



## **Plean COVID-19 Maidir le Filleadh ar Scoil**

### **Plan for Return to School**

*This plan has been developed to support the safe return to school in line with current advice from Department of Education and Skills and Health Service Executive*

## Introduction

We hope you and your families are keeping well. We are really looking forward to welcoming you all back to school for the new school term. It has been a long time since our school closed unexpectedly in mid-March due to COVID-19. Our main focus at present is re-opening our school safely, in line with current guidance and recommendations. Re-opening the school safely will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community – BoM, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner.

Re-opening Plan gives details of:

- Physical preparation, signage and hand sanitiser stations
- Procedures around drop off and pick up
- General and specific advice on how all pupils, staff, parents and visitors will prevent the spread of the virus

We would ask all parents/guardians to familiarise themselves with the new drop-off and collection routines for the safe delivery and collection of pupils from school. The Board of Management and Staff greatly appreciate your support as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year.

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. At this time it is normal for a child to feel a range of emotions. Children are to be encouraged to talk with someone they trust, like a parent or a teacher. Modelling a calm and positive response to your child's return to school will greatly help him/her return to school and adapt to the changes.

**It will take some time for all of us to get used to the "new circumstances" as we become familiar with the new routines and procedures designed to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of the virus.**

Parents will be required to fill out a **pre-return to school form** for their child(ren) **three days before returning to school**. This form will be sent to all parents in the form of a link on **Saturday 27th August 2020**. Parents will be required to fill out **one form per child** attending Gaelscoil na bhFilí. **All staff must also complete a pre-return to work form**. We are really looking forward to welcoming you all back to Gaelscoil na bhFilí and will be doing all that we can to ensure that the return to school is a safe and enjoyable experience for the children. Wellness and reassurance will be a focus of our work with the children as they settle back into school again.

## Return to School Plan

This plan was drafted by the Board of Management and was guided by resources provided by Department of Education & Skills and Health Service Executive.

The plan will be reviewed on a regular basis depending on advice from HSE and other public health authorities.

This plan has been formulated to achieve the aim for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.

### Drop Off & Collection

All schools are required by Department of Education & Skills to decrease interaction and increase available space. There will be changes regarding how schools accept children in the mornings and to dismissal in the evenings. The congregation of groups of children and parents in the yard is not allowed by Department of Education and Skills.

\*There is an exception for parents of children in Junior and Senior Infants and those that travel to school by bus.

- **ALL Parents/Guardians will be required to remain in their cars with children until 8:50 a.m.**
- **Our school gates will be opened at 8:50 a.m.** (only exception is for children arriving on School Bus). Board of Management do not provide supervision before school opens at 8.50 a.m.
- We require that **ONE parent/guardian from each family** drops off children to school and collects in the evening.
- **Parents/guardians and children from all classes are to line up on the running track keeping 2m apart.**  
\*There are yellow markings on the running track along the curbing to indicate 2m\*.
- Parents/guardians are required to remain with their child until 8.50 a.m. Children are not to be left on running track unaccompanied.
- **Acceptance of Junior and Senior Infants. Parents/guardians of Junior and Senior Infants may enter the school yard at 8.50 a.m. (mask/face shield required).** Parents/guardians will bid farewell to children at the school door.  
\*Please refer below for Parents of Junior Infants regarding first day of school.
- **Acceptance of 1st - 6th Class.** Parents are to remain with children in their cars until 8.50 a.m. and then proceed at this time to the small school gate in line with 2m social distancing.
- **\*ALL parents/visitors are required to wear a mask/face shield IF entering the yard\***  
**Please note that parents/guardians of children in Junior and Senior Infants are the only parents permitted to enter the school yard.**

**\* FAO : Parents of School Bus Children ONLY \***

All children that travel by bus will be designated a spot on the yard under the shelter (in line with social distancing guidelines). These children will be required to stay within their bubble/class group or family grouping and not mix with children from other classes/bubbles. Teachers will be explaining this to the children on the first day back. Children travelling to and from school by bus will depart school at the slightly earlier time of 2.25p.m. in the evenings.

