



SAPERE AUDE

DUNDALK GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A safe return to Dundalk Grammar School Covid-19 Protocols – updated August 2021



Information Guidelines for Parents

*Created in conjunction with DGS Covid-19 Response Plan and in accordance with
Department of Education and Department of Health Guidelines*

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Introduction:

Dundalk Grammar School is committed to a safe return to school for all members of the school community. Paramount is the Health and Wellbeing of our students and staff. It is essential that all stakeholders are committed to supporting our school in reopening and continue to do so as this will be an on-going obligation. We all must take personal responsibility for our actions in relation to minimising the risk of the spread of Covid-19.

The guidelines outlined below should be read in conjunction with the DGS policies listed at the end of this document.

Sanitising Stations and Signage: The school has 65 sanitising stations located around the campus at regular intervals and with Covid-19 signage positioned throughout. Students/Staff must follow these signs and to make themselves familiar to our revised school layout.

Sanitising packs, hand washing and respiratory guidance for staff: Staff can request additional supplies for their teacher hygiene packs that should contain disinfectant wipes, face masks, hand sanitiser, gloves and disinfectant spray. Each classroom is stocked with a disinfectant spray, blue roll and a 500ml bottle of sanitising gel. Should **you** require further product or PPE email the Facilities Manager at buildings@dgs.ie.

All staff should familiarise themselves and adhere to current hand washing and coughing/ sneezing etiquette as outlined by the HSE. Further information and guidance is available to view on the DGS website under the Covid-19 link.

Housekeeping & Cleaning: A regular cleaning programme is outlined as follows. All housekeeping, caretaking and kitchen staff will have completed the Department of Education & Skills Induction Training Programme on Hygiene and Cleaning of Schools prior to opening. Our in-house housekeeping staff will be provided with appropriated PPE equipment and clothing while working within pod groupings.

The boarding house will be cleaned twice a day and disinfected by Spray Mist Method every weekend. The junior and senior schools will be cleaned every day, with spot checks throughout the school day on bathrooms. The junior and senior school bathrooms, stairwells and lifts will also be disinfected by Spray Mist Method every weekend. Dining areas will be cleaned between breaks and at the end of the school day.

The 65 hand sanitising stations are located throughout the campus and each will be checked and cleaned once a day, topping up product, as required. Each classroom will have disinfectant spray and wipes to help keep major touch points and desks sanitised throughout the working week.

Parent/Guardian Covid-19 Protocols

All students must follow the Irish protocols for international travel (including the UK). If a student has been abroad to a country **not** on the green list, as published by the Department of Health & Foreign Affairs, then that student/s must restrict movements for two weeks and the school must be informed.

If a student is unwell, they must stay at home. The school must be informed immediately.

It is vital that all students take personal responsibility for their own health and those around them. Students must adhere to social distancing measures and practice safe coughing / sneezing etiquette. All students will be required to wash and sanitise their hands regularly throughout the day.

Day Students - Travelling to school

Temperatures **must** be checked every morning by parent/guardian prior to departure to school.

- It is advisable that you check with your bus provider on their travel protocols and ensure that transport is available for your son/daughter
- Students using public transport are recommended to use two face coverings, one for travelling and one for school. Masks that are not in use should be stored in a suitable plastic bag. Hands must be sanitised before and after removing masks
- Social distancing measures should be taken whilst on board buses/trains
- The school recommends that students have their own personal container of hand sanitiser
- Students are encouraged to bring their own water supply as drinking water fountains will not be available
- Vending machines will not be available for use

Arriving to school -

- Students **should not** arrive to school before 08:45am
- The boarding house / old Louth hospital will serve as a drop off point for **Junior school and returning boarding students only**
- Senior school students travelling by car should be dropped off near Tesco's and use the pedestrian path to the signalled crossing and then proceed safely up Stapleton Place adhering to social distancing guidelines
- Students travelling by bicycle must use the bicycle stands located outside the boarding canteen
- 1st, 3rd & 5th year students are asked to enter the school grounds via the main school gate and then proceed directly to their first timetabled class. In the event that a classroom is locked, for example a practical classroom, students should wait outdoors until the teacher arrives. Students **must** wear a face covering on entering school buildings
- 2nd, 4th & 6th year students are asked to enter the school grounds via the Ardee Road gate (next to the bus depot) or the Ardee Road pedestrian gate before entering the school via the main Harper building entrance (at Gray Court) and then proceed directly to their first timetabled class. In the event that a classroom is locked, for example a practical classroom, students should wait outdoors until the teacher arrives. Students **must** wear a face covering on entering school buildings
- To support social distancing, students should walk in single file, on the left-hand side of the corridors, as indicated by the floor markings

Please note that students will be given regular intervals to remove face masks outside. Student with underlying issues may be permitted to wear a visor. The school should be informed, and a medical certificate provided.

