

# Mercy Convent Primary School, Naas.

## Plan for Re-opening of the School

### Underlying Principles

- The school has a responsibility to make an effort to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.
- This plan is a working document and will be kept under review. It will be subject to change following regular review.

**Covid-19 Manager: Acting Principal Anita Comer**

**Lead Worker Representative: Laura Mc Glynn**

**Assistant Lead Worker Representative: Kathleen Barron**

**All staff members will be required to complete a “Return to the Workplace” form prior to returning for the new school year.**

**They will also be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction training prior to -returning.**

### Physical Distancing

Every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

- All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system.
- The school is split into 2 groups with each group having different starting times, break times, lunch times and finishing times.
- Group A will consist of 3 Junior Infant classes, 3 Senior Infant classes, 3 First, 2 Second and 2 Third classes.
- Group B will consist of 3 Fourth, 3 Fifth and 3 Sixth classes.
- The day will include 2 x 20 minute breaks.
- Within each class from 3rd to 6th, the children will be further divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods, where possible. All unnecessary furniture has been removed from these classrooms to create as much space as possible.
- Whilst social distancing is not required in Infants to Second class, every effort will be made to divide each bubble into pods and to maintain physical distance.

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### Timetables

We appreciate your support as we try to safely re-open the school building. If at all possible we request you not to come onto the school grounds or into the school building unless it is essential. We appreciate that dropping off and collecting the Junior & Senior Infant pupils at their designated doors is essential for the first few weeks, but for the older pupils a drop-off at the school gate is desirable. Working together we hope to be able to progress the re-opening in as safe a manner as possible for all.

We would ask all parents to familiarise themselves with the following drop-off and collection routines for the safe delivery and collection of pupils from school. Please be patient as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year.

It is imperative that:

- adults do not come within 2m of each other at drop-off / collection times.
- parents do not try to have meetings with members of staff at drop-off and collection times – meetings between parents and teachers can only take place by prior arrangement, through the office or through Aladdin Connect.
- all parents adhere to the drop-off and collection plans as outlined below

Timetable for Group A	Timetable for Group B
<b>9.00 – 9.15 School start</b>	09.15 – 9.30 School start
<b>10.30 – 10.50 Break time</b>	11.00 – 11.20 Break time
<b>10.50 – Class resumes</b>	11.20 – Class resumes
<b>12.30 – Lunch time</b>	1.00 – 1.20 Lunch time
<b>12.50 – Class resumes</b>	1.20 – Class resumes
<b>1.40 – Infant classes finish</b>	2.40 – 4 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> classes finish
<b>2.30 – 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> classes finish</b>	
Classes in Group A	Classes in Group B
<b>*Jun. Inf. - Ms. E. Loughnane</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. A. O'Flaherty
<b>*Jun. Inf. - Ms. P. Kelly</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. K. Smyth
<b>*Jun. Inf. - Ms. D. Webberley</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. M. Coughlan
<b>*Sen. Inf. - Ms. M. Deely</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. M. Sweeney
<b>*Sen. Inf. - Mr. B. Corkery</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. L. Mc Glynn
<b>*Sen. Inf. - Ms. N. Coyle</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. N. Jacob
<b>1<sup>st</sup> - Mr. P. Ryan</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. B. Rafter
<b>1<sup>st</sup> - Ms. S. Madigan</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. M. Keogh
<b>1<sup>st</sup> - Ms. A. Farrell</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> - Ms. S. Buckley
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> - Ms. R. Carroll</b>	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> - Ms. A. Clifford</b>	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> - Ms. D. Mc Donnell</b>	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> - Ms. M. Treacy</b>	

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- \*These classes, Junior and Senior Infants, have a later start time for the first three weeks, until Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of September. Junior Infants will start at 10 a.m., Senior Infants at 9.30 a.m. Junior infants will finish at 12 noon. Senior Infants will finish at 1.40 p.m. Starting /finishing times for these classes will be reviewed and are subject to change after 18<sup>th</sup> September.
- The two Third classes will take all breaks with Group B to ensure there are 11 classes on yard at any one time.

