



St. Mary's Diocesan School

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COVID-19 Policy Statement & Response Plan

Updated 23rd August 2021 – (Please see appendix A for any new requirements/updates since first issued August 2020)

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

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

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

This policy statement is underpinned by advice with public health advice issued by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and in compliance with the "Return to Work Safely Protocols"

developed by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). This document outlines the steps our school will take to minimise the risk of infection and to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

This policy document outlines the steps and procedures to:

Minimise the risk of the introduction of COVID-19 into the school

Minimise the spread of COVID-19 in the school

The Board of Management, Staff, Students and Visitors will adhere to the following:

Preparing for Return to School

Staff will complete a Return to Work Form (RTW) and return to Lorraine Noone or email LNoone@stmarysds.ie by for their return to work on the 26th August.

Staff will have a refresher on covid procedures and updates to this document will be sent onto all staff.

Staff have completed Induction Training in August 2020.

Inform Principal if any staff member is in the High Risk category.

Lead Worker Representative (LWR) X 2 appointed by BOM.

Communication to Parents regarding returning to school outlining new procedures with a particular emphasis on attending school if only free of COVID-19 symptoms and procedures in relation to the minimisation of the spread of COVID-19 in our school. Parents will be asked to inform school management of high risk students to COVID-19 in advance of the reopening of the school so that necessary precautions/arrangements can take place by emailing cerrie.byrne@stmarysds.ie

Policies updated to reflect procedures around reducing risk regarding COVID-19. These include a Health & Safety Risk Assessment, Code of Behaviour and Acceptable Use Policy.

Signage displayed around the school regarding reducing the spread of COVID-19 in our school.

All unnecessary items of clutter and/or storage units will be removed from our school to create more space particularly in classrooms.

Desks/Chairs will be spaced out in classes to maximise potential to allow for physical distancing in the classroom.

Access to school will be strictly controlled in relation to non-staff and visitors by recording names, contact numbers and time spent on the school grounds. There will be limited access for visitors by appointment only.

Communication

Provide, as necessary, up to date information to our staff and students on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie through various means such as letter, email and social media including the school App and website.

Encourage and foster clear two-way communication with all stakeholders through honest dialogue using various forms such as regular emails, meetings and communication through the LWR and senior management of the school.

All communication regarding the implementation of this plan to be conducted in an open and transparent way with respect for all stakeholders a key underlining principle to the successful implementation of the plan.

Lead Worker Representatives (LWR)

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others, they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management. The Board of Management have appointed Rosaleen Brennan and Martina Lonergan as the Lead Worker Representatives of St Mary's Diocesan School.

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;

Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;

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

Consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19;

Promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;

Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;

Monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;

Conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week);

Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;

Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;

Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;

Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;

Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Control Measures to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 in St Mary's Diocesan School

Staff, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into schools:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms which are:

High temperature

Cough

Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties

Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

To minimise risk of introduction we will:

Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.

Advise staff and students not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.

Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the principal (or deputy principal if the principal is unavailable) promptly;

Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school

Advise everyone entering the school building that they need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser. They will also inform the main office relevant details for contact tracing purposes.

Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal/other nominated staff and should be received at the main office.

Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19 in St Mary's Diocesan School

Respiratory Hygiene

Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or a bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Dispose of the tissue immediately into a bin.

Hand Hygiene

St Mary's will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the school on how to wash your hands.

A system will be employed to avoid congregation of people waiting to wash hands.

Hand Sanitiser units will be available throughout the school.

Students will wash their hands regularly during the day.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing falls into two categories

Increasing separation

The following strategies will/have been employed in St Mary's Diocesan School to increase separation:

Clutter removed from school/classrooms

Class spaces reconfigured

Timetable reviewed and student-based classrooms for 1st, 2nd, 3rd & TY students

Utilising other space in the school for teaching

Reconfiguring classrooms

Locker use for students has been suspended until guidance on physical distancing is updated by the HSE

Overflow arrangements in some cases to allow for live streaming of classes

Enhanced Supervision before school, at break times and during class changeovers

Decreasing Interaction

Student based classrooms for 1st, 2nd, 3rd & TY students

Students to move quickly between class

Queue management system in canteen

Separate year group break time areas

Increased supervision in early morning, break and transition times

Extra staffroom to increase space for staff

Locker use for students has been suspended until further notice

Staff meetings in larger rooms/smaller groups and/or remote meetings

No hand shaking with students and staff

One-way system developed for students and staff throughout the school building

Face Coverings/PPE

St Mary's Diocesan School will be following public health advice regarding the use of face coverings in educational settings namely:

It is requirement that teachers, staff and students attending secondary schools wear a face-covering when a physical distance of one/two metres from other staff or students cannot be maintained.