Moving within the school

- Students should continue to adhere to social distancing measures when moving from class to class.
- Face coverings must be worn at all times when in the school buildings
- Students should walk on the left-hand side of the corridors

Before and after class

- Students must sanitise their hands when they enter a classroom
- It is the responsibility of the student that hands, seat, and desk be sanitised before they leave the classroom. Sanitising product will be available in all classrooms

Break and lunchtimes

- Both break and lunch will operate on a staggered system
- 1st, 3rd & 5th year – break, 10:55am – 11:05am, lunch 12:35pm – 13:15pm
- 2nd, 4th & 6th year – break, 11:10am – 11:20am, lunch 13:15pm – 13:55pm
- School finishing times remains unchanged

- All students **must** sanitise their hands before and after break and lunch
- Eating areas will regularly cleaned between breaks
- For food purchases students are strongly recommended to avail of the card payment system when paying for food in the school canteen. The use of cash is discouraged

See website for details at <https://www.dgs.ie/sc/tfw-food-services-menu-harper-canteen/> on how to register for the cashless card

- Break and lunch queues will adhere to all social distancing safety measures
- Year groups will eat in designated areas
 - 1st year – outside Deputy Principal’s office
 - 3rd year – in day canteen
 - 5th year – in day canteen (H8)
 - 2nd year – outside Deputy Principal’s office
 - 4th year – in day canteen
 - 6th year – in day canteen (H8)
- Lunchboxes and contents must be brought home daily and washed thoroughly and/or disposed of
- Students must **not** share lunch

Uniform and PE kit

Uniform and PE kit should be regularly washed. PE kit should be washed after every PE class or extracurricular activity involving sport that evening.

P.E. and extracurricular sports

- If a student is timetabled for P.E. on that day, they may arrive to school that morning in their clean P.E. uniform. This is applicable for all year groups
- Changing facilities will remain for after school activities
- Showers will not be available
- Afterschool sport should be played outside

Music lessons and after school extracurricular activities

- Music lessons will continue and will occur in line with the latest Health and Safety guidelines
- Indoor after school extracurricular activities will take place and the school day guidelines will apply
- After school study will be slightly adjusted
 - Wednesday 14:45pm – 16:45pm
 - Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday 16:00pm – 17:00pm

Toilets

- No more than three people are allowed in a toilet at any one time
- All students **must** wash and sanitise their hands before and after using the toilets
- A stop-go system is in place and clearly marked
- Instructions are displayed outside and inside toilets and must be followed
- All bathrooms will undergo deep cleaning at regular intervals during the school day

After school

- Students **must** leave the school buildings and grounds the same way they arrived
- Students who are not participating in after school activities **must** leave the school grounds immediately
- Students participating in extracurricular activities at 5pm **must** attend after school study
- Senior school students walking, should be collected by their parents/guardians from their morning drop off point
- Students travelling by bicycle must use the exit they entered by in the morning
- 1st, 3rd & 5th year students are asked to leave the school grounds via the main school gate
- 2nd, 4th & 6th year students are asked to leave the school grounds via the Ardee Road gate or the Ardee pedestrian gate
- Students leaving the school early for appointments must complete the permission to leave school slips in their School Journal and sign out at the designated point

Books, Locker, and stationery equipment

- Lockers will be available to day students before and after school and during designated lunch breaks. Students are not permitted to use lockers during class times.
- Students are **not permitted** to share textbooks, copies, or stationery such as pens, pencils, or rulers etc

Homework

Homework will be set in accordance with DGS's Homework Policy available to view on <https://www.dgs.ie/policies/>. Teachers will use the *Office365* suite of resources to virtually set and receive homework.

Lost and Found

Students are advised that any property left on the school premises may be disposed of. Parents/Guardians should ensure that all clothing is clearly marked with the students' name. Access to the schools Lost and Found is by appointment only.

Detention

After school detention will be as normal on a Friday afternoon from 3.15pm – 4.15pm and will be conducted in accordance with HSE and social distance guidelines. Students will be asked to wear an appropriate face covering.

School Absences

- The school **must** be informed of all school absences on that day. Please either telephone or email admin@dgs.ie
- If absences are due to Covid-19 related symptoms the school must be informed immediately

Visitors and deliveries

Under the current guideline's parents/guardians are requested **not** to enter the school without first seeking permission unless they been requested to collect their son/daughter.

All visitors will be requested to log names and mobile numbers if contact tracing is required should a positive case of Covid-19 was detected within a student or family unit.

Suspected case of Covid-19 within the school

Symptoms of COVID-19.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important to know and recognise the symptoms:

- high temperature above 37.5°C
- Persistent cough
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss of smell, or taste or distortion of taste

If a student presents with symptoms of Covid-19 during the school day the following procedure will apply in accordance with HSE Guidelines and the School Covid-19 Response Plan.

- The student will be given a high grade medical mask
- They will be brought safely to an isolation area by a Covid Compliance Officer where their temperature will be taken
- If a student presents with a high temperature the school will contact the parent/guardian to collect their child from school. (*please ensure that the school has all your correct contact details and emergency contact number*)
- The student will then be collected from school via the isolation areas. All isolation areas are located beside an outside door

- Parents/Guardian should contact their GP for assessment to see if they require a Covid-19 test

Confirmed Cases of Covid-19

Please note that confirmed cases of Covid-19 will be dealt and managed in accordance with Department of Education and Public Health HSE guidelines (see appendix 4 Schools Pathway for Covid-19, the Public Health approach for further information)

First Aid/ Illnesses

In the event where a student feels unwell or requires first-aid they should either be sent or accompanied to sick bay.

Main office and Accounts

Students, Staff and Parents will not have access to the main office or accounts.

It is recommended that school fees be paid by bank transfer, standing order, or by cheque. If you require further information, please email accounts@dgs.ie or the Bursar at bursar@dgs.ie.

Parents/ Guardian contact to school

If a parent/ guardian needs to speak with a member of staff regarding their son/daughter's progress or other issues, please email admin@dgs.ie Staff members will respond when they are free to do so.

Where possible and in accordance with HSE guidelines, limited person to person appointments may be arranged. Other forms of communication such as Zoom, or Skype may also be used.

