



**OUR  
LADY'S  
SCHOOL**  
**TERENURE**

**Our Lady's School COVID-19 Response Plan**  
August 2020  
Updated: February 2021

## 1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Our Lady's School will be implementing this *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Our Lady's School and to ensure a safe return to school for all students and staff.

The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). The Board of Management wants to ensure that any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of teaching and the reopening of facilities comply with best guidance as provided by the Governments and the national health agency. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

This document aims to provide details of:<sup>1</sup>

- Return to work roadmap
- Return to workplace safely, personal responsibility and Lead Worker Representative(s)
- Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
- General advice to prevent the spread of the virus
- Procedure for Returning to Work
- Control Measures
- Dealing with a suspected case of Coronavirus
- Staff Duties
- Sick Leave and absence management
- Employment Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The assistance and cooperation of all employees, students, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan. Failure to follow the information and guidance in this document as well as failure to adhere to Our Lady's School's safety procedures and policies, site safety procedures and policies, and suppliers/manufacturers guidance could result in increased risk and potential harm to individuals and the wider community.

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.

## 2. Return to work roadmap

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of operations and the return to the workplace in August 2020, safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government. In order to comply with such advice and instructions and ensure that health and safety is safeguarded as much as possible, the return of employees to the school campus must take place in a planned and carefully controlled manner.

In advance of the reopening of Our Lady's for the 2020/21 school year the Board of Management have put the following processes in place:

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- A 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;
- A means of passing on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education ;
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form ;
- Identified a Lead Worker representative/s;
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 ;
- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing ;
- 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;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment;
- Made necessary arrangements to restrict access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school ;
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:
  - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
  - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
  - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed

This COVID-19 Response Plan is subject to ongoing review and may be updated or modified as the situation evolves, and new guidance and advice is provided.

## **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 while 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 BOM.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/dd7fb-induction-training-for-reopening-schools/#post-primary-induction>

A national information campaign to support parents and students will happen in advance of schools reopening on issues such as COVID-19 awareness and to help minimise the risk of introduction and spread of the virus in schools.

### **3. Return to work safely, personal responsibility and Lead Worker Representative(s)**

#### **3.1 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**

All employees will be required to complete a '**Return to Work Form**'. This RTW Form will be sent out to each employee in advance of the school opening.

This form will be made available electronically or by post from the Principal prior to opening and employees are obliged to complete this form at least 3 days prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide:

- i. details of the online Induction Training for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace
- ii. details of any additional health and safety measures applicable to facilitate the staff member's return to the school campus.

In accordance with public health advice, certain responses to the RTW form will preclude an employee from returning to the workplace for health and safety reasons. e.g. the employee's return to the workplace would result in an unacceptable risk to the health and safety of the employee and/or other persons.

In circumstances where a staff member's request to return to the workplace cannot be facilitated the employee will be advised to seek medical advice. Arrangements for remote working will be considered. Decisions with respect to working remotely will be guided by DES instructions and local arrangements by the Board of Management for non-teaching staff.<sup>2</sup>

There are some school staff who 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**.

**People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):**

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.

As of February 2021 A Returning To Work form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Our Lady's School requests staff in writing to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

### 3.2 Personal Responsibility

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management.

However, all staff, students, parents/guardians, 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.

If a staff member has any queries or concerns in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, they should contact the LWR who will bring the issue to the attention of the Principal.

The Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures seek to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and protect the health and safety of all parties within the workplace as much as possible in full adherence with the advice of the public health authorities and the Government. In particular, the Covid-19 Response Plan seeks to be compliant with the Government's "Roadmap for the full return to school" published on July 27th <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b264b-roadmap-for-the-full-return-to-school/> and the 'Return to Work Safely Protocol' (<https://assets.gov.ie/74103/6b5dc9ecab2a489280a5a0cdcc647c5c.pdf>).

### 3.3 Lead Worker Representative(s)

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.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in respect of schools. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review.

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies with the Board of Management/ Education and Training Board and school management.

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.

The role of LWR is separate to that of the Safety Representative under the health and safety legislation. However the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the workplace 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.