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

All children on the post primary school transport scheme should be asked to wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Face coverings are defined as face mask (nose and mouth only) and a see-through visor. These should be plain and non-offensive coverings.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

Any person with difficulty breathing

Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated

Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance

Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

Please note that use of gloves is not appropriate in relation to reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19. Gloves may only be necessary in situations such as cleaning, intimate care settings or some practical classes/lessons.

Extra-Curricular Activities

All extra-curricular activities are suspended until further notice pending further guidelines from the HSE. This action will allow the school to reintroduce students to the school curriculum and to allow time for the response plan to be implemented in a safe and secure way.

Hygiene and Cleaning

The following will apply in St Mary's Diocesan school:

A full comprehensive cleaning process will be employed each evening in all school buildings

Additional cleaning will be provided and focussed on frequently touched surfaces.

School cleaning is set out in HPSC advice and will be covered in the induction training.

The Lead Worker Representatives will carry out an inspection twice a week on all matters regarding the COVID-19 Response plan including cleaning procedures.

The class teacher and students will have the responsibility to clean/wipe down used surfaces before leaving the room with disinfectant/sanitiser products.

Shower facilities will NOT be available for both staff and students.

Staff must clean and use their own equipment and utensils.

A deep clean of a room will take place in the event of a student/staff with suspected COVID-19 was present.

Procedures in relation to a suspected case of COVID-19

Staff and students should not attend school if displaying any of the symptoms of COVID-19. The following procedures apply if a suspected case arises in St Mary's Diocesan School:

If the person with the suspected case is a student, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately

Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route (nearest exit door of the building), keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.

The designated isolation area is in the prefab at the main entrance.

If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a student should wear a face covering or mask.

Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. He 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 to 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 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect.

Carry out an assessment of the incident, including a record of symptoms which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.

Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

If staff are displaying symptoms, they must inform the Principal (or Deputy Principal(s)) and leave the building, call their GP and self-isolate until further advice from their GP.

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

Staff Responsibilities

Staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care for their own health & safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and to protect health & safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.

The staff have duties in the following:

Adhere to the COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.

Complete the RTW form

Must complete the COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training prior to their return to work.

Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.

Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Coordinate practices and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.

Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.

Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.

Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.

Adhere to the procedure outlined above if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility.

Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

COVID-19 related absence management

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

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Support for staff wellbeing will be provided for by Department Support Services including the PDST, CSL and the HSE's Health Promotion Team. The occupational Health Strategy comprises of the Employee Assistance Service (EAS) and Occupational Health (MEDMARK). The EAS is provided by Spectrum Life. They can be contacted on a helpline 1800 411057 for help and advice.

All stakeholders will:

continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff

provide up to date information to our staff and students on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie

display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques

agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan in relation to summer provision

inform all staff and students of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements

adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the public health guidance and direction of the Department of Education

keep a contact log to help with contact tracing

ensure staff and students engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education

implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school

provide instructions for staff and students to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time

implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix A

Summary of additions to COVID-19 Response Plans required by 'Work Safely Protocol'

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW) & Appendix 6 Checklist for School Management

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Schools should request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Infection Prevention Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

Advise staff and pupils to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test

Advise staff and parents/students not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:

If they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19

If they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus

If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

Advise staff and parents/students to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;

Hand Hygiene

There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands

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

Physical Distancing

Ventilation

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice '*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*'

The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The department has also published guidance on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide monitors.

Use of PPE in Schools

Medical Grade Masks

Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN16483 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

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

Staff Duties

Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:

If they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus

If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school

Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

Employee Assistance Service

Information updated in this section.

Pre-Return to Work Form COVID-19

New form revised by HSE May 2021

Checklist for School Management Staff

Requested confirmation that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following periods of closure such as school holidays.

Advised staff and pupils not to return to or attend school if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 or if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus.

Advised staff and parents/students not to return or attend school if they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel

Advised staff and pupils to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;

Hand / Respiratory Hygiene

Staff and pupils need to wash their hands or use handsanitiser

When entering and exiting vehicles

When entering and exiting school buildings

Physical Distancing

Have you advised staff of the Department's guidance to achieve good ventilation

Have you checked any mechanical ventilation systems to ensure an adequate supply of fresh air is used

Checklist for dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19

A nominated member of the school management team will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to.

Checklist for cleaning

A cleaning schedule to be made available to cleaning staff including:

Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces such as vending machines, coffee machines and door handles