Boarding Students

Dundalk Grammar School is committed to providing a safe and Covid-19 free living environment for our boarding students. Boarding in Dundalk Grammar School is a privilege and on past experiences has proven to be a positive and rewarding experience. The wellbeing of our boarding students is critical. It is therefore essential that our boarding student family take personal responsibility for themselves and with those with whom they live. Personal hygiene, washing and sanitising of hands regularly, adhering to social distancing measures and staying within their allocated dorms is essential.

Here follows the DGS Boarding guidelines:

Parents/ Guardians are requested to monitor temperatures of all boarding students in advance of their return to school.

If a student is unwell, they must stay at home. The school to be informed immediately.

Sunday night return

- Returning boarders **must** confirm their day of return (either Sunday evening or Monday mornings) and contact the Head of Boarding by texting 087 9984811 if changes occur
- It is advised that temperatures are taken over the weekend
- Boarders returning on Sunday evening **must** return between 20:30pm and 21:30pm and must be wearing a face covering
- Please note that boarders will require multiple face coverings (minimum of 10)
- Parents/Guardians dropping off students by car should wait until their son/daughter has been admitted to the boarding house
- Students arriving by public transport must adhere to travel guidelines and change masks before entry to the boarding house
- Temperatures will be taken on arrival before entering the boarding house

- An abnormal temperature will result in the student being moved to an isolation area and the parent/guardian will be contacted to collect the student as soon as possible. Duty staff must be given an estimated time of arrival. Please note students will not be allowed to use public transport

Monday morning returns

- Temperature checks will take place on arrival
- Arriving students must remain in a waiting area outside the boarding house under the marquee until their temperature has been checked before being admitted to the boarding house

Washing and changing

- All students must sanitise their hands before and after using the toilet/shower
- All students must have their own toiletry bag. Any items left in the bathroom will be disposed
- Students **must** have at least two bath towels with them each week
- All towels **must** be marked / identified by dorm number and initials
- Used wet towels must be placed in the designated bins at the main exit doors for collection by our professional laundry supplier. The wet towels will be removed from site, washed at a high temperature, dried, folded and returned to the boarding house and student, within 24 hours
- **No** towels can be hung upon or placed on radiators
- **All** students must be showered and dressed before their designated breakfast times

Laundry

- Students must place all soiled clothing in a laundry bag provided by their parents/guardians which must be taken home and washed at the weekend
- Duvet cover, pillowcase(s) and towels must be brought home at the weekend for washing

Breakfast

- Breakfast times will be staggered, 7.55am 1st, 3rd, and 5th Yr and 8:15am for 2nd, TY and 6th Yr

Lunch

- Lunch periods will be staggered in accordance with the Senior school arrangements as outlined above

After school

- At the end of the school day there will be a boarding rollcall in Finnamore Hall
- Extracurricular activities will continue as normal for boarders
- 1st years will use the large boarder common room after school and adhere to social distancing guidelines
- Remaining boarders will have designated areas allocated to them

Leaving the school grounds

- Under **no** circumstances may a boarding student leave the school grounds unaccompanied except with a parent/guardian or agent, pre-arranged by the school
- If a boarding parent/guardian wishes to take a student out of the school, this should be sanctioned by the school two days in advance
- Students can be visited as opposed to being taken from school grounds, again prior notice please to Ms Babington Head of Boarding

Tea

- Tea will be staggered as follows, 16:50pm 1st, 3rd, and 5th Yr and 17:20pm for 2ndYr, TY and 6th Yr.

Evening Prep from 6pm

- Students will spend prep in various rooms allocated to the year group as per previous years and adhere to social distancing guidelines and classroom layouts
- Music practice will continue, students **must** not share musical instruments

Boarder lockers

- All boarder lockers will be available in the boarding locker room

Special Needs/SNA protocols

Please email Mr McKinney (SENCO) for any queries relating to your son/daughter at resource@dgs.ie

Underlying Health Issues – susceptibility to Covid-19

A small number of students may be unable to initially return to school due to personal or close family health susceptibility where attending school would be a risk. Please inform the school should this be your family circumstances prior to the school reopening.

Breaching of Covid-19 related rules

Students are reminded that any deliberate breach of the Covid-19 guidelines will be dealt with in accordance with the school's *Code of Behaviour*. Personal responsibility and common sense must be adopted. Students should not engage in any physical contact, such as hugging or horseplay etc. If a student fails to follow guidelines the following sanctions will apply to protect all members of the school community from the threat of Covid-19.

- Students will be reminded by staff members that they are breaching safety protocols
- Repeat offenders will receive a warning and a letter or phone call home will be communicated to parents/guardians
- **Deliberate** coughing/sneezing/spitting will be treated as assault and will result in up to five days suspension and on return a medical cert must be submitted to the school stating that they are Covid-19 free and are safe to return to school. The offender may be liable for the victim's medical costs should this arise
- Repeat offences may result in the removal of the student

As a reminder the use of mobile phones and the taking of images is strictly **forbidden**.

Face coverings: Please ensure that your son/daughter has an **appropriate** face covering, plain or patterned. Face coverings displaying logo's, inappropriate words or symbols are **not** permitted. Students found in breach of this rule will be requested to remove and dispose of them safely. An alternative mask will be provided.

Clarification on the use of face coverings in Post Primary schools

The Department has issued the following clarification on the use of face coverings in post primary schools:

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Wearing of face coverings – a requirement

Staff and students, at post-primary level, are required to wear a face covering. The exemptions to this are set out below.