### Key to Entrances & Exits

Entrance and Exit Points	Door Number
Main door at reception	1
Emergency exit (to the left of main door as you enter school)	2
Emergency exit (to the right of main door as you enter school)	3
Back Door	4
Emergency exit beside back door	5
Old school entrance (main hallway)	6

### Entrance & Exit Points for Specific Classes

Teacher	Class	Entrance & Exit Point Door Number
Ms. E. Loughnane	Jun. Inf.	1
Ms. P. Kelly	Jun. Inf.	2
Ms. D. Webberley	Jun. Inf.	3
Mr. B. Corkery	Sen. Inf.	1
Ms. N. Coyle	Sen. Inf.	4
Ms. M. Deely	Sen. Inf.	4
Ms. A. Farrell	First	2
Ms. S. Madigan	First	1
Mr. P. Ryan	First	4
Ms. R. Carroll	Second	4
Ms. A. Clifford	Second	5
Ms. M. Treacy	Third	4
Ms. D. Mc Donnell	Third	6
Ms. M. Coughlan	Fourth	3

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Teacher	Class	Entrance & Exit Point Door Number
Ms. K. Smyth	Fourth	1
Ms. A. O'Flaherty	Fourth	3
Ms. L. Mc Glynn	Fifth	3
Ms. N. Jacob	Fifth	4
Ms. M. Sweeney	Fifth	5
Ms. B. Rafter	Sixth	4
Ms. M. Keogh	Sixth	5
Ms. S. Buckley	Sixth	1

### Arrival at school

- Group A – 9.00 – 9.15 (with the exception of Junior and Senior Infants, for the first three weeks)
- Group B – 9.15 – 9.30
- We ask for co-operation with these times as it will mean that the numbers congregating at any one time will be minimised.
- We ask parents to 'drop and go'. The children should walk in on their own from the outer gate on the Sallins Road. Children go straight to their classrooms on arrival.
- The children should enter the building via their designated entrance point at the appropriate time.
- No adults, other than staff members, should enter the building.
- Staff members will be available outside and inside the building to receive the children and to help them to their classrooms.

### End of School Day

- Adults, who are collecting their children from school at the end of the day, should wait along walkway, (socially distanced) in the carpark, in the church grounds or other pre-arranged locations.
- Please ensure that you are there on time to pick up your child.
- The following arrangements will apply –
  - Jun. Infants and Sen. Infants: collect at assigned door where pupils were dropped in the morning.
  - 1st – 6<sup>th</sup> Class: the class teacher will lead each class to the walkway.

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### 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:

- Messages to teachers can be sent by email, note or by phoning the school office in advance.
- When the adult arrives at the school, they should either phone the office or use the intercom at the front gate of the school to alert the office that they have arrived.
- The child will be brought from their class to the adult by a member of staff.
- The adult who is collecting will be asked to sign the child out.
- No adult should enter the school building, unless invited to do so.

### Yard Allocation at Break / Lunch time

Eleven classes will be allowed out at each break/ lunch time.

Old School yard: 2 classes

Gate to St. Helen's: 2 classes

Junior infant area: 1 class

Main yard: 6 classes- each allocated their own section

Yards will be supervised by class teachers, learning support teachers and SNA's working within those bubbles.

### Hygiene / PPE / Sanitisers

- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all class and support rooms.
- Warm water and soap is available in all classrooms, staffroom and staff bathrooms.
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and parents / guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.
- In accordance with DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once a day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, communal eating areas, sinks and toilet facilities.
- All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.
- Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)
- Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.
- While it is not envisaged that PPE will be worn by staff in general, staff who are attending particular intimate care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves and face masks.
- PPE will be used where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation.
- Teaching staff are advised to wear masks / face coverings / visors where 2 m distancing is not possible.

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### Toilets

- Children will use the toilets in their own classrooms. There will be designated toilets / sinks for each class, where toilets are shared between classes.
- Staff will have designated toilets also.
- Children should use the bathroom and wash their hands before leaving home in the morning.

### Personal Equipment

- In so far as possible, it is requested that children from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class will bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment. Children should have separate stationery for home use.
- It is further requested that all items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.
- For children in Junior and Senior Infants, the school will provide a pouch or container which will hold each child's pencils, crayons, etc., and which will be labelled with their name.

### Shared Equipment

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

### Uniforms / Tracksuits

Uniforms are to be worn to school each day except for those days when your child has PE. Children will be advised of their PE days once we are back in school. We ask that the children change out of their uniforms/ tracksuits as soon as they get home from school. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities etc.

### Office

An on-line payment system has been set up to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled. Parents / Guardians are asked to co-operate in helping to keep school staff safe by arranging for on-line payment, through the school office.

Children should not be sent to the Secretary's Office or to the Reception area to deliver messages. Staff members should not enter the Office / Reception area and should speak with the office staff at the hatch.

### Staffroom

All staff members should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not engaged in teaching e.g. when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, face coverings should be worn.

Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible.

