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**Scoil Mhuire, Ballincollig, COVID - 19 Response Plan and Health and Safety
Statement
2020-'21
Updated March 2021**

This COVID - 19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire in putting in place measures to ensure the safe return to school for all.

This COVID - 19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for Scoil Mhuire to meet the Government's 'COVID - 19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools'.

COVID-19 Policy Statement

Scoil Mhuire, Ballincollig, is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan.

The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus.

We will:

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

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions. This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: *Fr George O'Mahony (Chairperson)* Date: *31st August 2020*

Planning and Preparing for Return to School

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

Details for the reopening of Scoil Mhuire and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Signage

Scoil Mhuire will display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. Scoil Mhuire will display posters promoting good hand and respiratory hygiene in prominent areas in the school such as the office, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to work in Scoil Mhuire, staff must complete a **Return to Work (School) [RTW(s)]** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal.

A RTW form should only be completed and returned to the school prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace. This RTW form will be completed by staff after the January/February/March 2021 school closure. The staff will be requested to confirm (verbally or in writing) that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

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 school 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.

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 of Scoil Mhuire and the School Management Team.

Scoil Mhuire has appointed a Lead Worker Representative (Sinéad Mhistéil) and Assistant Lead Worker Representative (Suzanne Mhic Ghiollachuda) in order to ensure all guidelines in relation to the safe return to school for all are adhered to.

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

- Work collaboratively with the school management team and BOM 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 Scoil Mhuire.
- 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 Scoil Mhuire.
- Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in Scoil Mhuire.

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 workers who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

Name(s) of Lead Worker representative:	Contact details
Sinéad Mhistéil	smhisteil@scoilmhuireballincollig.ie
Suzanne Mhic Ghiollachuda	smhicghiollachuda@scoilmhuireballincollig.ie

All staff, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors in Scoil Mhuire 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.

Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment within Scoil Mhuire.

Scoil Mhuire have renewed their emergency procedure involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the COVID-19 School Response Plan. Changes to the school's existing emergency procedures will be detailed to staff before they return to school on September 1st 2020.

Scoil Mhuire have also reviewed their existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan.

General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

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

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

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This can be achieved through the following measures:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- Staff, parents and pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases should not attend school, phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- Staff, parents and pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID-19 should not attend school and follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Staff who are in close contact with someone who is displaying symptoms or awaiting a test for COVID-19 should not attend school and should follow HSE advice.
- Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Everyone entering the school building should be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day are not permitted and should only be on school grounds by prior arrangement (phone call to the school) and should be received at a specific contact point (the main front door of Scoil Mhuire).

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

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

Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

Pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of the following:

a. Wash your Hands Frequently

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

Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

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>

b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers

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

Hand sanitisers will be available in each classroom. Dispensers will be located on the wall at entry and exit points to classrooms.

Hand sanitizer dispensers will also be available for use at each entry point to the school.

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

c. 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.

d. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace.

Note: Guidance on the physical distancing requirements will be informed by public health advice for schools and will be updated as required.

e. Practice respiratory hygiene

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

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

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

Do

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

Do Not

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

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.

Control Measures

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school.

These control measures are outlined in this document.

The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

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

The following control measures have been put in place:

- 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 pupils 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 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.

a. Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form prior to any return to the school facility (see section 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. Staff will complete this RTW form following the January/February/March 2021 school closure.

b. 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.

c. Physical Distancing

Each class will be considered a 'bubble'. This will consist of the children in the class, the class teacher and an SNA if they are also present in the room.

The desks in the classroom will be arranged according to Department of Education & Skills guidelines.

As far as possible pupils will be 1 metre from each other. Where this is not possible, pupils will be grouped in pods and pupils will stay in the same pods to the greatest degree possible.

Each class bubble will play separately on the yard and class groups will not mix. The yard will be divided into sections so that class bubbles can't mix.

Where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m from children. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

If teachers need to be in close proximity to a child/children they are to wear a face covering (masks).

Wearing a visor is sufficient when teachers **can** maintain a 2m distance from pupils.

Masks and visors will be provided by the school for the staff.

Teacher will continually consider maximizing distance and minimizing when planning their lessons. Special attention will be given to Physical Education, Music/Singing and Drama. Guidelines from the Department of Education will be followed.

There will be no congregating of staff in any area within the school.

Careful consideration will be given to facilitating distancing of staff during break times. The school hall will be used as a second staffroom. Breaks will be staggered.

Adults need to maintain a 2m distance from each other at all times.

Teachers are also asked to limit their interactions in the school office. To prevent too many people handling the photocopier etc. teachers are asked to have their photocopying needs pre-arranged and left into the office to be completed by the secretary.

There is a maximum of two people allowed in the office at any given time.

The office has a Perspex screen around the front of the desk and children are encouraged to wait at the door if they are going to the office for any reason.

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.

d. 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 facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

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

Staff are asked to use their own cups, cutlery etc. when eating and drinking in school. There will be no sharing of kitchenware and utensils.

e. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Teachers and staff **will** be required to wear face coverings (visors/masks), similar to those worn in shops when a distance of 2m cannot be maintained.

Visors will be provided for all staff members. A back up supply of masks will also be available.

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. All staff will be required to wear masks and gloves when dealing with an accident and performing First Aid.

When close contact is required staff **must** wear face coverings.

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

Primary school children will not be required to wear face coverings unless displaying symptoms of COVID-19 as they wait in the isolation area.

f. Wearing of Gloves:

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

g. Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made. All tables in all classrooms will be cleaned daily.

A written cleaning schedule will be made available to cleaning staff. It will include cleaning of frequently touched surfaces such as door handles.

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

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

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

There will be daily collection of used waste disposal bags from offices, classrooms, toilets and other areas within the school facility.

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

h. Access to the school building /contact log

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures which is by appointment only or having been pre-arranged by phone call to the office.

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

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts.

A reception desk will be placed inside the main entrance door of the main building. The secretary at the main entrance will be able to meet visitors at this entrance and deal with anything that needs to be given to pupils etc.

In the case of a child having to go home early, or if they are unwell the secretary will be able to bring the child to this door to meet parents and prevent anyone entering the building with the exception of staff and pupils.

There will also be a bell at this door to alert the main office to a visitor if the secretary is not at her desk at the time.

i. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedures shall continue to apply in Scoil Mhuire.

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

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

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 Scoil Mhuire will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

A designated isolation area has been identified as the **'Parents' Room'** within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 has been considered and a contingency plan which allocates the **Halla** as a second isolation area for dealing with additional cases has been put in place. The designated isolation room (Parents' room) is away from other staff and pupils. It contains a table and chair. If the Halla is needed, it will be closed immediately for all its usual activities.

The principal or her delegate from the school management team will be responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Scoil Mhuire the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately.
- The teacher must immediately supply the child with a mask. The teacher themselves should also wear a mask. The teacher will then escort the child to the isolation area (Parents' Room) maintaining a 2m distance at all times.
- The child will be placed in the Parents' Room. The teacher can then inform the secretary in the office to call the parents of the child presenting with symptoms. An SNA or other member of staff will supervise the pupil from the corridor.
- The child's desk and chair in the classroom will be cleaned thoroughly and the Isolation Area will be given a deep clean.

In the case of adults presenting with symptoms:

- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

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

School staff will 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

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:

- 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 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.

- Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health
- 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.

Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES.

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire 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 of Scoil Mhuire 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.

The Employee Assistance Service (as funded by the Department of Education & Skills) is now being provided by **Spectrum.Life**. Contact details are provided to staff.

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