Face coverings

Face coverings are required for staff and students. Face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. 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.

Face coverings must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.

Visors

Face coverings are more effective than visors. In the limited circumstances where a material face covering cannot be worn clear visors must be considered. The alternate use of a clear visor can also be considered when a staff member is interacting with students with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Exemptions

A medical certificate to certify/letter that a person falls into a category listed below must be provided to the school by, or on behalf of, any person (staff or student) who claims that they are covered by the exemptions below:

- any person with difficulty breathing who cannot wear a cloth face covering or a visor
- any person who is unable to remove the cloth face-covering or visor without assistance
- any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the cloth face covering or visor, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

In circumstances where a medical certificate is not provided that person (staff or student) will be refused entry to the school.

The Department has also issued the following clarification regarding the physical distancing requirement when a face covering, supported by a medical certificate, cannot be worn:

The view is that there will be a very small number who are covered by the limited exceptions who cannot wear a cloth face covering or visor and that in these limited circumstances the arrangements in place for physical distancing (1m), hand hygiene, cough etiquette and cleaning would apply and should be strictly observed.

Directions for effective use of face coverings

- Information should be provided by schools on the proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings. Advice on how to use face coverings properly can be found here.

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

- All staff and students should be reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.
- All staff (and students, where applicable), should be aware that they should wash or sanitise hands (using a hand sanitiser) before and after helping a student put on or adjust a face covering.
- Face coverings should be stored in a designated space, for example, in an individually labelled container or bag.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
- Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Whilst staff and students may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, schools should have a stock of additional disposable or multi-use face coverings (or if appropriate, visors) for staff and students in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

Use of medical grade face coverings Schools should consider the specific circumstances where the use of medical face masks (to EU Standard EN 14683) may be more appropriate for staff as part of their risk assessment for employees returning to work (for example where staff by necessity need to be in close and continued proximity with students with intimate care needs such as SNAs).

Students using school transport

All students on the post primary transport scheme are required to wear face coverings subject to the exemptions above.

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. *Please see attached appendix 2 and 3 for further details.*

Portable CO2 Monitor

The school has purchased a number of CO2 monitors. These enable us to spot check classrooms while in use and gauge CO2 levels. These monitors will in real time allow us to determine if there is adequate ventilation throughout the school

Junior School

- Junior infants to have a welcome afternoon before the full return
- Junior school will be open from 8:40am
- Students will be dropped off at the boarding house
- Infants will enter the school via the main entrance, the main red front door
- All other students will enter the school via the automatic gates and fire doors
- No visitors can enter the school building
- Science, IT, Art & Language teachers will teach in the Junior School rather than the children coming up to the senior school
- Sports items to be sprayed before and after use
- Lunches from the canteen to be delivered to the school
- Hot lunches in the boarding canteen to be served at 12:50pm
- Food will be consumed in the junior school

Further updates and information will be circulated by the Junior School Principal, Ms Lait and will be available to view via the school website or will be emailed directly to parents. Please ensure that contact information is correct. Please email juniorschool@dgs.ie to make any changes or update your contact information.

Contingency arrangements

In the event that the school has to close due to a Covid-19 related case/s, local or National shutdown, classes will continue to be taught on-line via the Office365 suite of resources.

Please see <https://www.dgs.ie/covid19-protocol/> for regular updates.

DGS Policies

- Covid -19 Response Plan
- Code of Behaviour
- Health and Safety Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Guidance and Counselling Policy
- Homework Policy
- Dignity at the Workplace

Please note that this document is subject to change. All relevant information and Health and Safety guidance is being followed and implemented at the time of publication.

Appendix 1 – DGS Staff Only

Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

Dundalk Grammar School

This questionnaire must be completed by all 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: _____

Headmaster: _____ 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, awaiting results of a COVID-19 test or been advised to restrict my movements. Please note: The school 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: _____ Date: _____

School Stamp: _____

Or can be completed by following the link below

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=x8PmwYex3UuOum8lsh7lmJHpiXC_0-RNhpPtkJtQjZUQ1pLUzBQWkIKSTJDUDFXWjVOMFdMT0FCNC4u

Appendix 2

Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools V2 30 November 2020

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

These documents are available at www.gov.ie/backtoschool.

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

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

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

1. In summary, the overall approach for schools should be to have windows open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. It is worth noting that windows do not need to be open as wide in windy/colder weather in order to achieve the same level of airflow into the classroom. This will assist in managing comfort levels in classrooms during periods of colder weather.
2. Most schools rely on the opening of windows i.e. natural ventilation and therefore it is important that windows and air vents can be accessed and opened.
3. Rooms should be well ventilated before occupancy each day. This can be achieved by ensuring that at the end of the school day each evening, the windows in each room should be opened (as wide as practical and safe while also considering security issues) for at least 15 minutes to ventilate the room fully.
4. Windows should also be open at break times and at lunchtimes for at least 15 minutes where possible.
5. Classrooms for the first class on the following school day (where the above end of day ventilating has occurred) can consider maintaining partially opened windows as per guidance below to keep the room fresh and prevent stuffiness and condensations etc.
6. Achieving fresh air via a number of windows partially opened as required rather than one window fully open can help to maximise the use of window driven natural ventilation distribution across the room without causing discomfort.
7. In colder weather any local chilling effect can be offset by partially opening the windows nearest and above the radiators.
8. Make sure that air movement is not blocked by furniture or window blinds and curtains.
9. Consideration should be given to local circumstances that may require to have additional windows open such as after break time activities
10. Rooms with adequate fresh air should not be stuffy or have condensation on the window glass.
11. Schools should also ensure that all permanent ventilation openings in rooms are fully open and not blocked by wall hangings etc. These normally are either a circular or rectangle ventilation grill on the external classroom wall or linear slot type ventilators built into the window frames. All of these should be opened all the time, if they have been taped and sealed for decorating purposes then the tape/sealing should be removed. If a room does not have permanent background ventilation, provision of same should be considered based on professional construction advice and current Building Regulations.
12. All mechanical ventilation systems and any air conditioning systems should be set to 100% fresh air, any air conditioning units that cannot operate on 100% fresh air (check with unit suppliers if in doubt) should be left off