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### DEALING WITH A SUSPECTED CASE OF COVID-19

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area (Prefab 1 and 2 in the old school) via the isolation route (through corridor in the old school building) 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. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.
- 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
- The school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms. The advice of the GP must be strictly adhered to. (This is a free service). Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

\*Procedure for staff member with a suspected case of Covid-19 is as above, with family member being contacted.

\*If staff member or child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and report that the person is a suspected case of Covid-19.

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.

#### [Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class](#)

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 public health advice will be sought and followed.

### CHILDREN WHO SHOULD NOT ATTEND SCHOOL

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school –

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending

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- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell

### Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time because of illness, the class teacher (and/or the learning support teacher, where relevant) will provide work to parents to support the child's learning at home.

The majority of parents have already provided an email address at which the school can contact them to support Home Learning. This will be especially important if the school, or parts of the school have to close due to HSE advice. If you have not already done so, please contact the school by e mail and you will be added to the Contact List for Home Learning.

### Teacher Absence and Substitution

In the event that teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

## CURRICULUM GUIDANCE FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL

As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 12th. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families.

Each child will be a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for teaching and learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

Curriculum considerations for the year ahead will take into account the very varied learning experiences pupils have had during the school closure.

“SLOW DOWN TO CATCH UP” is how we will approach our teaching in the initial weeks back. We will include routines that create a safe space where pupils can openly communicate their needs, thoughts and emotions, as well as their learning at the start of the school year and throughout the terms that follow. Care will be taken to avoid over use of teacher directed and didactic approach to teaching in an effort to ‘catch up’ or ‘cover lost ground’. Instead it is vital that teachers take the

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time to find out where pupils are at in their learning and how best pupils learning needs can be met in the new school year.

In SPHE, circle time and partner conversations are effective means of allowing pupils talk about the experiences during the pandemic. Play is very much encouraged for the infant classes.

Interaction between **school and home** has never been more vital in supporting children's learning. Establishing and maintaining a two way channel of communications will be critical through the coming period. This is important to reassure parents that teachers understand children will have had different learning experiences during closure. Also it is vital to reassure parents who are anxious about school reopening.

For pupils, SPHE lessons through art, or imaginative play in infants, will allow exploration of the views of pupils about their experiences of the school closure and their feelings about returning to school.

**Language** underpins everything a child does. During the initial weeks of the new school year opportunities to talk and discuss are very important for children so they can articulate their experiences of the pandemic.

The **outdoors environment** also has great potential for learning and should be used to maximum effect.

**Revising and revisiting:** The initial period of settling back is very important to reinforce and consolidate pupils learning from their previous class. Prioritise certain aspects of the curriculum during the initial weeks such as SPHE, PE, language and Maths. Gradually as we build a comprehensive picture of where pupils are at in their learning we can work towards more typical curriculum plans.

**Mandatory aspects of SPHE such as Stay Safe and RSE will be taught early in the new school year**

Pupils should also continue to have experiences in SESE and the Arts.

### SPHE

Each pupil will start or return to school with his/her own experience of the Covid-19 pandemic. The wider physical, mental, emotional and relationship implications of social distancing, lockdown and possibly bereavement may be significant for some pupils.

Particular attention will be given to: The importance of personal hygiene and how to wash hands thoroughly, coughing/sneezing according to the medical guidance, and how and when to wear face coverings/masks. Supporting pupils in managing their feelings, resolving conflicts and coping with uncertainty, as well as new situations brought about by Covid-19 such as loss of a loved one.

Revisiting the Stay Safe Programme or RSE. Allowing pupils adequate time to re-connect with one another and to (re)establish relationships with peers. Co-operative games and the incorporation of drama activities such as role play and improvisation can support this process. Providing children with opportunities to talk about and make sense of their new reality.

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### PE

Pupils will have had varying opportunities for movement and physical activity over the past months. As the new school year gets underway, movement and activity through timetabled PE lessons, along with activity throughout the day, will contribute positively to pupils' wellbeing. The use of 'pods', the need for physical distancing, the cleaning and organisation of equipment, and the individual school environment will shape the PE learning experiences in the new school year.

PE will take place outdoors and use of equipment should be confined to the sets that have been distributed to class groupings.

Emphasise strands such as Athletics or outdoor and adventure activities with particular focus on the strand units of running, jumping, throwing and orienteering. 'Games' may also provide suitable learning experiences. Choose learning experiences where pupils can work individually or in small groups (for example, in their pods) with minimal equipment. Promote physical activity and movement of a non-contact nature.

