

**St Aiden's NS  
Covid-19  
School  
Response Plan**

All schools need to have a Covid-19 Response Plan in place in order to reopen and continue to operate safely in the school year 2021-22.

This is St Aiden's NS **Covid-19 School Response Plan** was prepared in August 2021 on the basis of current public health advice and continues to be updated as further public advice is received.

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## Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in St Aiden's NS.

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

It is important that the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to pupils, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

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

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

### 1. St Aiden's NS COVID-19 Policy

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

## COVID 19 Policy Statement

St Aiden's NS is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representatives Ruth Towey & Marian Nally

Signed: Anne Moriarty Date: 24/8/2020

Principal

Fr. Paul Kivlehan

Chairperson

## 2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

Before re-opening the school management will ensure the following processes are in place:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates;
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, 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;
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19;
- Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing;
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking 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 limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school;
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:

### *a. School Buildings*

- 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

### *b. Signage*

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The following is a link to the dedicated area of the Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website where there are a number of posters, including those appropriate for primary school pupils, located.

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/posters/> Schools can download the posters and display in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets. Schools do not need to do this now as the posters may be updated during the summer and further information will issue on signage closer to planned reopening.

## 3. Induction training

All new staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. A link to this training is contained in **Appendix 10**. 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

A national information campaign to support parents and pupils 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.

#### 4. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (School) (RTW)** form, which is available online or from the Principal (**Appendix 2**). A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. School will request staff (verbally or 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.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide: details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace 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.

**Any substitute staff must fill in a RTW form prior to commencing work. If a 14 day period has lapsed since they have been in the school, another RTW must be filled in.**

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**. This will be updated in line with public health advice.

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they are at **very high risk**. Details of the leave arrangements is contained within Circular 0042/2021.

If the Board/Principal is unsure whether or not staff fall into the very high-risk category, advice will be sought from the Occupational Health Service.

#### 5. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

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

pupils. Adherence to the Return to Work 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, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker who will engage with the principal/BOM.

**Appendix 3 The process for appointment of the Lead Worker representative in schools agreed centrally between the Department of Education and Skills and the education partners.**

The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

- 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 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 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.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

Name(s) of Lead Worker representative:	Contact details
<p style="text-align: center;">Ruth Towey Marian Nally (Deputy Lead)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">mstowey@staidensns.com mrsnally@staidensns.com</p>



**All staff, 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.**

## 6. Display signage and changes to school lay out

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The Department will provide printed posters to schools, with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc. Schools can then arrange to display the posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets. This will be made available to all schools and staff in advance of school reopening.

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 COVID19. St Aiden's NS will reconfigure classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening which is currently 1m from 3<sup>rd</sup> class upwards.

## 7. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. Appendix 4 completed Policy Statement Risk Assessment Template.

St Aiden's NS has reviewed the emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the COVID-19 School Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures have been documented.

Risk assessments were reviewed 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 have been documented.

### **First Aid/Emergency Procedure**

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in schools. 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.

## 8. Access to school and contact log

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures. Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained **prior approval from the principal**. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all. The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts. St Aiden's NS contact log is available at **Appendix 5**.

All school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The purpose of the contact-tracing log is to facilitate the HSE's official contact-

tracing procedures and to act as a memory aid for employees in providing relevant information relating to close contacts in the event of a COVID-19 diagnosis. Personal data held in a contact log should generally not be processed by an employer for any other purpose. Employers should avoid disclosing information relating to a particular employee's COVID-19 diagnosis to other employees. The data should be retained only for as long as considered necessary for this purpose. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school in their role as data controller.

## 9. General advice to minimise the risk of the virus

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to **know and recognise the symptoms**.

They are:

- High temperature
- Cough or a new cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- fatigue
- aches or pains
- other uncommon symptoms of Covid-19, such as sore throat, headaches, diarrhoea, runny or stuff nose (with another symptom) or feeling sick or vomiting.

St Aiden's NS will:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- Advise **staff and pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases are not to attend school, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.**
- Advise staff and parents of pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID-19 to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal or lead worker promptly and follow outlined protocols (Section 13);
- Ensure everyone entering the school building should be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contact point.

Staff, pupils and visitors should at all times adhere to the up-to-date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. St Aiden's NS will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

## 10. Minimising the risk of spread of COVID-19: Infection prevention Control measures

-Staff and pupils are required to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and arrange for a PCR test.

-If staff or pupils have travelled outside of Ireland they are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

- Staff and pupils should know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (Section 13)

-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 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

→ Staff and pupils are 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

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place. A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents/guardians 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, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

*Staff, in particular, 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.*

Managing the risk of Covid-19 can be achieved through the following control measures:

### **a. Wash your Hands Frequently**

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19.