unless it is complemented by an adequate outside air supply such as openable windows, as this can help to provide outside air to occupants and maintain thermal comfort.

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

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

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

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

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

The Department's Planning and Building Unit has reviewed the HPSE guidance that consideration be given to installing an indoor air quality monitor in classrooms. (DGS has purchased two handheld monitors at present)

The HPSC guidance is based on general guidance published by the Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations (REHVA). The purpose of a monitor is to assist in determining when windows should be opened. Such monitors are already included in the Department's Technical Design Guidance, published in February 2018 (TGD 033). The rationale for the inclusion of guidance on the installation of monitors within the Department's TGD at that time was driven by the increased levels of insulation and air-tightness in new classrooms built since 2018 and the objective to increase awareness about ventilation, with associated guidance on when to open windows in these very airtight school buildings. The REHVA guidance recommends that windows should be opened when the monitor indicates that CO₂ levels exceed 800 parts per million (ppm). Given that this threshold is at 800 ppm compared to the standard setting of 1,500 ppm the Department considers that the use of monitors will result in an outcome similar to the approach taken in the above practical steps which recommend that windows are open as much as possible while recognising the importance of also managing comfort levels (windows to be partially open when classroom is in use and fully open when not in use).

It is also worth noting that the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which provides scientific and technical advice to support its government decision makers during emergencies notes with low confidence that continuous monitoring of CO₂ may be possible to use as a transmission risk indicator but further research is necessary to evaluate the potential application of the approach for different spaces and to compare modelled results and actual infection rates.

Given the above, it is the Department's view that in the main windows are likely to be required to be open at a frequency and level set out above to ensure appropriate levels of ventilation in the classroom irrespective of whether the opening of windows is prompted through the indoor air quality monitor (re-active approach) or through the pro-active approach outlined in the above guidance. While this matter (and supporting data) will be kept under review, the Department does not consider it necessary for schools to install such monitors in classrooms, where the practical steps outlined above are applied. However, it is a matter for individual schools to consider whether they wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for this purpose or alternatively schools may wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for provision of permanent background ventilation, where required, as referenced in above practical steps.

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

Coronavirus COVID-19



Coronavirus
COVID-19
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<https://www.dgs.ie/covid19-protocol/>



Fully Open (Class empty)



Partially Open (Class full)



Wash



Cover



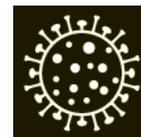
Distance

FACE COVERING TO BE WORN
Protect each other.

Ireland is operating a delay strategy
in line with WHO and ECDC advice



Riailtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Coronavirus
COVID-19
Public Health
Advice

Schools Pathway for Covid-19, the Public Health approach

Paper prepared by the Office of the Clinical Director, Health Protection, HSE.

10 February 2021



Health Protection Surveillance Centre
Lárionad Faire um Chosaint Sláinte

Introduction

There are almost 1 million students attending educational facilities in the primary and post primary sectors, across approximately 4,000 schools, in which close to 100,000 staff are employed¹.

The importance and significance of ensuring educational facilities safely open to pupils, and remain safely open for pupils and staff, is acknowledged across society and supported within the Public Health Medical community and the health services at large. Educational facilities are communities providing for not only the educational needs of pupils, but also many of their holistic, health and pastoral needs. It is a setting whereby social interaction and physical activity can be learned and occur in a place of safety, support and warmth.

It is important to note that in the months since the Covid-19 pandemic has occurred, we have learned that²:

- Children seem more likely than adults to have no symptoms or to have mild disease. Symptoms in children include cough, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, anosmia, ageusia or dysgeusia
- Investigation of cases identified in school settings suggest that child to child transmission in schools is uncommon and not the primary cause of Sars-CoV-2 infection in children, particularly in preschool and primary schools
- Children are rarely identified as the route of transmission of infection in to the household setting
- Children are not more likely than adults to spread infection to other people.
- There are some recent reports that the virus that causes Covid-19 infection may trigger a rare inflammatory disease, Paediatric Inflammatory Multisystem Syndrome, in some children. International research in to this rare disease and its association with Covid-19 is ongoing.

Both ECDC² and PHE³ have recently reported that investigations of cases identified in school settings suggest that child to child transmission in schools is uncommon and not the primary cause of SARS-CoV-2 infection in children whose onset of infection coincides with the period during which they are attending school, particularly in preschools and primary schools. PHE recent research identified that most secondary cases identified within school settings were through staff to staff transmission. This highlights the absolute importance of staff being symptom aware, exposure aware, complying with all distancing and hygiene measures amongst adults, in both the class room and transit / break times. Onwards transmission between students was responsible for the **least** number of cases in their outbreaks.

