

## **Scoil Oilibhéir Covid-19 Response Plan & Policy Statement**

The school Covid Response Plan has been extremely effective and successful in guiding the school community of Scoil Oilibhéir towards a successful re-opening of our school. This plan was reviewed in November 2020, February 2021 and June 2021.

These reviews take account of relevant guidance issued by both the HSE and DES.

### **School Details:**

<b>School Name:</b>	Scoil Oilibhéir
<b>School Address:</b>	Ballyvolane, Cork
<b>Principal:</b>	Mr. Aiden O'Brien
<b>Deputy Principal</b>	Mr. Damien Elliffe
<b>Chairperson:</b>	Mrs. Catherine Clancy
<b>Lead Worker Representatives</b>	Ms. Amy Barry Murphy Ms. Marjorie Vaughan Ms. Evelyn Kennedy
<b>Number of staff:</b>	39 Teachers, 11 SNAs, 1 secretary, 1 caretaker, 1 general assistant, 2 SCP = 55 in total.
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.scoilolibheir.ie">www.scoilolibheir.ie</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@scoilolibheir.ie">secretary@scoilolibheir.ie</a>

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### **Introduction:**

Exposure to COVID-19 is a public health risk which affects all citizens. Managing the risk of spread in the school is important in relation to the health of staff & pupils but is also important as part of general efforts to control the spread and protect the most vulnerable in the community. The following policy statement & plan describe the measures which have been put in place by Scoil Oilibhéir and adhered to by all staff, pupils and visitors to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 in the school.

This Covid-19 policy & plan outline the commitment of the Board of Management of Scoil Oilibhéir as an employer to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of Covid-19. The policy has been ratified by the Board of Management and has been communicated clearly to all staff, parents and visitors.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- This plan is seen as a fluid and changing document. The plan has been amended and developed further as required.
- The approach of staff to the implementation of this plan must be guided by adaptability, flexibility and a reasonable approach to all aspects of safety and hygiene as we meet the needs of our pupils and support our colleagues.
- It must be acknowledged that working in a large school such as Scoil Oilibhéir means that “no risk” cannot be guaranteed. Every precaution has been taken by the Board of Management to mitigate all identified risks and ensure the safety of all staff and pupils.

## **COVID-19 Policy Statement – Scoil Oilibhéir:**

Scoil Oilibhéir is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort 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
- appoint a Lead Worker Representative Team who are easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

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

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

**Signed:** *Catherine Clancy*, Chairperson, Board of Management

**Date:** 16/06/2021

### **Section 1:**

## **Practicalities for Staff:**

### **Procedure for Returning to Work following an absence (RTW)**

- In order to return to the workplace following an absence due to sickness and/or Covid, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which will be emailed to you by the Principal. For any queries in relation to High Risk Group, Self-isolation, Covid related absence etc. teachers and SNAs should consult the following DES circular which provides detail and has been circulated to all staff: <https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0042-2021.pdf>
- Staff will be kept fully informed of 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 or member of the Lead Worker Representative Team.
- For more information on Covid-19 symptoms and how the virus spreads please visit <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>.

### **Staff Responsibilities:**

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and pupils. 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 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 following absence.
- 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.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the protocols outlined in this plan.

### **Lead Worker Representative Team**

- The LWRT will work in collaboration 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.
- Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management. Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach are key to protecting against the spread

of COVID-19 in Scoil Oilibhéir, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students.

- If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others (s)he should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.
- The Lead Worker Representative Team in Scoil Oilibhéir is:
  - Ms. Amy Barry Murphy, Ms. Marjorie Vaughan and Ms. Evelyn Kennedy.

### **Use of PPE**

The Department has published “Guidance to Primary and Special Schools on PPE consumables and equipment” on [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.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.

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of primary and special schools V3 February 2021 states that 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
- Parent Teacher meetings
- Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Face Coverings/Face Visors/Masks 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. In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children. It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

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.

In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

We have additional disposable face coverings available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Face coverings are not recommended for children attending primary school. Adults must wear a face covering at all times in school when not in their classrooms. While in their classrooms teachers should wear face covering if they cannot maintain a 2m distance from pupils. However, if a teacher wishes to wear a face covering at all times that is a matter of personal choice. PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly in some instances, due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas as outlined above.

