇ *Excess furniture has been removed from dormitories and additional social spaces have been created in the boarding houses*

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 provided by the Department of Education has been completed and will be reviewed weekly in consultation with the Lead Worker Representative.

- ◇ *Additional risk assessment tools from the BSA and schools in other jurisdictions, more suitable to the particularities of a boarding school have also been employed*

Emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences have been reviewed to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan and changes have been documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedures shall continue to apply in the school. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, school personnel 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

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained **prior approval** from the Headmaster, Principal or another department head. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace.

- ◇ *A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained, using the template provided by the Department.*

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found [here](#). All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

5) Measures to prevent introduction & spread of COVID-19

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, staff-staff and staff-student, and must be managed in all settings.

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID -19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, students, parents and visitors as far as possible within the school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis. It is critical that staff, students, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

Staff, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

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

- Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation
 - ◊ *Staff or day-boarders with COVID-19 symptoms should not come to school*
 - ◊ *Staff or day-boarders manifesting a high temperature on check-in at school should not enter the building*
- Advise staff and students not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement
- Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal (or Deputy Principal) or the relevant line manager promptly
- Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- Advise everyone entering the school building that they need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser
 - ◊ *Appropriate signage is displayed at all entrances*
 - ◊ *Hand sanitiser dispensers have been installed at all entrances, classrooms, the Health Centre and refectories*
- Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point
 - ◊ *All visitors must sign in at School Reception*
- Physical distancing of 2 metres 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 students 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, which is available [here](#). Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all dormitories, toilets, kitchens and food preparation areas. Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap etc will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them. Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying. 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 are displayed adjacent to all washing facilities. Care must be taken to ensure that students do not ingest sanitiser gels as they are flammable and toxic.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Students 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

5.4) Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in a post primary school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. Department directions state that **it must be applied in a practical way** to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at time.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from students and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the student.

However where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1 metre distance and where possible 2 metres. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

- ◇ *A distance of 2 metres will be maintained between the teacher's desk and the nearest student desk in classrooms*
- ◇ *A metre-stick will be provided for each classroom*

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

Given that each school setting is different in terms of (i) location; (ii) physical layout (iii) available space within the school; and (iv) student numbers; the Department of Education recognises that schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate reconfigurations / operational changes necessary to maintain physical distancing. The Department has developed a Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year. The Framework sets out a suite of available measures that must be implemented at individual school level to the greatest possible extent.

The suite of measures set out in the Framework are:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilising and reconfiguring all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing
3. Review Timetables
4. Reconfiguring Classes
5. Consider Use of Live Streaming within the School
6. Accessing available spaces within the local community
 - ◇ *Six new classrooms have been created through reconfiguration of spaces*
 - ◇ *Furniture has been removed from classrooms to facilitate distancing and a sign on the door of each classroom indicates the maximum occupancy*
 - ◇ *Lunch time has been extended to one hour and service will be staggered over two sittings, by year group, to enable distancing in refectories*
 - ◇ *Floor markings indicate queue spacing for meals*
 - ◇ *A distance of 1 metre will be maintained between students in dormitories*

Decreasing interaction

The Department recognises that the extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a post primary school will depend on the school setting and a common-sense approach is required, recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between students. In post primary schools physical distancing of 2 metres where possible or at least 1 metre should be maintained between desks or between individual students or staff.

- ◇ *Students will sit at individual desks in all classrooms*
- ◇ *A distance of 1 metre will be maintained between student desks*

As far as possible and practical, students would remain in the classroom and teachers would move between rooms.

- ◇ *Students will be based in classrooms and teachers will move between classrooms*

As far as possible and practical students would be assigned to a main class cohort which would remain in the classroom for most subjects, with teachers moving between rooms. Where possible and practical double classes should be planned to minimise movement during the day. Where students have an elective subject they would move quickly into the new class and would be seated with members of their class cohort, observing as much physical distance as possible.

- ◇ *1st Year Zone: Rooms 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9*
- ◇ *2nd Year Zone: Rooms 10, 11 & 12*
- ◇ *3rd Year Zone: Study A, B & C (Formerly 5th Year Study Hall & Computer Room)*
- ◇ *4th Year Zone: Cinema Gym, Green Room and Molonium*
- ◇ *Senior Zone: Rooms 1, 2, 3 & 4; Rooms 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18*

- ◇ *Science classes will take place in the three laboratories and Music classes in the Athanasium, as usual*
- ◇ *Toilets for use during the school day will be assigned to each year group in its particular zone*

Hand washing and/or sanitising would be required when moving between classes by teachers and students

- ◇ *Sanitiser units have been installed outside all classrooms*
- ◇ *PCs for shared use by teachers have been removed from all classrooms, with portable devices available for teacher use instead*
- ◇ *Teachers will be supplied with a sanitisation pack to wipe down desk and other key surfaces at the beginning of each class; freshly laundered cloths will be available each day*

Physical distancing between the teacher and class would be observed.