Schools are a core part of local communities, therefore it is a community endeavour to keep schools open and pupils, staff and communities safe. It is crucial that all staff, pupils and their families follow

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1. ¹ The Department of Education '[Roadmap for the full return to school](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b264b-roadmap-for-the-full-return-to-school/)'
 2. ²Covid-19 in children and the role of school settings in Covid-19 transmission, ECDC 2020
 3. ³[SARS-CoV-2 infection and transmission in educational settings: cross-sectional analysis of clusters and outbreaks in England PHE](#)

national public health advice, within and outside the school setting, and consider carefully their activities and risk exposures, to ensure the opportunity for infection with Covid-19 and spread within our own communities is minimised. The lower the rates of community infection, the less likely we are to experience significant cases, concerns or outbreaks in the school setting.

Prevention and Protection within school settings

Guidance for the re-opening of educational facilities has been provided across a range of forums including:

1. The Department of Education '[Roadmap for the full return to school](#)'
2. The HSE / HPSC Covid-19 '[Interim Recommendations for the re-opening of schools and educational facilities](#)'
3. The HSE / HPSC Covid-19 '[Infection Prevention and Control guidance for Early learning and care and School Age childcare settings during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)'

The above guidance provides robust advice to educational facilities on prevention and awareness measures necessary and recommended for the safety of staff and pupils in relation to Covid-19.

Implementation of these measures will minimise the risks for all pupils and staff with respect of Sars- CoV-2 infection. Schools should adapt and customise these recommendations for their own particular settings, adhering at all times to the principles involved.

Potential case of Covid-19 in an educational facility

It is inevitable that with confirmed cases of Covid-19 circulating within the community, there will be suspect or confirmed cases amongst pupils and staff attending, or working within, educational facilities.

However, children will also continue to display symptoms of many other circulating respiratory viruses. It is known that young children often have a persistent cold.

Children with a blocked or runny nose, but no fever can attend school or childcare, but if they require paracetamol or ibuprofen for their symptoms, they must not attend school for 48 hours and GP assessment for testing is indicated.

If a child develops a fever and symptoms such as outlined in [HPSC guidance](#) whilst in school:

- They should be immediately isolated in a pre-identified place within school, with good ventilation and preferable an outside window opened.
- The school should contact their parent or guardian and ask them to collect their child as soon as possible.
- The child should be cared for appropriately by a staff member whilst they are waiting to go home.
- The staff member should wear a mask. Use of gloves is not essential, but staff members may wish to use them. If a staff member has helped someone with symptoms, it is essential they avoid touching their nose, mouth or eyes whilst caring for them, and undertake hand hygiene.
- If any child presents extremely unwell, from whatever potential cause, 112 and an ambulance should be called. NB we do not expect this to happen in relation to Covid-19.
- After the isolation space is vacated, it should be cleaned and contact surfaces disinfected. The staff member assisting with the child does not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves, or are later advised to by public health.

Schools **do not** need to inform parents that a pupil or teacher has been removed due to their symptoms. **Other pupils or staff do not need to be removed from class.** HSE Departments of Public Health will take action if the person has confirmed Covid-19 infection on testing, which will include HSE advice and guidance on communication to school pupils and staff where needed.

The parents / legal guardian of the sick child should contact their GP as usual, to discuss clinical concerns. **If it is determined by the GP that the child/pupil requires to be tested for Covid-19, any other household contacts should be removed from the school setting.**

It is vital that schools have current lists of staff and pupils, by classes with contact telephone numbers for parents and guardians. These should be in excel and ready to share with Department of Public Health, if required and requested under Infectious Diseases legislation, 1981, as amended.

Covid-19 Assessment and testing pathway for younger children (≥ 3 months – 13 years) and older children (≥ 13 years old)

Once the child has been collected from school, the parents should contact their GP by phone if the child has symptoms of concern, and/or symptoms consistent with Covid-19 infection e.g. fever OR a new cough, shortness of breath, deterioration of existing respiratory condition OR symptoms of ageusia or dysgeusia.

Their GP will assess and advise as per normal clinical practice and refer for testing as required and outlined in [here](#). Testing is advised for any child who meets the testing criteria unless there is a strong clinical reason to do otherwise. For children aged greater than or equal to 13 years of age or who attend secondary school, please refer to the adult testing guidance [here](#).

The Covid-19 Assessment and decision making pathway for all children greater than or equal to 3 months until completion of primary school should be used to guide next steps [here](#).

Covid-19 test results remain confidential as per doctor - patient relationship. No other child, parent, family or teacher will be informed of their results. **However, parents should be advised at the point of testing that their child's swab test result if Covid-19 detected will likely need to be shared with the educational facility, if this is deemed necessary by the Medical Officer of Health, for the safe management of any potential outbreak. Only details as necessary for safe onward management are shared with an agreed senior person in the school,** such that appropriate public health actions can be undertaken.

Covid-19 Test Results

Covid-19 not detected result

If a symptomatic child has a Covid-19 'not detected' result, the child should remain at home until he/she is clinically well enough to return to school, unless parents are specifically asked by HSE Public Health for their child to remain excluded because of other investigations e.g. if the child is a known close contact of a now confirmed case.

All diarrhoea symptoms need to have been resolved for 48 hours prior to return to school.

Confirmed cases of Covid-19

Confirmed cases will be contacted directly by the contact tracing centres and case information and contact identification will be initiated. The case will be referred to the Medical Officer of Health within the regional Public Health Department, for onward Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA) and management in this setting.