***Parents of Junior and Senior Infants***

Parents of Junior Infants on Day One. The first day of school in Junior Infants is a very special occasion and we look forward to making it memorable for both the Junior Infants and their parents. Parents may bid farewell to children at the school door or accompany them into the classroom briefly to settle them into their new setting if required. These parents will be asked to wear a face covering while on the school grounds.

**\*ONE Parent is permitted per family for drop off and collection.\***

**We will be required to operate a “ONE IN, ONE OUT” system to safely facilitate the parents of the Junior Infants entering and exiting the school on the first day. Only ONE parent is permitted inside school building at a time, the remaining parents will be required to wait outside maintaining the 2 metre social distancing from others.**

As usual, after the first few days it is expected that Junior Infants would bid farewell to their parents at the school door.

**Parents of Senior Infants** shall accompany their children into the yard at 8.50 a.m. and changeover is at the door of the school similar to last year.

**It is best if parents of children walk directly into school from cars for 8.50 am start (avoiding spending time in the yard as children are not to mix with children from different classes/bubbles).**

If a parent of a child in infants has a child from 1st- 6th Class they are required to remain with the parent until such time as they go to their classroom. They are not permitted to mix with children from other classes/ bubbles.

## **FAO : Parents of Junior Infant Children only**

<b>Day 1 – 5</b>	Children in Junior Infants will attend school until <b>11am</b>
<b>Day 6 – 10</b>	Children in Junior Infants will attend school until <b>12 noon</b>
<b>Day 11 Onwards</b>	Junior Infants will finish at <b>1.30 p.m.</b>

## **Bubbles and Pods.**

### **What is a bubble?**

Every class will be known as a bubble. Children are only allowed to mix with children in their class or bubble. A ‘Class Bubble’ is a class grouping that “stays apart from other classes”.

### **What is a pod?**

Within each classroom there will be some mixed groups known as pods. Teachers will be placing children in their pods on meeting their classes.

## **Staggered Breaks**

- Both classrooms will be on the yard at different times to decrease the interaction between the classrooms and all classes.
- Our playground will be divided into 5 different sections. These sections shall be shown to all children on the first day back to school.
- Children are required to remain in their bubble on the yard. This means that they can only mix only with children from within their own bubble/pod. This also will be explained on the first day.
- Children are not expected to maintain physical distance within their class group when outdoors but close contact will be discouraged.

## **Exercise**

- Finding new opportunities for outdoor learning will be pursued, when practical. In addition to yard breaks, regular movement breaks, including walking/running in the yard and around the school, will continue, with classes maintaining physical distance and walking/running quietly so as not to disturb other classes.

## **Visitors to School**

It is a necessary measure that we must take at this time to limit the number of adults at school. (Music Teacher, Hurling and Football Coaches etc.) are postponed at this time by Department of Education & Skills. Teaching staff fully recognise the importance of sport, music and art in children's lives and class teachers will be doing these activities as much as possible.

### **Social Distancing will look different in the 2 Classrooms.**

- Social distancing in Junior Classroom (Juniors - 2<sup>nd</sup> Class).  
Children in Juniors-2<sup>nd</sup> Class are not expected to be able to comply with social distancing. Class will be divided into bubbles and pods and we will be working towards keeping everybody within the same small group. The classroom has been cleared to increase space. Measures will be taken to discourage the sharing of items as much as possible at this age. Bubbles/ Classes will be kept 1-2m away from each other.
- Children in Senior Room (3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Class) will be expected to comply with social distancing. Teachers will explain bubbles and pods and the social distancing expectations to the children on the first day back at school.

### **Entrances & Exits**

- We will be operating a one-way system in our school.
- The small gate will become our new entrance.
- The larger gate will become our new exit.
- There will be signage to help identify the entry and exit routes.
- **\*The markings along the curbing of the running track will be used in the morning and evening to allow children and parents to line up in accordance with the 2m social distancing guidelines.**

### **Visitors to our school**

We need to keep the number of visitors to our school to a minimum at this time. Any parent wishing to speak with a class teacher can do so by the following channels:

1. Put a note in the school bag for the attention of the class teacher.
2. Telephone the office on Tuesday's.

We will then be in a position to arrange a meeting/telephone call at the earliest opportunity.