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 other s/he should contact the LWR/s who will engage with the Principal.

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.

### **3.4 Access to School and Contact Log**

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures. 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 principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education 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 at Our Lady's School. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts.

Our Lady's School will maintain, process and record data in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

#### **4. Signage**

Our Lady's School will display signage, as required, outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. These will be displayed in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets. The Department will be providing printed posters to schools with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2da43-signage-for-reopening-of-schools/#post-primary-posters>

#### **5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A site-specific risk assessment for Our Lady's School has been undertaken by the Board of Management and the Safety Statement has been updated accordingly, to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings

A copy of the updated Safety Statement is available on the school website. Both the risk assessment and safety statement have been updated to include all relevant Covid-19 specific control measures now in place.

Our Lady's School will continue to review their 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 schools existing emergency procedures will be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

Our Lady's School will also review their existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments will be documented and be incorporated into the schools statement.

#### **First Aid/emergency procedure**

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in schools with further precautions in place to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, schools should call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.



## **6. Making Changes to the 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. Physical distancing models have been guided by the “*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*” document.

Our Lady’s School has reconfigured classrooms and other areas to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of the school reopening.

## **7. Control Measures To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools**

### **7.1 Introduction to Control Measures**

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, 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.*

### **7.2 Minimising the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into the School Environment**

#### **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**

#### **Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms**

- Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- 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 if the principal is unavailable) 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;
- Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.
- Advise staff and pupils to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test
- Advise staff and pupils not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- Advise staff and pupils to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school.

## **How to reduce the chance of getting infected by the coronavirus:**

### **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

### ***Wash your hands frequently***

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water especially after touching another person or their personal items, after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

### **Hand Hygiene**

Staff and students should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Our Lady's School will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the school on how to wash your hands. Follow 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 needs to be managed so as to avoid congregation of people waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.

Hand sanitiser dispensers can be deployed more readily at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitizer spills to prevent risks of falls.

Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water should be used.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities should be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

Hand washing facilities should be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels should be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. 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 should be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and can be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve.

Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs can be used too.

When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that students do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands

·Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame

## Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Students and staff should perform hand hygiene:

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

### ***Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth***

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

### **Practice 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.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:

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

Video advice is available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/HSElive/videos/how-to-properly-wash-your-hands/157857121880007/>

### ***Maintain social distancing***

Maintain at least 2 metre (6 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets or they may get into your eyes nose or mouth, including the Covid-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease. The droplets may also come in contact with you indirectly and get into your system from items or surfaces through the eyes, nose and mouth.

## People at higher risk or vulnerable groups

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups

(<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>)

Any staff member who has a concern regarding personal higher risk, or a family member/household contact with higher risk, should discuss the situation with their GP/specialist (or an appropriate medical professional) before making a decision on whether to return to work or not. Advice on risk categories is found in Circular 0049/2020. The Board of Management may seek advice from Medmark in such cases.

## Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in a post primary school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. 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 m distance and where possible 2m. They should 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

## 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*' The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

See: <https://assets.gov.ie/85177/d9643a37-5254-483e-a72e-d2a08ae36d46.pdf&ust>

## 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; schools themselves are best

placed to decide on the appropriate reconfigurations / operational changes necessary to maintain physical distancing.

In recognition that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be appropriate as schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate configuration for their school, 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, being implemented at Our Lady's are:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing;
2. Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing;
3. Review Timetables;
4. Reconfigure Classes;
5. Consider Use of Live Streaming within the School;

[A link to the "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" is provided here.](#)

[You can see a link to illustrated classroom layouts to maintain social distancing here.](#)

### **Decreasing interaction**

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 2m where possible or at least 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual students or staff.

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

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. Our Lady's School has moved to a temporary 1 hour timetable to minimise movement during the school 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.

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

Physical distancing between the teacher and class would be observed.

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

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

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.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

#### *School drop off/collection*

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting students has been planned to maintain physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Walking/cycling to school will be encouraged as much as possible.

Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing requirements may not be respected.