Appropriate PPE has been purchased and distributed to staff. A PPE pack is also provided to any additional staff as they arrive in the school. Disposable face masks will be available to all staff who wish to avail of it during the school day. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

### **Staff Absence:**

If a teacher is absent the class will not be split as was previously the case if a substitute teacher could not be sourced. All classes will remain in their bubbles at all times during the school day, to the greatest extent possible. All efforts will be employed to source a suitably qualified substitute teacher. If this is not possible, the banded Cill Barra teacher will cover the class for the duration of the absence and the terms of DES circular [https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/ActiveCirculars/cl0045\\_2020.pdf](https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/ActiveCirculars/cl0045_2020.pdf) will be applied. In relation to SNA absence, every effort will be employed to source a substitute SNA from our school list of Garda vetted SNAs to cover the absence.

### **Supervision:**

Please refer to internal operational policy on supervision.

### **Cill Barra Teachers:**

Please refer to internal operational policy on Cill Barra.

### **Special Needs Assistants:**

- SNAs provide invaluable support to our most vulnerable pupils. The Road Map to ReOpening schools' states:
  - "staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble should be reduced as much as possible".
- SNAs will continue to cater to the needs of their pupils but will exercise the utmost care in terms of hygiene as they move between class bubbles and will take all appropriate precautions, including wearing PPE, and keep contact with pupils to a minimum.
  - Please refer to Appendix 4 for 'Use of Equipment on Site'

### **Staffroom & Classroom Arrangements:**

An extra staff room area has been established in the halla. The maximum number of staff allowed in the staffroom at any one time will be 16. The same procedure will apply to the staff room extension area in the halla. Classroom furniture has also been set up to follow guidance from the DES Roadmap to Re-Opening School regarding social distancing in classrooms.

## **Section 2 Practicalities for Hygiene & Safety in the Building & on the School Site**

### **Hygiene & Cleaning equipment:**

- A supply of hygiene equipment as recommended by the DES & HSE has been purchased and installed in advance of school re-opening.
- Cleaning equipment required by staff in classrooms has been provided.
- All classrooms, corridors and school hall were cleaned by the school cleaners in advance of the school re-opening.
- We have put in place an effective cleaning and disinfection system as regular cleaning and disinfection will help reduce the spread of the virus. All staff were furnished with a cleaning responsibilities document at the start of the school year. This outlines everyone's areas of responsibility with regard to cleaning and disinfection.
- We have arranged for frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, light switches, kitchen appliances etc. to be cleaned regularly throughout the day.
- Staff 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.
- All staff will have ongoing access to cleaning products. A weekly order system is in place for the replacement of all cleaning supplies.
- There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school
- Staff have the option to use their own utensils in the staffroom & kitchen and clean their own utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.) after use each day. If not, all school delph, cutlery etc. will be cleaned in the dishwasher after each break.
- If disinfection of contaminated surfaces is needed, this will be done in addition to cleaning. Disinfection packs are ready in a number of locations in the school for this purpose.

### **Health & Safety Risk Assessment:**

- Covid-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment.
- We have reviewed our emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's Covid-19 Response Plan.
- Any changes to the school's existing emergency procedures have been documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement. This can be viewed on Sharepoint in a folder entitled, Plean\_Scoile\_Eagrú.
- We have also reviewed our existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. This particular risk assessment can also be viewed on Sharepoint in a folder entitled, Plean\_Scoile\_Eagrú. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments have been documented and incorporated into the school safety statement.

### **Signage/Floor Markings**

- We have displayed appropriate signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.
- The importance of parents taking responsibility for social distancing outside the school gates is regularly highlighted to parents.

### **Isolation Room/Area**

- An isolation area for pupils who need to go home during school time when they are feeling unwell has been set up in our Aistear Room. The procedures for the use of this room are available to all staff and can be viewed on Sharepoint.

