

St Laurence O'Toole's CBS COVID-19 Response Plan v.2 March 2021

1) Introduction

Each workplace is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan. In addition to being places of learning, schools are also places of work. This document sets out the St. Laurence O'Toole's CBS COVID-19 Response Plan, including the COVID-19 policy, lead worker representative and process to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19.

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 is being done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education. Details for the safe reopening of St. Laurence O'Toole's CBS and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Following the guidance of the DES publication *Reopening our primary and special schools* (DES, 27th July, 2020; updated 5th March, 2021), this document outlines the steps being taken in St. Laurence O'Toole's CBS to minimise the risk of infection while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time.

This is a working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance and/or adaptations to practice.

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 we may rectify same.

2) School COVID-19 Policy

St. Laurence O'Toole's CBS 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, 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: Patrick O'Keefe
(Chairperson)

Date: 10/03/2021

3) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The following tasks have been completed:

- keep up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and DES updates;
- pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required;
- ensure that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the DES;
- provide staff with access to the *Return to Work (RTW)* form; available [here](#).
- provide a *Return to School Declaration* form to be for all pupil absences; available [here](#).
- identify a Lead Worker representative;
- display posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19;
- make the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout to support physical distancing;
- removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- undertake a covid-19 specific health and safety risk assessment;
- make necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school;
- the school building has been reviewed to check the following:
 - water system flushing at outlets to prevent Legionella disease;
 - school equipment checked for signs of deterioration or damage prior to reuse;
 - bin collections and other essential services resumed.

3.1) Induction Training

All staff have undertaken and completed Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to school. 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 will be updated 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 her/his duties, s/he should immediately seek guidance from the Principal or Lead Worker Representative.

3.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a Return to Work (RTW) form, which has been circulated by the principal. This form should be completed and returned before returning to work. The principal has provided details of the Induction Training for completion by staff and details of additional health and safety measures in place. Those at very high risk cannot return to work. See HSE information [here](#).

3.3) Lead Worker Representative

The Lead Worker Representative (LWR) and Deputy Lead Worker Representative (DLWR) are Shane McIntyre and Niamh Richardson. If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker who will engage with the principal/BOM. Full details of the LWR role for primary schools can be accessed [here](#).

3.4) Signage

Signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID- 19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene are displayed in appropriate locations throughout the school.

3.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Classrooms and other areas have been reconfigured as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening.

3.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. The school risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings has been undertaken.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The school's First Aid/emergency procedures shall continue to apply.

3.7) Access to School and Contact Log

Arrangements for visitors is by appointment and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. 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 pupil contacts.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found [here](#): All school COVID-19 related data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts.

4) Control Measures to prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in School

The following control measures are in place and shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required:

4.1) General

- Staff and pupils that have symptoms should not attend school. They are advised to contact their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Staff and pupils should not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a close contact for a person with COVID-19 and must follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Staff and pupils who have travelled outside Ireland should consult and follow Government advice [here](#).
- Staff and pupils who develop symptoms at school must bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Staff and pupils must know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (details at Section 8);
- Staff and pupils must cooperate with the school and health officials for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or an outbreak in the school.

4.2) Visitors

- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day must be by prior arrangement and are received in the lobby.
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

4.3) Pupils and classes

- Pupils will be taught the symptoms of COVID-19: High temperature, cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties, loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste.
- Pupils will be taught proper procedures for respiratory hygiene.
- Pupils will be taught proper handwashing technique and will be required to perform frequent hand hygiene throughout the day.
- Physical distancing will be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue.
- Class bubbles, pods and individualisation of books and resources are being used to minimise contact.
- Where possible staff will maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m.
- Staff will take measures to minimise/avoid close contact at face to face level as much as possible.
- Pupils moving around within the classroom will be minimised as much as possible.
- Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities it should be organized to the

greatest degree possible to minimize congregation.

- Staff and pupils should not share personal items.
- Pupils will be encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device will be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene implemented.

4.4) School drop off/collection

- Pupils are asked to arrive between 8.40am and 8.50am and stay within their class bubbles on the yard.
- Pupils are encouraged to walk/cycle to school.
- Adults are requested to maintain a distance of 2m between parents and guardians and between parents and guardians and school staff.
- Possible congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing may not be respected will be monitored each morning and afternoon.
- Classes will leave to go home between 2.25pm and 2.35pm to avoid congestion in the corridors or at the school gate.
- Times for the arrival of the three taxis bringing pupils to and from school have been co-ordinated to avoid congestion

4.5) Staff and canteen

- Staff will remain in their class team bubbles for break times using the allocated room for each team.
- A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as arriving to work. and break times.
- Where 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.
- To facilitate physical distancing staff meetings will continue to be held online.
- There is a no hand shaking policy.
- To minimise gathering of school staff at the beginning or end of the school day staff may go to the classrooms or the allocated room for each team rather than the staffroom.
- Rotation between areas/classes has been minimized as much as possible.
- Physical distancing is applied in the canteen facilities and a queue management system for canteen use is being implemented.