### **Homework**

Homework will not be assigned for the first fortnight in order to help everybody settle into new routines and form new habits. More information will follow regarding homework in due course.

### **Limit the number of items coming to school**

After Day 1 children should **only bring their lunch, coat and school bag** to school every day. School Books will remain at school. Please ensure that your child has everything they need for school before they leave home including spoons, drink, lunch etc. **All of these items must have your child's name labelled clearly.** Children are discouraged from sharing stationery and other belongings. Each child will be asked to bring the wrappings from their own lunch home with them in their lunch box. All lunches/ lunch boxes and drinks bottles need to be washed in hot soapy water every night.

## **Coats**

Children are required to keep their coats in their bags.

It is desirable if your child has a separate small lunch bag/ box that fits their lunch and a drink.

## **Sanitising Stations**

We have lots of sanitising stations installed at school with 60-70% alcohol sanitiser and will be following strict, regular and supervised hand hygiene measures as recommended by Department of Education & Skills throughout the day. Department of Education & Skills have recommended that young children **should not have independent use** of containers of **alcohol hand sanitisers**. National Poisons Information Centre, Ireland also **advises parents NOT to give alcohol sanitisers to primary school children to bring to school** (bumbag style bags can be used for parents who wish for their child to use their own **alcohol free sanitiser** in the Senior Classes). Parents of children in Junior Classes who wish for their child to use their own **alcohol free sanitiser** due to skin sensitivities may put **alcohol free sanitiser** in a side pocket of their school bags that is easily accessible.

## **Masks**

**\*Masks/Face shields are required by any adult entering the school yard. \***

Pupils are permitted to wear masks should parents feel that they are competent and happy to manage wearing masks. Masks will need to be labelled with your child's name clearly identifiable. Masks left in school will be disposed of at the end of each day.

Staff may wear face shields and/or masks on a regular basis. Face coverings/shield will be worn when a physical distance of 2m cannot be maintained.

## **Deliveries to school**

Items may understandably be left behind at home in the mornings from time to time. We will have a sealed box left at the gate to facilitate dropping off a lunch/ coat left behind in the morning. Please place any item you are dropping off in a sealed bag labelled with your child's name.

## **School Bus Parking**

Space outside the main school gate is for School Bus only.

## **Children and Staff who should not attend School**

**No person (child, teacher or parent) should attend an educational setting if unwell OR if any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID 19.**

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school

- Children who are generally unwell or presenting with any of the recognised symptoms. This means that if a child has a temperature upon waking, a persistent cough or any other signs of illness they cannot attend school under any circumstance. Parents are encouraged to seek GP advice. If children present with any illness or symptoms at school, they will be sent home.
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad must self-isolate for a period of 14 days. Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of ‘normal precautions’ (“green”), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.
- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 until GP advises that they can return to school.
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 until a negative test result has been received and the child’s GP certifies he or she can return to school.
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending. They may return to school when a GP certifies they are able to return to school.
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school.

## **Collection of Children during the School Day**

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply:

- When the adult arrives at the school rather than going to the child’s classroom directly, he/she should press the buzzer by the school gate to alert the class teacher/ office that they have arrived.
- Parent/ Guardian should remain at the gate.
- The adult who is collecting will be asked to sign the child out.

## **Hand Hygiene**

- Hand hygiene will be important at all times. This will be addressed with a combination of hand washing using soap and water and use of hand sanitiser.
- Upon arriving at school and during the day, everyone will be required to use hand sanitiser or wash their hands with soap and water.
- Specific lessons on hand hygiene will be taught to all classes during the first week back in the school on a daily basis and then reviewed weekly and as required.