- ◇ *A distance of 2 metres will be maintained between the teacher's desk and the nearest student desk in classrooms*

Where movement of class groups between rooms is required it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.

- ◇ *Students will remain in their zones for class and study, apart from when they need to use specialist rooms*

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.

- ◇ *Day-boarders will be checked in and temperature-checked on arrival*
- ◇ *Day-boarders may not go upstairs to boarding quarters*
- ◇ *Boarders will be supervised at breakfast and between breakfast and class time*
- ◇ *The classroom area will be supervised before classes and during breaks*
- ◇ *Whole-school Morning Assemblies will not be held*
- ◇ *Sunday Mass(es) for boarders will be celebrated in the school without visitors present*

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged. Where students need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimise congregation at the shared resource. Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items. Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

- ◇ *PCs for shared use will not be available; portable Chromebooks will be available for use under supervision*
- ◇ *Teachers are responsible for ensuring that Chromebooks are sanitised after use in class*
- ◇ *Teachers should sanitise their key-cards regularly and may not use one another's cards or allow a student to use a staff key-card for any purpose*

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting students should be arranged to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres where possible

- ◇ *Detailed procedures for drop-off of boarders at beginning of term will be communicated to parents separately*
- ◇ *Parents should not enter the school with their sons, either when dropping off boarders at the beginning of term, or dropping off day-boarders in the morning*

Students should head straight to their designated learning space/classroom.

Staff

A distance of 2 metres is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching, such as the staff room and arriving to work. If 2 metres cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much distance as is possible and updated guidance on face covering should be observed. Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

- ◇ *The Teachers' Marking Room has been made available as a supplementary staff room*
- ◇ *Staff meetings when students are not at school can safely take place in the Atrium*
- ◇ *'Croke Park' meetings will take place in school, maintaining 2 metres social distance*
- ◇ *Parent-Teacher meetings will be conducted remotely, as it would not be possible to ensure the necessary social distancing for everyone if they took place in the school*

- Implement no hand shaking policy
- Minimise gathering at the beginning or end of the school day

Refectories

- Ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities
 - ◇ *Perspex screens have been fitted at food service counters in the refectories*
 - ◇ *Chairs have been removed from refectories to ensure appropriate distancing*
 - ◇ *Staff (other than supervising housemasters) will not eat in school refectories*
- Stagger canteen use and extend serving times where possible to align with class groupings
 - ◇ *Lunch time has been extended to allow for staggered meal service*
 - ◇ *Breakfast and supper service times will be adjusted*
- Implement a queue management system
 - ◇ *Meal queues will be supervised*
- Make sure students clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area
 - ◇ *Hand-sanitising units are in place at the entrances to the refectories*

Corridors and Stairwells

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.

5.4) Use of PPE in Schools

The Department has published Guidance to Post Primary Schools on PPE consumables and equipment on gov.ie/backtoschool. This provides schools with the information needed on the appropriate quantities of PPE consumables and equipment to support the full and safe reopening of schools.

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. The Department has accepted this recommendation. Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category;
- Administering First Aid
- Meetings with parents

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

- ◇ *A new, larger and better ventilated space has been assigned as the Consultation and Treatment Room in the Health Centre*
- ◇ *Additional work-wear and medical PPE has been sourced for medical staff*

Reception Areas

Consideration should be given to the use of Perspex in reception areas where it is not possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or students.

- ◇ *A glass screen is in place at School Reception*

Masks/Face Coverings

Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

It is therefore a requirement that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or students cannot be maintained. In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with students with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

- ◇ *Teachers may wear either transparent visors or masks at the front of the classroom, but must wear face-masks if moving around the classroom, when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained*

All students on the post primary transport scheme should be asked to wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

- ◇ *Day-boarders travelling by private bus must wear face coverings in the vehicle and adhere to the same regulations as apply to the public school transport scheme*

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

- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

All staff and students wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering. Information on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings can be found [here](#).

All teachers and staff should be aware that they should wash or sanitize hands (using a hand sanitizer) before and after helping a student put on or adjust a face covering. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled. Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

- ◇ *Students need to have a fresh face-mask of their own every day*
- ◇ *Students need to have a sealable plastic bag or other suitable receptacle in which to carry their mask when not in use during the day (eg during meals)*
- ◇ *Unless using disposable masks, boarders should have **at least 14 cloth masks** when they arrive at school, labelled like the rest of their clothing; the masks should be included with their weekly laundry and will be washed at an appropriate temperature and returned in the normal way*
- ◇ *Three-ply cloth masks in the school colours will also be available for purchase in the school*

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

- ◇ *Back-up disposable face-coverings are available for students*

Whilst staff may wish to utilize their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, schools should have available a stock of additional disposable or multi-use face coverings, or if appropriate face visors, available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed throughout the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

- ◇ *Clear visors and disposable masks are available for staff*

On the use of face masks by staff, schools should consider the specific circumstances where the use of medical face masks, to EU Standard EN 14683, may be more appropriate for staff (for example where staff by necessity need to be in close and continued proximity with students with intimate care needs such as SNAs or School Bus Escorts).