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

#### *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.

Our Lady's School may implement the formation of staff "pods" or teams who work together and take breaks together.

Staff meetings will be held in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

Implement no hand shaking policy.

Minimise gathering at the beginning or end of the school day.

## *Canteen*

There will be no canteen service in operation at Our Lady's School during the initial terms of the 2020/2021 academic year.

## *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.

### **7.3 Use of PPE in Schools**

Our Lady's School will use PPE in line with the guidance set out by the Department of Education.

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. Therefore, at Our Lady's School, the requirement will be for students and staff to wear appropriate face coverings/masks.

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.

### **Reception Areas**

Consideration has been given to the use of Perspex in reception areas where it is not possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students. This Perspex has been put in place.



## **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 2m 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.

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.

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 will 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 should be provided on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

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.

Face coverings should be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn (e.g., in individually labelled containers or bags).

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.

Our Lady's has invested in a limited supply of additional disposable face coverings available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

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.

Staff that may find themselves working in close proximity with students with intimate care needs such as the SNA team, will be given appropriate PPE which will include a Visor and an appropriate mask.

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.

## **7.4 Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

The Department will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on school activities. Our Lady's School will amend the Response Plan upon receipt of the updated information.

### *Choir/Music Performance*

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances 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.

### *Sport Activities*

The school is currently referencing the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport and will keep abreast of any updates.

## *Shared Equipment*

Art – Where possible students will be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards will be cleaned between use and consideration could be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments will not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments will be thoroughly cleaned

Library Policy – Where practical students will have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Students will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

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

Staff or students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.

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

The following outlines how a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

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

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 should be contacted immediately;
- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times;
- The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be 2m away from others in the room;
- Remember that the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room;

- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a student should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect;
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff 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 COVID19 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.

- 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 complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette. 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 within the school facility.
- Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus
  - If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
  - Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health.

## **10. Hygiene and Cleaning in Our Lady's School**

### **10.1 Introduction to Hygiene and Cleaning**

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice, which Our Lady's School will comply with and will also be covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Please see the Protocols on Cleaning document.

### **10.2 Maintaining a Clean Environment**

Our Lady's School will be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning will be focused on frequently touched surfaces –door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

If and when students are moving between classrooms cleaning products will be available in each classroom to wipe down desks.

All staff will have access to cleaning products in the classroom 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. Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or students due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas.

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

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

The rooms will be cleaned as soon as practicable possible. Once the room is vacated the room will not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. Disinfection only works on things that are clean. Therefore when disinfection is required it is always in addition to cleaning.

Person/s assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and household gloves and a plastic apron. Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).

Special attention will be given to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles 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.

## **11. Sick Leave and absence management**

### **Covid Leave**

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures – currently addressed for teaching personnel and SNAs in DES Circular Letter Circular Letter 0049/2020 which supersedes Circular Letter 0024/2020.

For privately paid non-teaching staff, the Board will be responding in line with HSE advice with regards to high risk or vulnerable groups. Sick leave policies may have to be amended.

A staff member who has a concern regarding personal higher risk, or a family member/household contact with higher risk, should discuss the situation with their GP/specialist (or an appropriate medical professional) and follow their advice in relation to whether or not they should return to work. This should be done in line with the Circular 0049/2020

Reasonable accommodation of employees will also be a factor such as the consideration being given to the employee to work remotely.

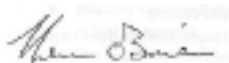
The RTW form opens the conversation between the employer and the employee to discuss their individual circumstances in a sensitive manner. Please speak with the Principal.

## 12. 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 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. 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.