### **Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 of a Staff Member**

Staff should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The key symptoms that will be considered are:

- High temperature (38 degrees Celsius or above)
- A persistent cough of any kind
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- This list of symptoms may be added to depending on advice.

If a staff member or other adult working in the school presents with any of these symptoms, they must stay at home, inform the principal and seek the advice of a GP as soon as possible.

If a staff member or other adult displays symptoms at school, they should inform the principal as soon as possible and leave the school once supervision of pupils is arranged. Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved in line with DES and public health guidance.

### **Teacher Absence and Substitution**

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. However, if a substitute teacher is not available, the class will not be able to be split. The Board of Management may have no other choice but to ask that the class remain at home until a substitute teacher can be found. This measure will be as a last resort but we do need to make parents aware of it.

## **Dealing with a Suspected Case of Covid-19 of a Child**

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The key symptoms that will be considered are:

- High temperature (38 degrees Celsius or above)
- A persistent cough of any kind
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- \* Please note that this list of symptoms may be added to depending on advice.

If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following are the procedures will be implemented:

- The principal and/or secretary will be informed immediately if a child is presenting with symptoms.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- The child will be seated in the isolation area of the classroom or hall. The teacher/ staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child. The teacher will also ensure that other children always maintain a minimum distance of 2 metres from the symptomatic child.
- A mask will be provided to the child presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people until they exit the school grounds.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member as soon as possible. They will be advised to contact their GP by phone and seek medical advice regarding their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- If the child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, or if the school cannot make contact with a parent the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a suspected Covid-19 case.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved in line with DES and public health guidance.

## **Individuals Who Are Awaiting Test Results and Contact Tracing**

- A pupil or member of staff who is awaiting results of a Covid-19 test will not return to school until a GP certifies that they should return. Unless otherwise instructed by the HSE, all other children and teachers continue to attend school until results come back. If a negative result is received, the child can return to school following GP advice in the form of a certified letter.
- If a staff member is awaiting a test result, the HSE will advise what to do in this case regarding contact tracing and what procedures need to be followed.
- 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. Confidentiality related to the identity of suspected or confirmed cases will be maintained. The advice and instructions of the HSE will always be followed.

### **Impact of a Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class**

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a confirmed case of Covid-19:

- The school will co-operate with the HSE and will assist with contact tracing to notify any close contacts.
- Public health advice will be sought and followed.

### **Fire Drills and Emergency Evacuation Procedures**

- The assembly point for fire drills or other evacuations will remain the same. Students will walk with appropriate physical distance out classroom doors to reach the assembly point in the yard. Classes will remain 2m apart from each other in their lines. This will be practiced during the school year.

### **Music**

Singing and wind instrument playing presents a risk, and mediation needs to be in place, with emphasis placed on other aspects of the music curriculum. Singing outdoors or with enhanced distancing of 2m is recommended. It is recognised that in the junior classes that rhymes and short songs for teaching purposes are integral and may continue in classrooms, using good ventilation whenever possible by opening windows. Tin whistles may never be shared.

### **Shared Equipment**

- By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and calculators. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place after each use to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.
- It is very important that all your child's belongings are labelled clearly with your child's name in a number of places. Children will be discouraged to share pens/ pencils/ colours etc.
- Social physical contact (hand-to-hand greetings, hugs) is discouraged among children.

### **Conclusion**

We are satisfied that we have control measures in place to ensure that this will be a safe re-opening. It will take some time for all of us to get used to the "new circumstances" as we become familiar with the new routines and procedures designed to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of the virus. There will, undoubtedly, be some unforeseen challenges and we will deal with these as they arise. We would like to thank you for your co-operation in making preparations to date and look forward to working with you as we assist the children adapt to the necessary changes. We are conscious of the fact that our pupils have not been in school since March and that they are looking forward to coming back to school to meet their friends again. We wish our 6th Class pupils from last term every good luck and success as they continue their education in Gort Community School. We are also looking forward to welcoming our Junior Infant pupils and their families to our school community. Wishing you all the best for the new school year ahead.