

Mercy Primary School

School Covid-19 Response Plan

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1 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 Mercy Primary 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 (NPHET).

It is important that any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of school based teaching, learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol and minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHET 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 developmental 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.

This document aims to provide details of:

1. **COVID-19 School Policy**
2. **Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
3. **Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
4. **Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
5. **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
6. **Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
7. **Control Measures**
8. **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
9. **Staff Duties**
10. **Covid related absence management**
11. **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

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, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpssc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie;

2 MERCY PRIMARY SCHOOL COVID-19 Policy

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

COVID 19 Policy Statement

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

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

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

This can be done through clear communication with the Lead Worker Representative(s)

Signed: *Barbara Hanamy*

Date: 26/8/2020

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The BoM aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace 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.

3 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 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.

4 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. Ann Murray is the Lead Worker Representative for this school.

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
Ann Murray	amurray@mercyprimaryschool.ie

The role of the lead 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.

5 Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

The Department of Education and Skills have engaged with the HSA in order to provide schools with guidance on updating their Risk Assessments and Safety Statements. This updated Risk Assessment will be available on the school website in due course.

6 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. Mercy Primary 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. 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 being infected by the coronavirus:**

6.1 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.

6.2 Maintain social distancing

This section will be constantly updated with public health advice. The advice to date is for staff to try to maintain distance of 1-2 m indoors and to wear Visor / facemask at all times.

6.3 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.

6.4 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 in the covered bins provided in the school.

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.

6.4.1 Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a covered bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 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 enter 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>

6.4.4 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.

7 Control Measures- Mercy Primary School Birr

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 for our school are outlined as follows:

- All staff to complete “ pre-return to work questionnaire” and complete the DES COVID19 safety training –
- COVID19 policy and risk assessment updated.
- Increased cleaning organised for the school
- Signage (both inside and outside building) and sanitizing stations set up in school.
- PPE supplies in school to be used accordingly.
- Parents will be asked to ensure no pupil comes to school feeling unwell.
- As per the protocols, staff will wear masks/visors at all times.
- Pupils will not be required to wear masks or visors unless parents wish it re underlying condition / family reason.
- Sanitiser is available in all classrooms.
- We have purchased a sanitizer machine which will be used to sanitise desks, chairs, shelves, equipment every day.
- 3 isolation rooms have been set up so any pupil / staff member who displays symptoms can go there and be supervised safely until collection. Then contact tracing sheet at door can be used in case of positive test. We also have a contactless thermometer on site for use in such situations.
- All classes and toilets are set up with soap, paper towels and pedal bins.
- Staff have been supplied with cleaning and sanitizing equipment to look after own areas and touch points.
- Parents to be asked to follow the drop-off and collection instructions in the Logistics Plan at all times to ensure the safety of all.
- Contactless temperature checks on arrival for school visitors. Anyone with temperature of 38’ and over will be asked to leave the school premises.

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.

Any staff / pupils who have travelled to a country on the RED list must not return to school / work and must self-isolate for the recommended 14 days. (Note these RED countries can change)

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:

7.1 Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school (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.

7.2 Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- Covid-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school
- Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and 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.

7.3 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. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. These 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 and should be available in each classroom.

7.4 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, door handles and surfaces. 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.

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

7.5 Access to the school building /contact log

Access to the school 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 to the school. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts. In addition, see visitor contact log at Appendix 2.

7.6 Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school according to current occupational and public health guidance. Each staff member must consider their own health and personal circumstances and adapt their use of PPE accordingly. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid 19 is identified while the school is in operation

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

7.7 First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Mercy Primary 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 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

8 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 Mercy Primary School will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

3 designated isolation areas have been identified within the school building. These designated isolation areas are 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 Mercy Primary School the following procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times

- A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms. She should wear the mask while waiting and while exiting the premises.
- Parents will be requested to contact their GP and to furnish the school with evidence of this before the child can return to school.
- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided
- Public transport of any kind should not be used to transport the child home from the school.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.
- Any staff member displaying symptoms will be asked to leave the school and contact their GP. The procedures above will follow on from here.

Fictional Scenario- To allow for understanding of above

“Pupil B” displaying symptoms of COVID-19 while at school.

Pupil B immediately sent in a calm, supportive and reassuring manner to isolation room.

Safe supervision of room organised and parent contacted to call to school to collect pupil B.

Parent must contact their GP to seek medical advice.

Pupil B is then recommended for testing (stay out of school) or is deemed fit to return. Parent must have a GP note approving the return to school.

If a positive test result occurs , the HSE will step in to advise the school- bubble testing etc.

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.

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:

- Inform school management if they have travelled to any country outlined on RED list and if so then self-isolate for 14 days as recommended by NPHET.
- 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
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19
- Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- Complete the RTW form before they 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 complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return

- to school
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- 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.

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 supports healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

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