Signed



Date: 26th February 2021

Chairperson of the Board

Signed



Date: 26th February 2021

Principal

	<b>Appendix 1 – Return to Work Roadmap</b>
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Proposed return – August/September 2020</b>
<b>Government Roadmap</b>	<p><b>Board of Management to have developed a Covid-19 Response Plan (to reflect DES guidelines).</b></p> <p><b>Board of Management to have issued a Pre-Return to Work form to all staff to be returned and completed 3 days before returning to the school campus.</b></p> <p><b>Board of Management to have provided necessary online induction training to staff in relation to Covid-19.</b></p> <p><b>Board of Management will have reviewed and updated relevant school policies (i.e. Code of Behaviour, breaching or non-compliance with responsibilities, etc.) to take account of any changes that might be required as a result of Covid-19 protocols.</b></p> <p><b>Board of Management to have updated Safety Statement to address the risks and control measures in relation to Covid-19.</b></p> <p><b>Board of Management has identified a Lead Worker representative/s</b></p>
<b>Staff level and activity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>All staff (not at risk) return to work in line with risk assessment</b></li> <li>● <b>RTW forms completed and returned</b></li> <li>● <b>Induction training completed. Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education</b></li> <li>● <b>No high-risk employees to return (subject to risk assessment process and where relevant, in adherence to DES circular letters on protocols)</b></li> </ul>



## Control Measures

- Safety information and protocols communicated to all staff, pupils and parent/guardians
- Appropriate signage in line with public health guidelines to be displayed throughout school (buildings and grounds).
- Physical distancing requirements arranged in line with social distancing risk assessment (one-way systems, use of stairs, lifts and re-organising the school campus to maintain distancing, social distancing screens, school library, etc.)
- Classroom layouts in line with government social distancing requirements
- Virtual meetings – it is possible that meetings and events will be permitted (by late August) within a school building in accordance with applicable Government restrictions and guidelines. This would also relate to BOM meetings, parent teacher meetings, etc.
- Covid compliant staff room and work areas
- PPE available where required
- Hand sanitisers all areas
- Standard cleaning and maintenance regimes in place and detailed records retained
- Sign in/sign out arrangements in place for tracing purposes
- Appropriate First Aid procedures in place and necessary training to be provided to first aiders
- Additional workstations available (if required)
- Designated isolation room(s) available
- Visitor access protocol in place
- Delivery protocol in place
- Guidance for staff in relation to work related travel
- Structure for regular communication and information sharing opportunities in place to reinforce and advise staff of any new safety requirements
- All safety procedures and protocols are adhered to by staff
- School policies (such as Code of Behaviour, Health and Safety, Sick Leave) to be updated as necessary

## Covid-19 – Checklist for reopening of schools

Area	Actions	Action Date	Responsibility	Complete √
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<p><b>Policies and procedures</b></p>	<p><b>Covid-19 Response Plan to be prepared</b></p> <p><b>Risk assessment and Safety Statement to be updated</b></p> <p><b>Pre- Return to Work (RTW) self-assessment questionnaire to be prepared. As of February 2021 an additional 2 questions added. See Google Form.</b></p> <p><b>On-going consultation with all staff</b></p> <p><b>Training module to be prepared for a Return to Work (RTW)</b></p> <p><b>Planning to start on social distancing arrangements for school – one-way systems, use of lifts, classroom layouts, social distancing screens, social areas, etc.</b></p> <p><b>Break time arrangements to be reviewed</b></p> <p><b>Arrangements for visitors and deliveries to be prepared</b></p> <p><b>Sign in-sign out procedures to be reviewed (contact tracing)</b></p> <p><b>Protocol to be prepared to deal with person who develops signs and symptoms of Covid-19 on school campus</b></p> <p><b>Need to identify isolation area(s) within building</b></p> <p><b>Code of Behaviour to be reviewed to address non-compliance issues</b></p> <p><b>Guidance to be prepared for staff if working from home</b></p>			
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	<p><b>Transport arrangements to be reviewed particularly drop and collection areas</b></p> <p><b>Checklist to be developed for safe use of equipment in specialist rooms</b></p> <p><b>First Aid procedures to be reviewed</b></p> <p><b>Supervision arrangements to be reviewed</b></p> <p><b>Need to establish where PPE will be required by staff</b></p> <p><b>Need to have a protocol for work activities by staff where physical distancing is not possible</b></p> <p><b>Need to develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection of all frequently touched surfaces within school campus</b></p> <p><b>Need to have a procedure for staff when handling books and equipment</b></p>			
<p><b>Requirements for all areas</b></p>	<p><b>Physical distancing</b></p> <p><b>Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette protocols in place</b></p> <p><b>Hand washing facilities and sanitisers in multiple locations</b></p> <p><b>Necessary signage and information displayed for the management of Covid-19</b></p> <p><b>Additional waste collection points</b></p> <p><b>Supervision plan to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements</b></p>			

