

Scoil Mhuire Junior

Information letter for parents regarding protocol for the safe reopening of our school

We are looking forward to the safe return of all our pupils

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidelines for the safe operation through the prevention and control of COVID -19 in Scoil Mhuire Junior.

It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID – 19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance for the health and well being of pupils and society as a whole.

This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in our school to minimise the risk of infection into schools while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time

This is a live document and a work in progress that involves all persons in the school community as we work towards a safe return to school.

It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However with the cooperation of all members of the school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to the school and the consequent risk of its spread.

The school has a responsibility to make every effort to ensure the safety, health and well being of all members of the school community – children, staff and parents. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care according to the Dept. of Education and H.S.E guidelines.

Key facts for Parents:

COVID – 19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and is caused by a new virus called the Coronavirus.

Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. To infect you, it has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into your eyes, nose or mouth. This can be direct or indirect (on hands, objects, surfaces). If you come into close contact with someone who is shedding the virus and who is coughing or sneezing or if you touch - with your hands - surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without having washed your hands thoroughly you may contract the virus.

As COVID-19 is a new illness, we are still learning about how easily the virus spreads from person to person and how to control it, so it is important to keep up to date and make sure you are using the most up to date guidance available. This information is available from the following links:

- HSE-HPSC: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>
- HSE Hub: <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

• Department of Health: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/7e0924-latest-updates-on-covid-19-coronavirus/>

COVID-19 can be a mild or severe illness. Severe illness is much more common in older people (especially older than 70) and in people vulnerable for other reasons. Severe illness is much less common in children and young adults in good health. (See below)

The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:

- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 37.5 degrees Celsius
- Shortness of Breath
- Breathing Difficulties
- Lack of smell.

Symptomatic people appear to be most infectious for other people in the early days after symptoms begin. Infection can also spread from people in the day or two before they get symptoms and it can spread from some people who get an infection but have no symptoms or such mild symptoms that they take little notice of them (asymptomatic spread). People are no longer infectious for other people 14 days after they have developed symptoms.

Good Practices: You must ...

Wash your hands with soap and water (which is the best method to get rid of germs) and or use a hand sanitiser

Practice good respiratory hygiene: that is, when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

Maintain social or physical distancing: that is, leave at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance between yourself and other people where possible, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.

Not engage in handshaking or hugging

Must avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth – if you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself

Keep your hands in good condition. Moisturise them often. Any basic product that is not perfumed or coloured is OK.

The staff will complete multiple lessons on correct hygiene, lining up, the importance of hand sanitising, staying within their pods/bubbles etc. with the children during the first weeks back in school.

Role of Parents:

It is important that parents have a clear understanding of the benefits and risk of attending and that it is not possible to guarantee that infection will be prevented in any setting either in a childcare centre, school or in the home.

The following are protocols that are put in place to safeguard the health and safety of each other. Parents are expected to abide by them and failure to do so may result in a parent being instructed to remove a child from the school building/yard, and or to leave the school premises themselves. If serious breaches of safety measures occur, the board and or the police may be informed or called if needed.

Under no circumstances is a parent to bring a child to school if -

- if the child is exhibiting any symptoms of Covid 19-
- If the child has a temperature, is sneezing, coughing, who has been vomiting or has diarrhoea.
- If a child has been outside of the country in the 14 days prior to August 27th, they are not to attend school and must isolate
- If the child has been in contact with any family member and or other person who has Covid.

Arrival and departure procedures for children and parents:

In accordance with HSE Guidelines

“Last updated: 10 November at 6.05pm

By law, you have to wear a face covering:

on public transport

in shops, shopping centres and some other indoor settings - see the full list of places

You should also wear a face covering:

when staying 2 metres apart from people is difficult

THEREFORE

- **All Adults must wear masks on school grounds**
- Parents must arrive **on time** for drop offs and collection of their child.
- Only parents or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised are allowed to drop off and collect children.
- Any parent who is in a high-risk category should not drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves. (This of course is at the discretion of the individual parent/carer/grandparent's discretion)
- Parents who cannot wear a mask for medical purposes may drop children a little later at 9.05 to avoid the crowds and may collect at either 1.35 (Junior & Senior Infants) and 2.35 (1st & 2nd Class)
- There will be a highlighted signed one-way system in operation, with class locations, please follow signs.
 - **Early Start** – classroom located nearest the main gate
 - **Junior Infants** – located near main gate and small yard
 - **Senior Infants** – will be located near the children's garden, near large back yard
 - **First Class** – located in the same classrooms as they were in Senior Infants last year
 - **Second Class** – located near office and large back yard.
- **ONE PARENT only** to take children to their classes, children will be entering and exiting their classrooms through the classroom exit door NOT main building doors.