The Medical Officer of Health (Consultant in Public Health Medicine, MOH), and teams will liaise directly with the school and inform them of the confirmed case as necessary; will undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment to inform any further actions and recommendations by the Medical Officer of Health.

The MOH has statutory responsibility (Appendix 1) under the Infectious Diseases regulations, 1981, as amended to investigate and manage infectious disease sources

¹ *"On becoming aware, whether from a notification or intimation under these Regulations or otherwise, of a case or a suspected case of an infectious disease or of a probable source of infection with such disease, a medical officer of health, or a health officer on the advice of a medical officer of health, shall make such enquiries and take such steps as are necessary or desirable for investigating the nature and source of such infection, for preventing the spread of such infection and for removing conditions favourable to such infection."*

Public Health principles for management of outbreaks, or potential outbreaks, and aligned testing strategy within the educational facility

- Public health will urgently discuss with the school to establish any appropriate exclusions, i.e. advice to isolate for identified staff or students and to remove from school setting based on an informed Public Health Risk Assessment.
- Core to the PHRA will be assessing the likelihood of onward transmission from the case identified. This will inform their further actions.
- Every facility will be unique in how the schools are organised and therefore the risks associated within them will be unique too e.g. special educational needs settings, primary, secondary and boarding schools will all have very different environments, and will need to be assessed separately.
- HSE Public Health will assess whether the index case is also likely to be the primary case within the school setting or a secondary case. They will assess the likelihood of onward transmission from the case identified. This will inform their further actions.

- **The definition of close contacts within the school setting will be variable. It will not be automatically assumed that a whole class will be deemed as close contacts.** This is because the school settings are so varied e.g. in young primary school children, 'pods' will likely be deemed close contacts and all removed. In secondary settings where there is social distancing rather than a 'pod' per se, close contacts will be determined by proximity and interaction with the index case; class placement; classroom structure; common travel; social networks and friendship groups etc.

- Close contacts will be identified following PHRA and engagement with the school and removed from the school setting. They will be tested as per national contact guidelines (Day 0 and 10) and they should be advised to restrict their movements and remain alert for symptoms, as per national guidelines.

- Onward testing strategy will be determined by information from the initial risk assessment. **There is no blanket policy to test entire classes or years.** The strategy will be determined after risk assessment of the confirmed case, considering the likely source of infection and the likely potential for onward transmission of infection within the school setting.
- The risk assessment may be dynamic and change as new information becomes available.
- The testing strategy may evolve as information unfolds.
- There may be other community close contacts who will also be excluded from the school but because of their community exposure NOT their school exposure e.g. siblings / cousins etc
- Depending on results from testing, or following initial PHRA, the MOH may recommend wide spread swabbing within a class or a facility under HSE mass testing processes.
- Whether all students from a class / year are removed whilst undergoing testing, or whether remain in school, will be determined by the risk assessment. Drivers of removal are as per attached drivers for partial school closure.
- An Outbreak Control Team may be called as appropriate, and to assist the Medical Officer of Health in the investigation and control of Covid-19 cases and outbreaks.
- A general outbreak plan for Covid-19 outbreaks can be found [here](#)
- ACTION FOR SCHOOLS

To inform the public health risk assessment and to manage cases and outbreaks and identify relevant contacts, schools should have prepared a summary outlining the below ready to give to the Medical Officer of Health as part of the statutory investigation and management of Covid-19.

- a brief description of the school (type, numbers of staff and students and special features) pertaining to the schools
- A list of staff and students with appropriate contact telephone numbers
- Prepare a broad description of classrooms
- An outline of the staff and students movements around the school, between lessons and breaks
- A list of 'pods' and 'bubbles' should be kept up to date

Consideration of the need for full, or partial, educational facility closure

If there are concerns regarding the need for closure, or partial closure, of an educational facility,

these will be discussed by the MOH in conjunction with the educational facility, and as part of local outbreak control teams within the Departments of Public Health. Any decision to close, or partially close, an educational facility will be based on the best approach to control the spread of Covid-19 and allow opportunity to remove the conditions favourable to such infection, as deemed necessary and appropriate by the MOH. In the evaluation of the need for closure of any educational facility affected by any outbreak of infectious disease, the standard Public Health approach is to utilise a Risk Assessment model. This enables the most accurate and effective determination of the likely health impacts of a range of possible interventions, ranging from exclusion and testing of a small group or 'pod' of pupils, up to and including closure of an affected facility. The actual criteria used by an MOH, may be modified in the light of local conditions or specific local information, which informs the Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA) required to provide for sensible and safe decisions regarding closure and, by extension, reopening of an educational facility.

There are marked differences in educational facilities spanning age (from 5-18 years), and the behavioural and medical needs of pupils attending the educational facilities. Establishing these facts will focus the PHRA undertaken by the MOH and their teams. It is unlikely that a single issue (or single case of Covid19) would automatically lead to a decision to close an educational facility, although multiple cases across the facility setting will increase the likelihood of school closure.

Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA)

Regional Departments of Public Health will undertake a PHRA to explore the following:

- unique information and factors relevant to that particular educational facility and its infrastructure, with regard to infection transmission
- interactions of the community of pupils and teachers both within the school and how they interlink within the wider community
- patterns of infection within the wider local community and
- consider general community infection rates in the regions serviced by the educational facility

This information will inform the decisions regarding the need for full, or partial, closure of any educational establishment, or any control measures to be immediately implemented short of actual closure. A range of issues (e.g. multiple cases in different classes) may lead the Medical Officer of Health, in conjunction with any relevant Outbreak Control Team (OCT), to decide that maintaining an open facility will present ongoing risk to staff, pupils and the wider community above which that is acceptable. Also keeping a school open may not allow for the adequate control of the spread of infection or adequate removal of the conditions favourable to infection.