### **Pupil Wash Bags:**

- These are very important for each pupil in order to bring their own hygiene supplies to school. Each bag should consist of a hand towel, liquid soap and a roll of toilet paper. (hand sanitiser is optional but not essential)
- Parents are asked to ensure that the wash bag is regularly replenished, including fresh towel and to encourage your child to use the wash bag throughout the school day as required.
- Each class teacher will continue to build the importance of the wash bag into the daily routine of the classroom.

### **Cleaning and Handwashing Protocols in Classrooms:**

- Teachers will ensure that all pupils wash their hands regularly throughout the school day. See "Control Measures" for more detail.
- The cleaning contractor will ensure that specific cleaning jobs are completed in each classroom each day. Mrs. Cronin to liaise with the cleaning contractor on this.
- In order to ensure the health & safety of all staff and pupils, Teachers & SNAs should also spend some time each day cleaning the desk surfaces after the work of the day. All cleaning and hygiene materials will be provided to each staff member.

### **Pupil Belongings:**

- Children must have their own equipment in school.
- Children will not share materials as far as is practicable.
- We limit amount of materials per child – teachers have been specific in terms of what pupils bring to school – no need for excessive amounts of colouring pencils etc.



All text books will be quarantined on return to school for 72 hours, following a school closure.

### **Office:**

- Any visitor to the school must sign the attendance/contact tracing log at the office with their own pen.
- All interactions with Mrs. Quarry must be done through the hatch. Nobody should enter the secretary's office apart from the Principal & Deputy Principal

## **Section 3:**

### **Practicalities for Pupils – September 2021**

#### **Morning Drop-Off Procedures:**

The school gates open at 8:30am each morning. **Children should be in their seats in the classrooms when the bell rings at 8:45am.** Please ensure that your child is on time for school each morning.

- ***Congregation at the School Gates:***
  - We ask all parents to avoid any congregation at the school gates. This is on public health advice. Please leave the area once you have dropped your child. We also ask that you wear a mask when dropping and collecting your child.
- ***For children from Senior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> class:***
  - Children should be **dropped by the parent at the school gate** as was the case last year. Parents should not enter the school grounds as per our Covid Response Plan. Staff members will be on hand to guide and assist your child to their classroom.
- ***For Junior Infant Pupils:***
  - Junior Infant parents may accompany your child to their classroom door until we feel they are settled enough to come into the school on their own. **Parent must wear a mask while on the school grounds and in the building.**
  - We ask that only one parent would come with your child as we need to minimise the footfall on the school campus as per public health guidance.
  - Once you drop your child at the classroom door, please exit the building immediately via the one-way system which will be outlined to you by staff in the corridor.
  - Please do not enter the classroom.

#### **Afternoon Collection Procedures:**

- All pupils will leave the school on a staggered timetable in order to facilitate physical distancing and to prevent congregating outside the school gates.
- **Each classroom has been assigned a gate to leave by in order to minimise the gathering of children and parents at gates.**
- The table below will give you the precise time your child's class will leave the school as well as which gate your child will leave by. **Please note the gate and time for your information.**

## **Dismissal of Pupils**

### **Junior Infants: Going Home**

Junior Infants collected at class room door – one-way system (use of fire door to exit.)

- Room 25 – 11.50
- Room 24 – 12.00
- Room 23 – 12.10

**Note:** This system of going home early is designed to help the children to settle into school and will be in operation until Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. From Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup> Junior Infant pupils will go home via the side gate @ 1:20 to avoid mixing with senior infant pupils going home at 1:30.

### **Senior Infants: Going Home**

Senior Infants leave the school @ 1.30 via the Side Gate

### **1<sup>st</sup> Class to 6<sup>th</sup> Class: Going Home**

Staggered Dismissal as follows:

- Rooms 13-16 leave the school at 2.20 via the Side Gate
- Rooms 5-8 leave the school @ 2.20 via the Main Gate
- Rooms 10-12 leave the school @ 2.25 via the Main Gate
- Room 28 leaves the school @ 2.25 via the Side Gate
- Rooms 17-19 leave the school @ 2.30 via the Side Gate
- Room 21 leaves the school @ 2.30 via the Main Gate
- An Droichead 1 & 2 leave the school @ 2:30 via the main gate

## **Section 4:**

### **Practicalities for Parents & Visitors to the School**

- Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.
- The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus. A sign in/sign out log of those entering the school will be maintained. The school maintains a log of staff and pupil contacts.
- All school records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR, Data Protection Acts and guidance received from the Data Protection Commission.
- If an item is forgotten by a pupil the parents will not be allowed to drop it to the school unless it is medication.