- ◇ *Medical-grade face masks are available in the Health Centre*

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by students or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for matters such as cleaning, intimate care settings or when administering First Aid. Routine use 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.

Aprons

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 was present.

6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

The Department has indicated that it will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on school activities in advance of school reopening and plans will be updated accordingly

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.

- ◇ *Choir Practices will take place in the Boardroom, with all students and staff wearing clear visors*
- ◇ *Appropriate social distancing will be observed in rooms where music lessons take place*
- ◇ *Music teachers will wear clear visors during music lessons*
- ◇ *Pianos must be sanitised before each lesson*
- ◇ *Piano students should be equipped with suitable wipes to sanitise the keyboard before private practice times*
- ◇ *While drum-kits are for shared use, students may not share drumsticks*
- ◇ *Other instruments such as guitars may not be shared between students*

Sport Activities

Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on *Return to Sport*.

- ◇ *Arrangements for sport and sporting fixtures will develop in accordance with guidance from the HPSC and the relevant sporting bodies*
- ◇ *Sports, including contact sports like rugby, will not involve fixtures with other schools or clubs, on or off the Glenstal campus, **until at least 5th October**, this date to be reviewed in mid-September*
- ◇ *Access to the Gym will be strictly regulated; masks must be worn and hands must be sanitised before and after using each item of equipment*
- ◇ *All balls, cones, pads etc used for sports training will be sanitised at the end of each training session*

7) Hygiene and Cleaning in School

HPSC 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 wash hand 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, light switches, hand rails, chairs/arm-rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

- ◇ *Additional cleaning of these areas in the main school building will take place during the night, when students are in the boarding houses*

If students are moving between classrooms consideration may be given to appropriate cleaning products being provided to enable them to wipe down their desk, chair and surface before leaving the room.

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 will 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 their own utensils for breaks (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a student/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

The rooms should be cleaned as soon as practicable possible. Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. The environment and furniture will be cleaned using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product. Special attention will be paid to frequently touched surfaces – the back of chairs, couches, door handles, light switches 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.

8) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Staff or students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how a suspected case that may arise in the school setting will be addressed.

A designated isolation area should be identified within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19 should be considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and students.

- ◇ *The school Health Centre is the designated Isolation Area, containing three isolation rooms and a general sick-bay, physically separate from the Nurses' Consultation and Treatment Room*
- ◇ *A separate toilet is allocated in the Health Centre for students who are isolating*
- ◇ *A 4-bedroom Supplementary Isolation Area in a separate building has been assigned to house students who need to isolate but may not be in a position to go home*

If a staff member/student 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 student, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- **The symptomatic person should be accompanied to the Isolation Area** via a route that involves the least possible contact with others and allows the accompanying staff member and others to maintain 2 metres social distance
- In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to exit the building and go around it on the outside, re-entering near the Isolation Area
- The symptomatic person should not be brought directly to the Consultation and Treatment Room. If it is necessary to wait for the nurse or for one of the three isolation rooms to be unlocked, the symptomatic person must maintain a distance of 2 metres from all others in the area
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres, a staff member caring for a person with symptoms should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin
- **A mask should be provided for the person presenting with symptoms** and (s)he should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
- The symptomatic person should only use the designated toilet rather than the general Health Centre toilet
- In the case of a staff member, the Nurse (or if the Nurse is not present, the colleague accompanying the individual who is displaying symptoms) should assess whether (s)he can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home
- The school will facilitate any staff member presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and will facilitate them to call their doctor
- **If the person is well enough to go home, the Nurse or another staff member will 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;
- **In the case of a student, the Nurse (or the On-Call Nurse outside clinic hours, by telephone if necessary) should assess the student, and in consultation with his parent(s)/guardian(s), decide whether he should be collected or remain in isolation in the school**
- The individual with symptoms should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and should cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided
- In the case of a student whose parents/guardians are not in a position to collect him from the school, the student may be accommodated to isolate either in the designated Isolation Area or the Supplementary Isolation Area for up to 14 days
- If any person with symptoms, either staff or student, is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the Nurse or another staff member will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect
- The Nurse will carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- **After the departure of the symptomatic person, the isolation area and work areas involved will be cleaned appropriately**

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 student confidentiality is essential at all times.

9) 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
- 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
- Complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- Be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette and coordinate practices 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
- Adhere to the procedure outlined above if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst on the school premises
- Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

10) 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.

11) 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 individual staff members 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 banner *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.