Criteria for closure (Full or partial)

Criteria to be ordinarily considered with regard to any potential outbreak and educational facility closure, or partial facility closure, include but are not limited to:

1. Evidence or clear concern that spread within the school is the primary driver of cases, or suspect cases, notified. This is as opposed to spread of infection externally within the community setting (e.g. within households where children / teachers live etc)
2. The numbers of, or rate of increase of, Covid-19 detected cases amongst staff / pupils is concerning
3. The number and complexity of staff and pupil family units and structures within the educational facility setting amongst those as either cases, contacts or suspected cases e.g. teacher with several children / close cousins in the educational facility all across different years
4. The severity of cases (e.g. hospitalised) amongst children / staff is atypical and giving rise to concern e.g. several hospitalisations amongst children who would be pre-morbidly well
5. Physical structure or layout of school which limits the range or adequacy for any increased recommended prevention measures e.g. further social distancing implementation within pods or groups, more specific recommendations relating to hygiene or cleaning measures
6. Age group or ability of students e.g. if it is an educational facility or unit caring and educating pupils with specific medical or behavioural needs. This may compromise the ability for staff and pupils to realistically comply effectively with requirements for symptom awareness, and disease transmission prevention recommendations during an outbreak
7. Inability to undertake enhanced infection, prevention and control measures as might be recommended from identification of transmission risks within the setting of concern e.g. due to nature of toys or equipment required, particularly for educational facilities or units for children with behavioural or physical needs and limitations
8. Concerns regarding engagement with public health medical teams of senior personnel within the educational facility or system, with regard to their understanding of, or commitment to, implement sufficient risk mitigation and infection prevention and control measures as identified as necessary for the particular educational setting, in light of confirmed or suspect cases of Covid-19
9. Evidence that the pupils (and families) / teachers are not adequately participating in recommended control measures e.g. not reporting and excluding children with mild symptoms; re-enforcing training and implementation of social distancing and hygiene measures across the continuum of school and home etc
10. Any evidence that significant spread in wider local community can be shown, or be highly suspected of being linked or intertwined with the educational facility setting

11. Results from any swabbing recommendations identified a large number/high proportion of asymptomatic cases, particularly amongst groupings or pods not previously considered to be at high risk of infection transmission

12. Inability of the educational facility to safely operate as per e.g. legal requirements for staff : pupil ratios if partial closure was being considered

In all Public Health investigations, in which closure of an educational facility affected by any infectious disease outbreak is being considered, the criteria guiding closure will broadly provide the criteria for reopening. However, outbreaks are dynamic, and in the course of the investigation new risks may be identified and therefore new parameters required to be included for criteria to re-open or allow for full staff / pupil return. A list of the agreed criteria for closure (involving for example, high levels of disease, the requirement of decontamination to a level that meets with the approval of the MOH, (OCT), the compliance of management and staff etc), will form the basis for the criteria to guide reopening. It would only be when all these criteria, and any additional identified in the process of investigation have been satisfied, that a decision on reopening, or full return of staff / pupils would be made by the MOH.

As a result, each educational facility Covid-19 outbreak will be assessed on an individual basis and a unique decision made as to whether it is safe for the facility to remain fully or partially open, or whether closure is necessary.

It should be noted that Medical Officers of Health and their teams do not have powers of inspection.

Current context

There is significant interest across the public and political domain with regard to Covid-19 and educational facilities. Decisions on the need to exclude any pupils, test pupils, close, or partially close any educational facility are undertaken by Medical Officer of Health, informed by a robust Public Health Risk Assessment.

Clearly there is much evidence evolving about education facilities – it will therefore be a dynamic process and this is appropriate

Appendix 1 – Legislative role of the Medical Officer of Health

Infectious Disease regulations

The Infectious Diseases Regulations (S.I. No. 390 of 1981) confer a general power on the Medical Officer for Health (MOH) to “take steps...for preventing the spread of [an]infection” where the MOH is aware of a suspected case of infection or a probable source of infection. The 1981 Regulations were amended by S.I. No 53 of 2020, to include COVID-19. Article 11 of S.I. No. 390 provides that:

“On becoming aware, whether from a notification or intimation under these Regulations or otherwise, of a case or a suspected case of an infectious disease or of a probable source of infection with such disease, a medical officer of health, or a health officer on the advice of a medical officer of health, shall make such enquiries and take such steps as are necessary or desirable for investigating the nature and source of such infection, for preventing the spread of such infection and for removing conditions favourable to such infection.”

This power may be enforceable by the risk of criminal liability under Article 19: *“19. A person who refuses to comply with a requirement or direction given or a request for information made in pursuance of any of the provisions of these Regulations shall be guilty of a contravention of these Regulations.”*

After investigating the outbreak and having put in place the necessary prevention measures, the MOH may assess the risk to staff, pupils or the wider community continues. In that case the use of Infectious Diseases regulations may need to be exercised. If a recommendation to close, or partially close an educational facility based on criteria and powers in S.I. No. 390 of 1981, the reasons for closure should be explained and the actions required or conditions to re-open.

In practice, actions by the MOH are usually considered in the context of an OCT. Experience from other settings shows that closures usually result when implementation of a set of preventive actions is not sufficient to control an outbreak and consensus is reached on the need for closure.