## Section 5: Practicalities for School Organisation

### Organisation of Classrooms:

#### **Class Bubbles and Pods:**

- All classrooms are set up as individual class bubbles and the pupils in each bubble only interact with other pupils from that bubble. Class bubbles do not interact with any other class bubbles as per the guidance in the DES Roadmap for Re-Opening of Schools.  
Within each classroom from 3<sup>rd</sup> class to 6<sup>th</sup> class, the class is divided into pods of small groups. The pupils in each pod only engage with each other when group work happens in the classroom.

#### **Layout of Classrooms:**

The regulations of the DES Roadmap for the Re-Opening of Schools determine the physical layout of classrooms and our classrooms are set up to follow this guidance.

#### ***Classes from Junior Infants to 2<sup>nd</sup> Class:***

- Social distancing is not practised but all staff are aware of social distancing protocols and all staff take appropriate precautions to protect themselves and others in terms of close contact with pupils. The teacher's desk has an area of exclusion marked on the ground and all practises in these classrooms are reflective of the guidance in the DES Roadmap for the Re-Opening of Schools.

#### ***Classes 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>:***

- Social distancing of 2m where possible and 1m minimum is practised in these classrooms.
- We have arranged for the removal of all unnecessary furniture from these classrooms to maximise the physical space available to seat pupils safely.

#### **General Organisational Issues:**

- Each child must have full set of supplies as per book list.
- Each item needs to be labelled clearly so as to avoid the need to share or borrow.
- Children must not share any materials with another child.
- After school activities have been cancelled for the first term. This situation will be reassessed closer to Christmas.
- **We ask that parents keep your child at home if they are presenting with any symptoms consistent with Covid-19. Seek guidance from your GP and certify your child ready to return to school from your GP.**

## Section 6

### Specific Control Measures in place to prevent Covid-19 in Scoil Oilibhéir

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-student and must be managed in all settings.

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

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

#### **How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Scoil Oilibhéir:**

- We will promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms as follows:
  - ✓ High temperature
  - ✓ Cough
  - ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
  - ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
  - ✓ Nasal Congestion
- We advise staff and pupils that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- We advise staff and pupils not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- We will ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- Everyone entering the school building must perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser provided
- Visitors to the school during the day must be by prior arrangement and will be received at the main school door
- Physical distancing (of 2m) will be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

#### **Respiratory Hygiene**

- We will highlight the importance of all staff, pupils and visitors to Scoil Oilibhéir following appropriate respiratory hygiene.

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- This means covering the 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.

### **Hand Hygiene**

We will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the school on how to wash your hands. We will highlight the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

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

- Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).  
Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins will be managed so as to avoid congregation of people waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.
- Hand sanitiser dispensers will be deployed at exit and entry points of the school and classrooms
- Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities will be provided in all toilets, kitchens and food preparation areas.
- Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.
- Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing will be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities

### **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

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

### **COVID-19 Tracker App**

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that will:

- alert you if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19 COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of primary and special schools V3 February 2021 — 16 give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms
- You can download the free app from Apple's AppStore or the GooglePlay store

### **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing will be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

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

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

### ***Increasing separation***

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout will be used in Scoil Oilibhéir to increase separation to the greatest degree possible.

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, we will:

- Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing
- Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing
- The teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.

### ***Decreasing interaction***

- In planning the extent to which decreasing interaction is possible a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils in the primary school setting.
- A distance of 1m will be maintained between desks or between individual pupils.
- It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore, achieving this recommendation from junior infants to second class, is not a prerequisite to reopening Scoil Oilibhéir.
- Where possible work stations will be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.
- The risk of infection will be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into Class Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or "Pods" within those class bubbles, to the extent that this is practical.
- Where the class is divided into Pods, there will be at least 1m distance between individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.
- The objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles (and Pods within those Class Bubbles) as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.
- The aim of the system within the school is that class grouping mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. The Pods within those Class Bubbles is an additional measure, to limit the extent of close contact within the Class Bubble.
- Pod sizes will be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context.