	<b>Monitoring of access to and egress from school campus</b>			
<b>Staff</b>	<p><b>No high-risk staff allowed to return to work</b></p> <p><b>Receive necessary training prior to returning to work</b></p> <p><b>Consulted about Covid-19 Response Plan and Safety Statement update</b></p> <p><b>Appoint a Lead Worker</b></p> <p><b>Covid supervisor appointed</b></p> <p><b>Provide with information and guidance around a safe return to work, medical information, personal responsibility and duties</b></p> <p><b>Continue to use virtual meetings until public health policy guidelines change</b></p>			
<b>Parents/guardians and students</b>	<p><b>On-going consultation prior to reopening</b></p> <p><b>No high-risk students allowed to return to school</b></p> <p><b>To be provided with necessary information and guidance to prepare for school reopening</b></p> <p><b>Updated procedures to be outlined and explained</b></p> <p><b>COB to be resigned following review</b></p> <p><b>System for regular communication to be established</b></p>			
<b>Classrooms</b>	<b>Arrangements for classrooms to be reviewed in light of public health policy</b>			

	<b>and the necessary control measures required to protect the health and safety of staff and pupils</b>			
<b>Administration</b>	<b>Arrangements for administration areas to be reviewed in light of public health policy and the necessary control measures required to protect health and safety of staff and students</b>			
<b>Visitors and contractors</b>	<b>Policy to be put in place</b>			
<b>School yards and pitches</b>	<b>Social distancing plan to be prepared Ground markings (2m currently)/indicative stickers to be considered</b>			
<b>Toilets</b>	<b>Cleaning regime with records in place Sufficient liquid hand-wash soap and sanitisers available Social distancing plan</b>			

<p><b>Costs and purchasing requirements</b></p>	<p><b>Additional equipment for classrooms</b></p> <p><b>Additional supervision</b></p> <p><b>Signage</b></p> <p><b>Indicative floor stickers</b></p> <p><b>Sanitisers</b></p> <p><b>PPE – face coverings, screens, gloves, etc.</b></p> <p><b>Planning for additional cleaning staff and/or increased contactor costs</b></p> <p><b>Additional cleaning and disinfectant materials</b></p> <p><b>Essential cleaning materials for staff to keep their own work areas clean i.e. wipes/disinfection products, paper towels, etc.</b></p> <p><b>Additional bins for waste disposal</b></p> <p><b>Training – First Aid; use of PPE</b></p> <p><b>Covid-19 supervisor appointed</b></p>			
<p><b>Additional considerations</b></p>	<p><b>Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities</b></p> <p><b>P/T meetings</b></p> <p><b>Open evenings</b></p> <p><b>Parent Council, Board of Management and Student Council meetings</b></p> <p><b>No sharing of equipment</b></p> <p><b>Water taps to be shut down</b></p> <p><b>“No hand shaking, no hugging, no high five protocol” within school facility</b></p>			

	<p><b>“No selfies protocol” within school facility</b></p> <p><b>Photos are to be taken by a designated member of staff. Equipment used will be thoroughly cleaned before and after use. No sharing of devices is permitted. If individuals are being photographed they must adhere to the physical distancing requirements and use of face coverings in line with the information detailed above.</b></p> <p><b>Lifts to be used where strictly necessary. Cleaning of lifts will be necessary after use.</b></p>			
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## **Amendment 1: Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools V2**

The implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan by a school is the means through which schools can best prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 and demonstrate that they are operating in accordance with the requirements of the Roadmap for the Full Return to School, the Public Health advice from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and the Return to Work Safely Protocol developed by the Health & Safety Authority. These documents are available at [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool).

