



**OUR
LADY'S
SCHOOL**
TERENURE

Our Lady's School COVID-19 Response Plan August 2021

1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Our Lady's School will be implementing this *Covid-19 Response Plan* 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 purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in our school setting. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole.

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

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

In line with the Work Safely Protocol, the key to maintaining a safe school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM/ETB, staff, students and parents.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

This document aims to provide details of:¹

1. Introduction
2. Reviewing the safe operation of schools
3. Return to workplace safely, personal responsibility and Lead Worker Representative(s)
4. Signage
5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
6. Making Changes to the School Layout
7. Infection Prevention Control Measures - To Prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools
8. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19
9. Staff Duties
10. Hygiene and Cleaning in Our Lady's School
11. Sick Leave and absence management
12. Employment Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

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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 the same.

2. Reviewing the safe operation of schools

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of operations and the return to the workplace in August 2021, 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 2021/22 school year the Board of Management have put the following processes in place:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice and Department of Education updates;
- Arrangements to pass 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>

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 before returning to the workplace.

The school will request staff to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

Details of the working arrangements that apply to the very high risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Department's website

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.

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 schools. The process for appointment of the lead worker representative in schools has been agreed centrally between the Department of Education and the education partners.

Responsibility for the development, updating and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily 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 Work Safely Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared responsibility 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 he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

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;
 - 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;
 - Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
 - In conjunction with school management, promote good hygiene practices 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 implementing infection prevention control measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
 - In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
 - Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;
 - 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.

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative

Name(s) of lead worker representative:
Claire Kerin
Orlaith O’ Callaghan

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 infection prevention 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.

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. Infection Prevention 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.

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

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 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 students, to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/ confirmed case of Covid-19
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instance staff and students are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school
- Advise staff and students 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;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

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

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of [cold](#) and [flu](#).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), [self-isolate](#) (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need [a free-COVID-19 test](#).

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE [Website](#). If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a [COVID-19 walk-in test centre](#).

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 COVID-19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
- 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](#)

Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis. Public Health information on [close contacts, casual contacts and testing](#) is available from the HSE website.

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.

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.

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.

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

Choosing a Hand Sanitiser

Hand sanitising gels are biocides and fall under the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) –Regulation (EU) 528/2012. The Pesticide Registration and Control Division (PRCD) of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the competent authority for biocides in Ireland. Only biocidal products listed on the DAFM biocide product register are legal to market and use in Ireland. Our Lady’s School has ensured that all sanitisers and disinfectants they have carry a PCS 9xxxx, PCS 1xxxx, IE/BPA 7xxxx or an EU-000xxx-xx registration number on the label.

Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 at Our Lady’s will contain a minimum of 60% alcohol.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Students and staff should perform hand hygiene:

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

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 and safely into a nearby bin.

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

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

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 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 2021/2022 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.

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. The Department has also published guidance on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](#).

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.

Relevant employees will be trained in the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE.

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

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

The wearing of face masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they are to be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

Face masks act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face mask coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Face masks 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 mask 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 mask unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Face masks 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 mask, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face masks in educational settings was received on the 6th August 2020. This advice is available [here](#).

All staff and students wearing face masks should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face mask.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>

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 mask.

Face masks 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).

Face masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face masks should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

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

Whilst staff may wish to utilize their own face mask on a day-to-day basis, schools should have available a stock of additional disposable or multi-use face masks, 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.

Medical Grade Masks

Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

Wearing a face 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

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

Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sport-protocols/>

Shared Equipment

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

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should 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 should not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments should be

Library Policy – Where practical students should 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 should 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. The following outlines how a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

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

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;

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

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.
- New staff 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.
 - Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
 - 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.
 - If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
 - 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 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

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education

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'.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to 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. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experienced mental health professionals.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).

The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are 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. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools

Signed _____ Chairperson of the Board Date _____

Signed _____ Principal Date _____

	Appendix 1 – Return to Work Roadmap
Timeline	Proposed return – August/September 2021
Government Roadmap	<p>Board of Management to have developed a Covid-19 Response Plan (to reflect DES guidelines).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Board of Management to have provided necessary induction training to new staff in relation to Covid-19.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Board of Management to have updated Safety Statement to address the risks and control measures in relation to Covid-19.</p> <p>Board of Management has identified a Lead Worker representative/s</p>
Staff level and activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All staff (not at risk) return to work in line with risk assessment ● RTW forms completed and returned ● Induction training completed for new staff. Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education

<p>Control Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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 ● Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing. ● 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 ● 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

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

	<p>Supervision plan to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements</p> <p>Monitoring of access to and egress from school campus</p>			
Staff	<p>Receive necessary training prior to returning to work</p> <p>Consulted about Covid-19 Response Plan and Safety Statement update</p> <p>Appoint a Lead Worker</p> <p>Covid supervisor appointed</p> <p>Provide with information and guidance around a safe return to work, medical information, personal responsibility and duties</p> <p>Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.</p>			
Parents/guardians and students	<p>On-going consultation prior to reopening</p> <p>To be provided with necessary information and guidance to prepare for school reopening</p> <p>Updated procedures to be outlined and explained</p> <p>COB to be resigned following review</p> <p>System for regular communication to be established</p>			

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

<p>Costs and purchasing requirements</p>	<p>Additional equipment for classrooms</p> <p>Additional supervision</p> <p>Signage</p> <p>Indicative floor stickers</p> <p>Sanitisers</p> <p>PPE – face coverings, screens, gloves, etc.</p> <p>Planning for additional cleaning staff and/or increased contractor costs</p> <p>Additional cleaning and disinfectant materials</p> <p>Essential cleaning materials for staff to keep their own work areas clean i.e. wipes/disinfection products, paper towels, etc.</p> <p>Additional bins for waste disposal</p> <p>Training – First Aid; use of PPE</p> <p>Covid-19 supervisor appointed</p>			
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<p>Additional considerations</p>	<p>Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities</p> <p>P/T meetings</p> <p>Open evenings</p> <p>Parent Council, Board of Management and Student Council meetings</p> <p>No sharing of equipment</p> <p>Water taps to be shut down</p> <p>“No hand shaking, no hugging, no high five protocol” within school facility</p> <p>“No selfies protocol” within school facility</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Lifts to be used where strictly necessary. Cleaning of lifts will be necessary after use.</p>			
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Amendment 2: 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.

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 CO₂ 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 CO₂ 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