4.6) Corridors and stairwells

- Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact.
- To increase ventilation and decrease contact surfaces school windows and doors, where possible and practical, will be kept open during the school day. This measure will be kept under review to assess its practicality. Department of Education school ventilation information can read [here](#).
- However, staff will need to stop to exchange information. Where possible 2m distance, and not less than 1m distance should be observed.
- Classes will be briefly staggered going to and from the yard to minimise contact between class bubbles.
- 5th/6th will use the back stairs to enter and leave the building.

4.7) Yard/Supervision

- The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.
- It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary or special schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups.
- Each class bubble has a designated yard area where they must remain.
- Classes will be time-staggered going and coming from the yard.
- Children will sanitise before and wash hands after outdoor activities.
- 5th/6th will use the back stairs to enter and leave the building.

5) PPE in School

5.1) Use of PPE

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. These include:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- First Aid
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with those who are in the very high risk category.

Appropriate PPE is available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

5.2) Masks

Primary school pupils are not required to wear face coverings. However, pupils may wear a visor/face covering in school if parents/guardians or the child wishes. It is not the responsibility of school staff to supervise or enforce wearing of masks.

For staff, where it is not possible to maintain 2m physical distance, face coverings are required. Staff will wear masks as appropriate.

5.3) Hand Hygiene

- Protocols are in place for staff and pupils to wash and sanitise hands regularly throughout the school day.
- Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame.
- The use of disposable gloves in the school by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but are necessary for intimate care settings, first aid etc. Routine use 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.

6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

To avoid crossover of class groups and pods, all after school activities are postponed pending review of procedures. Homework will not be given for the moment.

6.1) Sport Activities

For the moment all PE and sports activities, including visiting coaches, will only take place outdoors in class bubbles. Government return to sports protocols, available [here](#) , will be observed for all sports activities.

6.2) Shared Equipment

- As much as possible equipment will not be shared.
- All shared equipment and toys will be cleaned on a regular basis. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs.
- Equipment and toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids will be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal.
- Cloth or soft toys used will be machine washed.
- Only jigsaws, puzzles and toys capable of being washed and disinfected will be used.
- All play equipment is checked for signs of damage, for example breaks or cracks, before use. If it cannot be repaired or cleaned it will be discarded.
- Clean toys and equipment are stored in a clean container or clean cupboard and manufacturer's instructions followed.
- Soft modelling materials and play dough where used should be for individual use only.
- Art and equipment supplies will only be shared within a class pod and cleaned and disinfected after use.
- Electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards are cleaned between use.
- Musical Equipment/Instruments –instruments are cleaned between uses.

- Text books, copies, pens, pencils etc: Books, copies, pencils, rubbers etc are not to be shared. Every pupil has been supplied with a plastic basin for said materials. Pupils are only allowed touch/handle their own basin/materials.
- Shared table items such as crayons, educational materials can only be used within a pod and are to be cleaned after use.
- Library Policy – Pupils cannot visit the school library to browse books. Library books for classes are collected and returned from the library by a staff member. Library books are quarantined for 72 hours after use before being reused.
- Minimal Sports equipment sharing is practiced and shared equipment is cleaned between uses by different people.

7) Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

- School cleaning is undertaken in line with HPSC advice.
- The school is cleaned thoroughly on a daily basis.
- Bins are emptied daily during cleaning.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols are in place to address a case of COVID-19.
- All staff have access to cleaning materials including clothes and disinfectant spray.
- Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.
- frequently touched surfaces – hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities are cleaned/disinfected by staff.
- Under no circumstances should cleaning materials be removed from the building.
- Staff may use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID- 19 was present

- The room will be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.
- Once the room is vacated the room will not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.
- The person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear the gloves and plastic apron provided by the school.
- The area and furniture will be cleaned using cleaning cloths and a detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).
- Apron, gloves and clothes are to be disposed of, double bagged and the bag left in the school waste container for a minimum of three days
- Cleaning should pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, desks, the back of chairs and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.
- If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC advice) as soon as is practically possible.

8) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

- Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19.
- The designated isolation areas are at the roof garden and the under-stairs office.
- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians are contacted immediately.
- A mask for the person presenting with symptoms is provided. S/he should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- S/he is accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, At least 2m distance is maintained from the symptomatic person at all times; If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a pupil should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents who will call their doctor and continue self- isolation at home;

- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor.
- The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
- Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
- Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect;
- An assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery will be carried out;
- Appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved – (details at Section 7).
- The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.
- Staff are encouraged to download the COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health contact tracing both in and out of the school setting.

9) Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school. Similarly, staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean).

10) 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. 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. In this regard and 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.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- Complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Coordinate and work with colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Be 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 to return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Not to return to or attend school if they live with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- If they have travelled outside Ireland, consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel; available [here](#).
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

11) COVID-19 related Absence Management

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

12) 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'.

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. Where required, short- term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home). A bespoke [wellbeing portal](#) and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is also available. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. A series of [weekly webinars](#) and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is currently available on the *Spectrum.Life* wellbeing portal.

Signed: Patrick O'Keefe
(Chairperson)

Date: 10/03/2021

Signed: Mark Candon
(Principal)

Date: 10/03/2021