The public health guidance for reopening schools and educational facilities includes some important recommendations about ventilation practices in schools:

- Consider if room ventilation especially in classrooms can be improved without causing discomfort.
- Where possible the opening of doors and windows should be encouraged to increase natural ventilation.
- Increase air flow and ventilation weather permitting.

The following practical measures for the deployment of good ventilation practices in schools should be considered by schools in the implementation of their COVID-19 Response Plans:

1. In summary, the overall approach for schools should be to have windows open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. It is worth noting that windows do not need to be open as wide in windy/colder weather in order to achieve the same level of airflow into the classroom. This will assist in managing comfort levels in classrooms during periods of colder weather.

2. Most schools rely on the opening of windows i.e. natural ventilation and therefore it is important that windows and air vents can be accessed and opened.

3. Rooms should be well ventilated before occupancy each day. This can be achieved by ensuring that at the end of the school day each evening, the windows in each room should be opened (as wide as practical and safe while also considering security issues) for at least 15 minutes to ventilate the room fully.

4. Windows should also be open at break times and at lunchtimes for at least 15 minutes where possible.

5. Classrooms for the first class on the following school day (where the above end of day ventilating has occurred) can consider maintaining partially opened windows

as per guidance below to keep the room fresh and prevent stuffiness and condensations etc.

6. Achieving fresh air via a number of windows partially opened as required rather than one window fully open can help to maximise the use of window driven natural ventilation distribution across the room without causing discomfort.

7. In colder weather any local chilling effect can be offset by partially opening the windows nearest and above the radiators.

8. Make sure that air movement is not blocked by furniture or window blinds and curtains.

9. Consideration should be given to local circumstances that may require to have additional windows open such as after break time activities

10. Rooms with adequate fresh air should not be stuffy or have condensation on the window glass.

11. Schools should also ensure that all permanent ventilation openings in rooms are fully open and not blocked by wall hangings etc. These normally are either a circular or rectangle ventilation grill on the external classroom wall or linear slot type ventilators built into the window frames. All of these should be opened all the time, if they have been taped and sealed for decorating purposes then the tape/sealing should be removed. If a room does not have permanent background ventilation, provision of same should be considered based on professional construction advice and current Building Regulations.

12. All mechanical ventilation systems and any air conditioning systems should be set to 100% fresh air, any air conditioning units that cannot operate on 100% fresh air (check with unit suppliers if in doubt) should be left off unless it is complemented by an adequate outside air supply such as openable windows, as this can help to provide outside air to occupants and maintain thermal comfort.

13. If the corridors and staircases have no identifiable ventilation systems and rely on air infiltration from adjoining spaces as many transient spaces do, consideration should be given to ventilating these areas before and after break times by opening doors etc., this needs to be considered taking into account the fire strategy of the building. Where stairwells have opening windows, consideration should be given to their utilisation.

14. Keeping open the internal doors into classrooms for periods of time may assist with increasing air movement and ventilation rate. It is important to note that fire doors should not be kept open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire.

**15. Schools should ensure there is appropriate ventilation of staffrooms, offices and other areas used primarily by staff, and in the context that some of these areas are used by different groups of staff at different times. This is in addition to the use of face coverings and adequate cleaning.**

**16. Schools should ensure there is appropriate ventilation of areas such as sanitary facilities, gyms, multi-purpose rooms and libraries etc. which are used by different groups of pupils and promote proactive use of open windows and any extractor fans when these spaces are in use.**

**The Department considers the above practical steps are sufficient to ensure good ventilation practices in school while at the same time ensuring an appropriate balance between ventilation and comfort.**

**The Department's Planning and Building Unit has reviewed the HPSC guidance that consideration be given to installing an indoor air quality monitor in classrooms.**