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>

### **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;

- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.

#### **b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers**

Hand hygiene can also be achieved by the use of a hand sanitisers (when hands are clean).

Hand sanitisers are more readily deployed in school settings to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities. They will be available at entry and exit points and in each classroom.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities should be provided for all toilets and the kitchen. Hand washing facilities should be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and paper towels should be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them. Pedal bins will be employed in the classrooms for disposal of paper towels and emptied daily. **Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame.**

#### **Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth**

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

#### **c. Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. 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**. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

**However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m 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.**

#### **Decreasing interaction**

A common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils in a primary school. A distance of 1m should be maintained between desks and pupils where possible. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore, this does not apply for pupils in Junior Infants-2<sup>nd</sup> class and is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary school for all pupils.

Where possible, workstations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared. The objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.

The risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into

(a) **Class Bubbles** (i.e. a classroom grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as

possible) and

(b) discrete groups or **Pods** within those class bubbles, to the extent that this is practical.

Junior Infants-2<sup>nd</sup> class will be divided into Pods and there will be at least (1m distance) between individual Pods within the Class Bubble. Children should not move between the pods where possible and sharing resources between pods is not allowed. In 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> classes there will be 1m distance between individuals in each pod, whenever possible. The objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible. The aim of the system within the school is that **class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day**. Pod sizes should be kept as small as is reasonably practical in each classroom context. To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times. Different Class Bubbles will have separate yard areas but shared break times. Sharing educational material between Pods should be minimised where possible. Staff members who move from class bubble to class bubble (e.g. SET and SNA) should be limited as much as possible.

### **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.

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

- Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.
  - Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) are discouraged.
  - Where pupils 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 minimize congregation at the shared resource.
  - Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items. Pupils will be encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Where teaching and learning involves use of **Chromebooks or iPads**, the contact surface of the device will be cleaned after use and hand hygiene encouraged. **Use of these devices will be time-tabled and they will be collected and returned to the cabinet or the table OUTSIDE the office.**

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

#### **School drop off/collection**

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils should encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible. Parking will not be allowed immediately outside of the school. Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible. Arrangements should be made to maintain a distance of 2m between parents/guardians and between parents/ guardians and school staff. This is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected. Both entrances to the school grounds will be used (front and side) to reduce congestion. Pupils should arrive no earlier than 9 a.m. head straight to their

small pod designated learning space/classroom bubble, as the yard will be separated after all pupils arrive to school. Each class bubble enters through their designated door: Junior room=the upper door; 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>=middle door; 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>=lower door. Pupils (Junior Infants -1<sup>st</sup> class) should be collected at the main gate. Classes will be staggered on leaving at 3pm. **If pupils have to leave early, prior arrangements should be made with the school and pupils should be collected at the main gate only. The class teacher will complete the sign out.**

#### **Protocol if a child is unwell**

#### **If a child displays symptoms of COVID-19**

#### **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, guidance on face coverings should be observed.

Physical distancing should be observed between staff members within the staff room as much as possible. Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing. A no hand shaking policy is implemented.

Gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day is minimised. Staff can rotate between areas/classes but this should be minimized where possible.

#### **Corridors**

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

#### **Yard/Supervision**

The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. Separate exits are used for each class bubble. It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups. The yard will be separated as far as is practicable. Children should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities. Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people. Two teachers will supervise if front and back areas of the yard are used. All teachers will supervise their class bubble from 9 a.m. daily, as part of CPH.

#### **d. 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.

#### **e. Do**

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze

- Put used tissues into a covered bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

**f. Do Not**

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

**g. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Appropriate PPE will be available and includes for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

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

**Face covering**

Masks are required to be worn by staff within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance when

- social distancing (2m) cannot be maintained between teacher and pupils or between teachers/staff
- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

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 coverings 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 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. Parents should keep up to date with Government and HSE guidance on the wearing of masks by primary pupils. From Dec 6<sup>th</sup> masks are advised from pupils in 3<sup>rd</sup> class upwards, provided there is no difficulty. Parents are encouraged to cooperate in a spirit of partnership but no child will be excluded for not wearing one.

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

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

**h. Wearing of Gloves:**

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It 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.

### ***i. Cleaning***

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, door handles and kitchen. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.

Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

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

### ***j. Access to the school building /contact log***

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus 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 should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts Appendix 5

### ***k. First Aid/emergency procedure***

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St Aiden's NS.

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999

Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident.