**Uniforms are to be worn to school each day except for those days when your child has PE. Children will be advised of their PE days once we are back in school. We ask that the children change out of their uniforms/ tracksuits as soon as they get home from school.**

### Language

Language is key to enabling pupils to interact and engage with others, to express their thoughts and feelings, and to share their experiences. A focus on language will therefore be particularly relevant as pupils return to school. Mainstream class teachers and special education teachers should continue to collaboratively plan for the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) and pupils with special educational needs (SEN). These pupils may require an even higher level of support than in previous years as they are helped to settle back into school and make progress in their learning.

### Mathematics

Given the length of time pupils have been out of school and the impact this may have had on their mathematical learning, an emphasis on talk and discussion will be important in enabling pupils to describe their learning or absence of understanding. The use of a range of assessment approaches is advised in order to accurately establish individual pupils' level of understanding of key mathematical concepts and skills. It will be important that topics and concepts taught in a distance learning environment during the school closure period are revised and that pupils' mathematics learning from their previous class is reinforced and consolidated. Topics not taught in the last school year will need to be prioritised.

### Learning Support

In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble, where possible.

- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.

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- Where children from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> Class receive support in one of the SET rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending
- Staff members, (particularly Learning Support Teachers, and SNAs can rotate between areas / classes but this will be minimized where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on what is known as the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

### Supporting pupils at “very high risk” to COVID-19.

There may be some pupils for whom return to school at the end of August/ early September may not be appropriate because the relevant public health guidelines indicate they are at “very high risk”. Overall responsibility for ensuring that such pupils receive appropriate support to engage adequately with learning remains with the school in which they are enrolled. Regular and ongoing communication between school and home will be essential to support the pupil’s engagement with their learning and their continuous connection with their classmates and school community.

### Blended Learning

Prior to returning to school, teaching staff will receive in-service (PDST) on the use of ICT as a tool for blended learning in preparation for possible school closures in the future.

### Extra-curricular Activities

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored. However, it would not be recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time. Further updates will be provided in September.

### Wellbeing

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- A sense of hope

Each child is returning to school with a different experience of COVID19 and lockdown and it will be important to support positive interactions and routines for the children and encourage healthy behaviours as we all make sense of this new reality.

Time will be given to children to express their feelings and to share thoughts and opinions.

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To this end SPHE is of particular importance in responding as to how COVID19 has impacted on children in terms of their feeling, thoughts and behaviours. Learning experiences that support children to focus on their strengths, positive attributes and qualities to enable reconnection with the school community will assist in easing the transition back into school.

### ***The following strand units may be given particular focus:***

- Self-Identity
- Taking care of my body. (encouraging the children into a routine of hand washing and coughing/sneezing etiquette)
- Growing and changing
- Safety and protection
- My Friends and Family
- Developing Citizenship

Children will be given help with managing feelings, resolving conflicts and coping with uncertainty (which may include the loss of a loved one).

Children will also be given time to reconnect with their peers through cooperative game and drama. They will also be provided with opportunities to talk about experiences during the lock down period.

Pupils' physical education is a central part of their wellbeing and should form a significant component of timetabled programmes upon returning to school.

### ***Emphasis should be put on the following strands:***

- Athletics and outdoor adventure activities with particular focus on the strand of running, jumping, throwing, and orienteering.
- Games are also important, though of a non-contact nature.
- Concentration should be put on aerobic activity.

### **The following are some suggestions for our school:**

- We ensure that the children can get outside every day for a run around or walk (regardless of weather, therefore we encourage them to bring suitable clothing for the weather)
- The **MOVE WELL MOVE OFTEN** programme is recommended.
- Routines should be in place for hand washing and hygiene etiquette on a regular basis from the first day of school. A check list could be put together to remind children of this routine and this could be displayed in classrooms and around the school.
- Some meditation/quiet time/"pause, notice, breathe", time could be established in each class to keep a sense of calm for all. There are lots of ideas for this on the following site <https://www.pdst.ie/primary/healthwellbeing/distancelearning>
- SPHE will be given more time each week as we are asked to encourage the children to talk about experiences. Children should know that the classroom is a safe place to talk about feelings

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- Using circle time is recommended as this would also help to re-establish skills like listening to others, turn taking and concentration.
- It must also be kept in mind that some classes may not have completed the RSE and Stay Safe programmes from last year and this will need to be covered.

The following 3 ideas and many more can be found here:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/returning-school-after-lockdown/support-pupils-return-to-school>

- Creating a piece of art as a whole class or whole school could help build connections and create a sense of belonging. Something simple like a picture made up of individual handprints is easy for pupils of all abilities to access. It can be displayed in the classroom as a physical reminder of the class's joint identity.
- Read Axel Scheffler's book about Coronavirus together.
- Discuss some positives that came from the last few months. (increased family time, more exercise, reduced pollution due to less cars being used etc.)

### Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention.

The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

A free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staff members are encouraged to make use of the service when the need arises.

## COVID 19 PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES IN JUNIOR AND SENIOR INFANT CLASSES

### Procedures

- Pods: Each class is called a bubble. Within the bubble, children are organised into groups called pods. In the Mercy Convent, the junior and senior infant classes are put into pods, each named a different colour. Within the pod, the children can work independently, in pairs and in groups. However, mixing with another pod is discouraged.
- Toys and resources – Our toys are carefully stored in containers and boxes. We clean and sanitise our toys and resources before we allow children in another pod to use them.
- Pouches: In junior and senior infants, each child has a pouch. The junior infant pouch initially includes a glue stick and crayons. Other items may be added over time. The senior infant pouch includes a scissors, a glue stick, crayons, a whiteboard marker, and a pencil.

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- Hand washing: We wash and sanitise our hands at regular intervals during the school day. (see below)
- Hanging up coats: Children enter the classroom and go to their chairs. On teacher's instruction, children hang up their coats, one pod at a time.
- Toilets: Children go to the toilets one at a time. They wash their hands at the sink.
- Children are aware of what to do when they cough or sneeze.
- We encourage children to be able to do things independently – open lunchbox and its contents, put on and zip coat, go to the toilet.

### Routines

#### Hand Hygiene

- Children will perform hand hygiene regularly during the school day:
  - ✓ on arrival at school
  - ✓ before eating or drinking
  - ✓ after using the toilet
  - ✓ after a cough or sneeze
  - ✓ after playing outdoors
  - ✓ when hands are physically dirty
- We will spend time teaching the children how to wash and dry their hands correctly.
- We will have regular movement breaks and children understand that they will stay in their pod.

### Cleaning

- Each classroom will be cleaned daily as per Government /HSE guidelines.
- Resources will be provided for children individually where possible, or shared with their 'pod'. Resources that are shared between 'pods' or classes will be cleaned between use.
- Books, toys and resources will be cleaned regularly or quarantined for 72 hours before being reused.
- Staff will maintain a regular cleaning routine with all of resources and materials that will be used by different pods or classes.

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: PROCEDURES CONSIDERED FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL

### Physical Distancing:

- The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day. This is called a Class Bubble
- In primary schools a distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors so there is no requirement for children from Junior Infants to Second class to maintain a physical distance within their Class Bubble.

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## Plan for Re-opening of the School

- Children from Third Class to Sixth Class will be arranged in Pods (max 6) within their Class Bubble. As far as possible, each Pod will be at least 1 metre distance from the next Pod. All unnecessary furniture has been removed from these classrooms to create as much space as possible.
- Children attending Learning Support will sit in the same pod in class, where possible.
- The teacher's desk should be at least 1 metre and where possible 2 metres away from pupil's desk.
- Children are not required to wear face masks
- For staff, face coverings should not be required if physical distancing is possible and practiced appropriately. The use of a visor as an alternative should be considered where there is a concern regarding prolonged close contact or if physical distancing of 2 m is not possible.

It is recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

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

### Hygiene:

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.

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

Teachers should remind pupils of the importance of good respiratory measures to limit the spread of the virus:

- avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth
- cover coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- dispose of tissues in a covered bin

The toilet door should be kept open with a door stop throughout the day to reduce touch points.

The classroom door handle is also a major touch point and should be cleaned regularly throughout the day.

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### Personal / Shared Equipment:

#### Personal Equipment

- In so far as possible, it is requested that children from 1st to 6th Class will bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment. They should also be asked to have an extra pencil case at home to reduce the amount of crossover between home and school.
- It is further requested that all items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.
- For children in Junior and Senior Infants, the school will provide a pouch or container which will hold each child's pencils, crayons, etc., and which will be labelled with their name.

#### Shared Equipment

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

#### Toys

- All toys should be cleaned on a regular basis for example weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.
- Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids should be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.
- When purchasing toys choose ones that are easy to clean and disinfect (when necessary).
- If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable.
- Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils or those with special educational needs may be inclined to put into their mouths should be capable of being washed and disinfected.
- All play equipment should be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they should be discarded.
- Clean toys and equipment should be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.
- At this time soft modelling materials and play dough where used should be for individual use only.

#### Art

Where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

#### Electronics

Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use and consideration could be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

#### Musical Equipment/Instruments

To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

# **Mercy Convent Primary School, Naas.**

## **Plan for Re-opening of the School**

### [Library Policy](#)

Where practical, pupils should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

### [Shared Sports Equipment](#)

Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.