**The HPSC guidance is based on general guidance published by the Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations (REHVA). The purpose of a monitor is to assist in determining when windows should be opened. Such monitors are already included in the Department's Technical Design Guidance, published in February 2018 (TGD 033). The rationale for the inclusion of guidance on the installation of monitors within the Department's TGD at that time was driven by the increased levels of insulation and air-tightness in new classrooms built since 2018 and the objective to increase awareness about ventilation, with associated guidance on when to open windows in these very airtight school buildings. The REHVA guidance recommends that windows should be opened when the monitor indicates that CO<sub>2</sub> levels exceed 800 parts per million (ppm). Given that this threshold is at 800 ppm compared to the standard setting of 1,500 ppm the Department considers that the use of monitors will result in an outcome similar to the approach taken in the above practical steps which recommend that windows are open as much as possible while recognising the importance of also managing comfort levels (windows to be partially open when classroom is in use and fully open when not in use).**

**It is also worth noting that the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which provides scientific and technical advice to support its government decision makers during emergencies notes with low confidence that continuous monitoring of CO<sub>2</sub> may be possible to use as a transmission risk indicator but further research is necessary to evaluate the potential application of the approach for different spaces and to compare modelled results and actual infection rates.**

**Given the above, it is the Department's view that in the main windows are likely to be required to be open at a frequency and level set out above to ensure appropriate levels of ventilation in the classroom irrespective of whether the opening of windows is**

**prompted through the indoor air quality monitor (re-active approach) or through the pro-active approach outlined in the above guidance. While this matter (and supporting data) will be kept under review, the Department does not consider it necessary for schools to install such monitors in classrooms, where the practical steps outlined above are applied. However, it is a matter for individual schools to consider whether they wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for this purpose or alternatively schools may wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for provision of permanent background ventilation, where required, as referenced in above practical steps.**

**As part of managing comfort levels in classrooms, schools should check that their boilers operation temperatures are set at the recommended manufacturers' guidance levels to maximise the available heat to the school. In addition, heating should operate for extended periods during colder weather to counteract, as best as possible, the impact of windows being open (partially when classrooms in use and fully when not in use) in order to maintain an appropriate balance between ventilation and comfort levels**

## **Amendment 2: Arrangements for the end of term - Christmas 2020**

### **Arrangements for the end of term – Christmas 2020**

**It is recognised that the end of each term is a significant milestone and often schools organise events and celebrations to mark the occasion. Celebration of these milestones is important to support positive wellbeing for pupils and students in schools. In this context, schools are reminded of the need to ensure that any plans for the remainder of the year are implemented in line with public health guidelines.**

**Current health and safety guidelines advise that gatherings be discouraged. Large school groups such as choirs should be avoided at present. Wind and brass instruments, including tin whistles and recorders, should not be played indoors due to the additional risk of infection such activity poses. Outdoor class performances and other precautions such as moisture guards for wind instruments may be considered as alternative options.**

**While the usual school assemblies should be avoided, class performances may be shared with other classes and parents/guardians using digital technologies such as the school website, the school’s digital platform and/or video-conferencing facilities, provided appropriate consent has been obtained from parents/guardians. Parents/guardians should not be invited to attend end-of-term celebrations this year. However, Christmas singing whilst maintaining social distancing and within normal pod structures can take place outdoors. Unfortunately, no parents / guardians will be allowed to attend these outdoor events either.**

**Pupils/students often like to share Christmas cards and small gifts. This is allowable but needs to be undertaken in a controlled manner, such that it does not involve pupils/students moving and interacting outside of their usual pods or contacts. Any cards/ gifts would ideally be given to a staff member directly, and then distributed by a staff member to pupils/students in a controlled way. There should be a strong emphasis on hand hygiene at all times.**

### **End-of-term examinations in post-primary schools**

**Student learning is assessed on an ongoing basis in the classroom and schools provide opportunities for students to display their learning through a range of formative and summative assessments. Many schools choose to administer end-of-term examinations as part of this approach to assessment.**

**Schools have their own arrangements for how these examinations are usually organised. In implementing these arrangements this year, schools should continue to implement all public health guidelines in terms of physical distancing, wearing of masks, hand-hygiene and sanitisation to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19. Schools**

**should consider administering end-of-term examinations to individual class groups in their classrooms rather than in large assembly-style groupings.**

**Teachers are reminded that they can continue to handle copybooks or exam papers completed by the students but there must be a strong emphasis on hand hygiene at all times.**