## 11. Impact 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.

### **Shared Equipment**

#### **Toys**

All toys should be cleaned on a regular basis e.g. weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs. Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids should be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal. When purchasing toys choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary). If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable. Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils may be inclined to put into their mouths should be capable of being washed and disinfected. All play equipment should be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they should be discarded. Clean toys and equipment should be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.

At this time soft modelling materials and play dough, where used, should be for individual use only.

#### **Art**

Where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

#### **Electronic devices**

Hands should be sanitised before and after device use. Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards may be cleaned between use by the teacher only.

#### **Musical Equipment/Instruments**

To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

#### **Library Policy**

Where practical pupils 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. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item. Electronic devices should be considered for access to shared reading materials.

#### **Shared Sports Equipment**

Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

## 12. Hygiene and cleaning in schools

Schools are reminded to take particular care of the hygiene arrangements for hand washing and toilet facilities. Each school setting should be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning, if available, should be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, chairs/arm rests, sink and toilet facilities.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. **Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.** Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day. There should be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from office and other areas within the school.

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

### **Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID19 was present**

The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible. Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry. Disinfection only works on things that are clean. When disinfection is required it is always as well as cleaning. Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear 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). Pay special attention 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. If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a, play area or if they used the bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

## **13. Dealing with a suspected case 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.**

**Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.** The following outlines how St Aiden's NS will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area is located within the school building in the GP hall. 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 put in place. The designated isolation area is behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils. The virus is spread by droplets so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St Aiden's NS the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately
- Isolate the person and the lead worker is 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
- 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. Health and Safety Rep to notify the cleaner of need for same.

**From Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>** the contact tracing process in schools has been suspended. If a child or staff member tests positive or has a positive antigen test, the principal, when informed, will notify the parents of other pupils in that bubble. The free antigen service may then be accessed by parents. The instructions of the HSE should be followed in this regard and staff **confidentiality is essential at all times**.

## 14. Shared staff and SEN

### Shared staff

Shared teachers/staff will follow protocol as for visitor with respect to contact tracing forms/logs. SEN and transition teachers will work within the same designated class bubbles to minimise contact. Team teaching and in-class support will be enabled as far as is practicable.

### Special Education Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school. Similarly staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness

### Hand hygiene

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

### Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which require the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. The following points can guide the development of such cleaning schedule:

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean;
- Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water.
- Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child
- If equipment is soiled with body fluids: - First clean thoroughly with detergent and water; - Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant; - Rinse with water and dry.

## 15. Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play. In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, 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 practices.
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and arrange for a PCR 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

## 16. Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES (Circulars 0042/2021 and 0027/21).

## 17. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.

## 18. Parent Duties

- **Pupils may not enter the school grounds before 9.00a.m.**, when staff will be ready to receive them. If driving, parents' cars are to be parked **across the road** from the school or away from the main gate. This is to prevent congestion at the school gates. We have 2m markings at the entrance gates to help with this. Please use both the front and side entrance gates.
- Parents must drop children at the school gate. **No adults other than staff are permitted to enter the school beyond the gate or in the school building** without the prior knowledge and consent of the principal. This is a DES directive and only intended in the best interests of the safety of your child as well as the staff.
- Under no circumstances may a child come to school if they display any symptoms such as a high temperature, cough, shortness of breath/breathing difficulties, nausea. Sick children must be kept at home. When GP/HSE advice is sought, it should be followed and the school informed. Please keep informed of and follow public health advice in relation to this.
- A return to school declaration link must be filled out following **any absence** and returned to the school before your child can return to class.
- At the end of the school day, exit will be staggered by the teachers, again to avoid congestion at the gates. Parents, please wait outside the gates for your child, while maintaining social distancing.

Signed:

Chairperson BOM Fr Paul Kivlehan Date 13 /9/2021

Principal Anne Moriarty Date 13 /9/2021

Updated 18/8/2021 in line with DES directives, 22/10/21 and on 6/12/2021 following DoE directives.

## APPENDIX 1

### St Aiden's NS COVID-19 Policy Statement

St Aiden's NS is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct handwashing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions. This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed:

Chairperson (BOM)\_\_\_\_\_

Date: /8/2021

Principal

Date: /8/2021

Appendix 2 RTW Qs

Appendix 3 Lead worker rep

|Appendix 4 Risk assessment

Appendix 5 Contact tracing form

Appendix 6 Check list for BOM

Appendix 7 Check list for dealing with a suspected case

Appendix 8 Checklist lead worker rep

Appendix 9 Checklist for cleaning

Appendix 10 links to training <https://www.hsa.ie/RTWS/#/> induction training

<https://www.hsa.ie/LWR/#/> Lead worker rep

Appendix 11 Return to school Parent Declaration Form