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- To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff will consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.
- Sharing educational material between Pods will be avoided/minimised where possible. Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble will be limited as much as possible.

***Additional measures to decrease interaction include:***

- Limiting interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.
- Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) will be discouraged.
- Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it will be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource.
- Staff and pupils must avoid sharing of personal items.
- Pupils will be encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

**Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school**

***School drop off/collection***

- Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils will be arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.
- Walking/cycling to school will be encouraged as much as possible.
- Arrangements will be made to maintain a distance of 2m between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff.
- Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected.
- Staggered drop off/pick up times will be used where feasible.

***Staff***

- A distance of 2m 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 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.



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- Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks etc.
- Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.
- We will implement no hand shaking policy.  
Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this should be minimized where possible.

### ***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.

### ***Yard/Supervision***

- The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.
- We have adjusted play time/outdoor activities to minimise crowding at the entrance and exits.
- It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary or special schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups.
- We have staggered break times and outdoor access.
- Children should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.
- Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

### ***Ventilation***

- The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice 'Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools'
- Rooms should be well ventilated before, during and after occupancy each day. This can be achieved by ensuring windows in each room are opened (as wide as is practical and safe, while also considering security issues) to ventilate the room fully.
- Windows should also be open at break times and at lunchtimes for at least 15 minutes where possible.
- Keeping open the internal doors into classroom for periods of time may assist with increasing air movement and ventilation rate.
- The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.
- In colder weather any local chilling effect can be offset by partially opening the windows nearest to and above the radiators

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- It is important that windows and air vents can be accessed and opened.
- It is important to make sure that air movement is not blocked by furniture or window blinds and curtains or any wall hangings.
- School management and staff should also take into consideration reliable, common sense indicators that there is adequate fresh air in a room. Such indicators include that a room is not stuffy and/or that condensation is not forming on the window glass.
- Good ventilation is also a requirement in school corridors, staff rooms, offices and all other areas used by staff.
- Any inadequate ventilation issues can be reported to management.

## **Section 7**

### **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 Scoil Oilibhéir will deal with a suspected case that may arise:

A designated isolation room has been set up in the Aistear room. It will continue to be called the Aistear room as this is a more familiar and child friendly concept for our pupils.

If a pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with symptoms is a pupil, the staff member dealing with the pupil should contact the secretary and the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and asked to come immediately to the school to collect their child.
- The pupil will be brought to the Aistear room while awaiting the arrival of the parent.
- The secretary will contact the teacher once the parent has arrived so that the teacher can ensure that the child is ready for collection at the external Aistear Room door.
- According to the DES Roadmap physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home. 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 provided. The child will be offered a face mask when they arrive at the Aistear room.
- 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. All appropriate cleaning supplies are provided in the Aistear room.
- The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

If a staff member displays symptoms of Covid-19 please notify the Principal/Deputy Principal and make immediate arrangements to go home. The staff member should contact his/her GP and follow all HSE and public health advice.

## **Section 8 Staff & Pupil** **Wellbeing**

### **Pupil Wellbeing:**

- We are conscious that the pupils will be returning to us following a lengthy break of almost 5 months from school life. Our initial focus therefore, as per the guidance in the DES Roadmap to Re-Opening Schools will be to ease the children back into school life.
- Many school procedures and routines will be different to what they have experienced heretofore, because of Covid-19, so we will spend a lot of time each day teaching the children these new hygiene and safety protocols.
- The school curriculum will be in our plans, but a key focus for all school staff will be ensuring that the pupils settle into school life in a relaxed and happy manner.

- We will aim to make sure that the children have a happy return to school and that stress and anxiety will be kept to a minimum. This will hopefully pay dividends later on when we fully engage with the curriculum.
- SPHE lessons concentrating on pupil wellbeing will be regularly completed in each classroom.

### **Staff Wellbeing:**

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

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