

**St Marys Special  
School  
Covid-19 Response  
Plan**

## Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM)/Education Training Board (ETB) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in St Marys Special School.

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 Re-opening 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 any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol and to minimise the risk to students, 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.

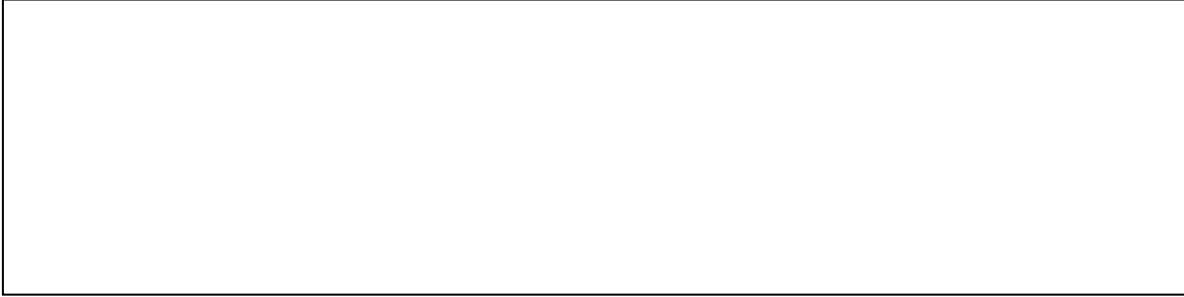
In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

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.

**Note:** The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from [www.Gov.ie](http://www.Gov.ie), [www.dbei.ie](http://www.dbei.ie) [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie), [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie), [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie); [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie);

**1. St Marys Special School COVID-19 Policy**



## 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.

Details for the reopening of the school facility and the applicable restrictions and controls are outlined in this document.

### Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 1**.

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.

## 3. 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.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

However, 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.

Name(s):	Contact details
Kevin Toale	041 6862666

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

Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.

- 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 with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

- Make representations 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.

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

**The Department of Education and Skills are engaging with the HSA in order to provide schools with guidance on updating their Risk Assessments and Safety Statements.**

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

Staff 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 Marys Special School will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

The most common respiratory symptoms of Covid-19 infection include; a high temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

Any staff member displaying these symptoms should immediately inform the Principal teacher. They will not be permitted to attend work if they have any of the symptoms listed below:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

Staff must inform the Principal of this situation as soon as possible. The following advice is provided to inform school staff and pupils **how to reduce the chance of getting infected by the coronavirus:**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Practice respiratory hygiene**

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

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

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

## **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 bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## **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.

## **You should wash your hands:**

- After coughing or sneezing
- Before and after eating
- Before and after preparing food
- If you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- Before and after being on public transport
- Before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- When you arrive and leave buildings
- If your hands are dirty
- After toilet use

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>

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

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

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer

- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and you are pregnant

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 believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the leave arrangements that will apply will be updated by the Department of Education and Skills.

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. It is not envisaged that anyone considered very high risk would volunteer for Summer Provision 2020.

## **6. Control Measures**

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 .

These control measures are outlined in this document.

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.*

The following control measures have been put in place:

### **i. Return to Work Form**

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

### **ii. Staff debriefing**

- 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 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.

### **iii. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school facility and should be available in each classroom.

### **iv. Cleaning**

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school have been made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, hoists, changing rooms, door handles, sink areas and staff room. 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.).

### **v. 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. In addition see visitor contact log at Appendix 2.

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

Whilst PPE will not be required to be worn within the school facility when social distancing is observed, PPE will be available to all staff who would like to use it and for working with children in close proximity e.g. 1:1 activities and for personal care.

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

**vii. First Aid/emergency procedure**

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St Marys Special School.

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.

