

Scoil Áine Naofa
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Latest Review: 01/03/2022.

COVID-19 POLICY STATEMENT.

This note is to inform all school stakeholders of the new public health advice from 28th Feb. 2022.

St. Anne's Loreto P.S. 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 updated the following COVID-19 Response Plan to reflect the guidance to schools issued from the DE following the mid-term break 2022. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and the combined support of all our Parents/Guardians is much appreciated.

It is understood that schools may need time in order to make any adjustments depending on their own circumstances. It is not expected that any work will be undertaken over the mid-term break.

On 21st of January 2022, the Government announced the easing of a number of public health measures. The infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings were to remain in place until 28th February 2022, so that all children of school going age would have the opportunity to avail of the Covid-19 vaccines.

On 17th February 2022, NPHE reviewed the remaining public health measures including the infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings.

Having closely considered relevant epidemiological data and other matters as set out in their letter of 17 February 2022, the Government has accepted the recommendations of the NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools.

- ✓ If members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so. Continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised.
- ✓ Critical components of the collective response in relation to COVID-19 continue to apply including self-isolation if symptomatic (even if fully vaccinated/boosted) or if having a positive COVID-19 test.

In general, schools should now resume normal school routines and normal teaching and learning activities.

Staying at home if you have symptoms/Return to School Protocol.

Staff and pupils are advised **not** to return to school if they are identified by the HSE as a confirmed case. The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms **remains** – for students and staff alike. One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread.

Hand Hygiene.

Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Funding will continue to issue to schools for the purchase of PPE, including hand sanitiser.

Face coverings/mask wearing.

It is no longer a requirement for staff or pupils/students to wear a face covering/mask in school. Staff and student/pupils can continue to wear a face covering/mask if they wish to do so on a personal basis and schools should continue to make masks available on request as they are currently doing. Funding to support the purchase of PPE, including masks, will continue to be made available to schools.

School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing.

With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised. All other measures relating to hygiene (including the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning of services) and pre-assigned seating will remain in place subject to further review.

Cleaning and Hygiene in schools.

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. This funding will continue for this academic year and will be reviewed in advance of the start of the next school year.

Our daily ‘Duty Cleaner’ continues to be employed to maximise health, safety and hygiene standards for all throughout the school day.

All staff will have access to PPE and cleaning products and will be required to clean their own work station area daily. Staff will also oversee pupils’ cleaning of their own work station area daily.

Physical Distancing.

Primary Schools Physical distancing has been implemented in primary schools mainly by structuring pupils and their teachers into class bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, to the extent that this was practical.

It is recognised that this has impacted on teaching and learning and the normal socialising and mixing between and within classes and year groups. As the general requirement for physical distancing in society no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain class pods and bubbles.

This will facilitate a return to team teaching, sports, singing and music and inter schools activities.

Where schools implemented staggered drop offs or pickups or breaks, these are no longer necessary.

Visitors to schools/Parent teacher meetings.

There is no longer a requirement to restrict visitors to schools and schools should revert to the normal arrangements for visitors.

Return to Work Form/ return to schools form.

Schools no longer need to request staff or pupils/students to complete a Return to Work form or a Return to School form after school holidays/breaks.

Antigen testing arrangements for children in primary schools and special classes.

As part of the transition arrangements the HSE will continue with the current processes to support the provision of antigen tests to primary schools, special schools and childcare settings.

The Antigen Free phone number is: 1800 110055 or parents may order antigen tests online via www.hse.ie/schooltest.

The call centre opening hours will be altered slightly and from next week onwards will be 8:45am to 6:00pm Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays). The online portal will remain operational 24/7.

Participation in antigen testing is voluntary, therefore it is not necessary for parents to share information with the school about whether they have requested antigen tests and nor to confirm negative antigen tests.

Children who are well should continue to come to school whether they participate in antigen testing or not.

Staffing flexibility arrangements.

It is recognised that public health advice to remain at home if symptomatic or if testing positive for Covid-19 will result in a continued demand for substitutes and the need for some continuing flexibility in regard to leave arrangements.

Overseas Travel

If anyone within the school community has travelled outside of Ireland they are advised to consult and rigorously follow latest Government advice on this matter in order to maintain safety for everyone on-site.

Collection of Children during the School Day

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply:

- When the adult arrives at the school, they should use the intercom at the front door of the school to alert the office that they have arrived. **Please note the Office Lunchtime is 1.10 – 1.45pm daily.**
- The child will be brought from their class to the adult, at the front door, by a member of staff.
- The adult who is collecting will be asked permission for staff to sign the child out.

Yard.

Yards will be supervised by all teaching and non-teaching staff as heretofore. Please be aware that yards will now be busier as we are returning to one set of morning break/lunch break times for all classes.

P.E.

Following advice going forward our school hall is deemed appropriate for school P.E. and activities.

Distance Learning.

Though we do not wish to return to ‘Distance Learning’ as before, this approach is being used for some homework exercises to maintain these skills going forward as a useful lifeskill.

All school partners 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 Representatives led by Ms. O’ Bric, Principal.

Signed: *Máire O’Donoghue* Date: 01st March 2022.
Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Signed: *Cíodhna O’Bric.* Date: 01st March 2022.
Principal.