**7. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

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

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 pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St Marys Special School 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 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
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The

individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided

- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

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

## **8. Pupil Arrival/Exit at school**

Following guidelines, the following procedure is now in place:

- Classes 1, 2, 3, 5, Rainbow Class, Colin's Class shall all enter and exit through their fire doors.
- Class 4 (Greenmount) shall enter/exit through their main door.
- Class 6 and 7 shall enter/exit through the rear door of the school.
- Neil's class enters direct to their class as always.
- Declan's class enters through the main front door of the school.

Upon reopening each class will have ownership of their own electronic thermometer. These thermometers are preset and **everyone, staff, pupils etc must have their temperature taken each morning before entering the school.**

## 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. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. 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
- ii. Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained
- iii. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- iv. Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19
- v. Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- vi. If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- vii. Complete the RTW form before they return to work
- viii. 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
- ix. Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- x. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- xi. Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

## 10. Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES. **See Staff absence procedure Page 15.**

## 11. 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.

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.

The DES employee assistance and well being service is available at all times.

## Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

### Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

This questionnaire must be completed by staff at least 3 days in advance of returning to work.

If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice before returning to work.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: St Marys Special School

Name of Principal: Kevin Toale

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

	Questions	YES	NO
1.	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days?		
2.	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3.	Have you been advised by the HSE that you are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?		
4.	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
5.	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?		
6.	Have you been advised by your doctor that you are in the very high risk group? If yes, please liaise with your doctor and Principal re return to work.		

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test. Please note: The organisation is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and will be held securely in line with our retention policy.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Bus Escorts**

As an additional control measure and to mitigate risk of infection at the very earliest point bus escorts have been supplied with an Infrared non-contact thermometer, during pupil pick up in the morning every child (without exception) shall have their temperature taken, if the temperature reading flashes red (high) the pupil **will not gain entry onto the school bus.**

In the event of a high temperature reading and a failure for a pupil to gain access to school transport the bus escort on arrival at the school must contact the school secretary.

Bus escorts will drop and collect the children from the set classroom entry/exit point.

## **Parents/Visitors**

For the duration of this covid crisis we have put extra measures in place to minimise risk . Our school is operating tightly within class bubbles/pods. **There will be no admittance of visitors or parents or drop-ins to any of our school buildings.** One person may be admitted by prior appointment only to meet with the school Principal.

In addition for health, safety, staffing and contact tracing reasons we ask you to arrange appointments for your child outside school hours. **If your child has an appointment on a school day they should not come into school that day.**

## Appendix 2

### School Contact Tracing Log for Visitors

Name of School: St Marys Special School

Address of School: Drumcar, Co Louth

Contact Person in School for queries: Kevin Toale

Contact Phone Number/email address for queries: [kevintoale@hotmail.com](mailto:kevintoale@hotmail.com)  
041 6862666

Name of Visitor	Time of Entry to school	Time of Exit from school	Reason for Visit (Contractor, Parent, Other)	If contractor name of company and address	Contact details of visitor	Date of Visit	Who the visitor met (separate person met)

## **Teacher absence procedures**

Although the Department of Education has made it clear that all teacher and SNA absences are substitutable, like most schools the finding of extra staff at short notice and with the advanced skill set to work in our school is not always easy and at times impossible. We have coped in the past by dividing classes up throughout the school, this has never been ideal, **it is now impossible.**

Generally St Marys has a staff of very diligent attenders, however, people get sick. When this happens going forward the following protocol will be applied:-

- When a teacher is unable to attend school they must inform the school immediately.
- The school will attempt to get immediate substitute cover.
- **In the event of a teacher not being found that specific class will not come to school that day, parents, bus drivers and bus escorts will be contacted.**
- Pupils will return to school when a sub has been found, or adequate supervision can be arranged or the teacher returns to school - whichever is first.

We acknowledge that this plan for full return to St. Mary's Special School at the end of August 2020 is ambitious. But in the absence of specific guidelines from the DES for our school we have had to plan bespoke arrangements with the health and well being of all of paramount importance. This response plan is subject to frequent change and its success will depend on the co-operation of all pupils, parents and staff alike. We thank you in advance for your co-operation and patience as we work together to find a 'new normal' for all.

St.Marys Special School.