- Parents may use the main gate/back gate to enter school grounds, but must follow the signed one-way system, parents proceed immediately to their child's Line Up area, standing 2 metres apart.
- They must remain with their child until handover has taken place, which will take place promptly.
- Parents must ensure their child remains at their side at all times and that their child does not interact with other children.
- Parents are strongly advised not to congregate with other parents on school grounds. All parents must leave the yard immediately after collection.
- **Parents are requested to exit school grounds promptly through separate exit gate opposite office after the child has been handed over.**
- If a parent has more than one child, the other children stay with them and having handed over the first child, they may proceed to the second line up area.
- Home times will require the equivalent lining up by parents outside allocated classroom exit doors to collect children, 2 metres apart to maintain social distancing. This will be undertaken as quickly as possible.
- Students and parents are allowed enter school premises at 8.40 only, if children have bikes/scooters they are encouraged to bring them to the bike rack promptly in allocated space and return to their class lines.
- No parent will be allowed within the school building unless by prior appointment. If parents needs to contact the school, please either use Contact us form on website, or telephone the office.
- If parents need to speak with teacher, **PLEASE DO NOT ENGAGE AT EXIT DOORS EITHER IN MORNING OR AFTERNOON.** All parents may contact teachers through their school email address, If a parent wishes to speak to a teacher, an appointment will be made following the initial email contact. This appointment will be by telephone.
- *From September 2nd we will be adopting a paperless contact policy, parents are asked to check their children's individual school email to check for updates.*
- In an exceptional case that a pupil needs to be collected early for example for a medical appointment, parents are asked to write a note for the attention of class teacher. When collecting your child, parents/guardians will wait outside classroom door and collect child there.
- **Should a matter of urgency arise for parents,** they must phone the office and make an appointment or access.
Access will only be permitted once they have downloaded and filled in the QR Code for contact tracing and they have used the hand sanitiser. Once inside the school building, they must maintain the required social distance and follow the directions of the principal/staff member.
- Markings on the ground will note where a class can line up.

If a child appears unwell on entering the classroom, the child's temperature will be taken and in the interests of the safety of the staff and the other children, the principal will contact the parent and ask the parent to take the child home immediately.

Other Responsibilities for Parents:

- Parents are to ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers prior to returning to school.
- Parents must ensure that all **water bottles** are sanitised using alcohol wipes on completion of homework before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Water bottles are to be filled at home every evening and labelled with child's name.
- Children are to go to the bathroom **before** they leave home for school daily.
- Children are to wash their hands **before** leaving for school

Parents and Uniforms:

- Children's uniforms must be clean and washed and changed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.
- The pupils of junior/senior /first class must wear Velcro shoes.

Children who may have symptoms:

- **Any child who is unwell with a fever, has a cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms or is displaying any of the symptoms of coronavirus is to stay at home.**
The child's parent should contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for coronavirus testing.
- Temperature testing will take place as is currently the practice for children who may be unwell. Parents will be contacted immediately and must remove the child if the temperature is over 37.5 C.
- Can parents/guardians please ensure that all contact numbers are up to date. Can parents/guardians have a plan in place for collecting children who may fall ill while at school. If a child falls ill while you are at work, it is important we have the correct contact details of the nominated emergency contact. Please update these details immediately.

Dealing with a suspected case of COVID- 19

- The child will be brought to the Isolation Room by a selected staff member keeping at least 2 meters apart from the staff member.
- The parent will be immediately contacted and asked to come to the school to take the child either to the doctor or home. The handover will take place at the front door.
- A mask will be given to the child to wear until he/she is picked up. The designated staff member will remain with the child until he/she is collected.
- Assigned waste bins will be in use.
- The designated staff member caring for the child in isolation should wear personal protective equipment i.e. face mask, disposable apron and gloves.
- The child should be encouraged not to touch surfaces, people or any objects.
- Public transport of any kind should not be used by the parent to take the child home.
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area and the child's work station will be carried out immediately.
- The designated teacher and the DLW will carry out an assessment of the incident which will form any part of follow up actions. This will be reported to the principal.
- The principal will inform the HSE in line with correct protocols.

My Child has symptoms which may be consistent with Covid 19, what do I do next?

1. Phone your GP and tell him/her of the symptoms which your child is experiencing.
2. Your GP may decide to send your child for a Covid-19 test.
3. If your child is sent for a Covid-19 test, at this stage, other siblings must be removed from the school/ other schools.
4. If your GP does not refer your child for a Covid 19 test, the guidelines state that you must keep your child at home for 48 hours or until the symptoms have alleviated.
5. **PLEASE BRING A NOTE FROM GP TO CLASS TEACHER STATING**

THAT CHILD IS FIT TO RETURN TO SCHOOL.

6. If no evidence of Covid 19 is detected by the test, then the child should remain at home only until he/she is clinically well enough to return to school (unless advised by HSE to do otherwise). Siblings can return to school immediately following receipt of a “not detected” test.
7. If the result is positive the Medical Officer of Health and teams will liaise directly with the school.

If there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school.

The school will comply with all guidelines from Dept of Education and the H.S.E

Symptomatic people should self-isolate and arrange to seek the advices of their G.P. and follow any advice given. Confirmed COVID-19 cases should continue to self-isolate at home for a minimum of 14 days and should not return to school until they are advised that it is safe to do so.

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school: If a child has been advised by a medical practitioner that they are unable to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher[and/or] the Special Education teacher, where relevant, will suggest activities to support learning at home with parents.

Hand Hygiene Hand sanitiser dispensers have been installed in each classroom at entry and exits, and in common areas around the school. Dispenser soaps are available at all sinks. There are hand towel dispensers and will be disposed in a pedal bin which will be disposed of regularly. Hand Hygiene will be promoted and encouraged regularly, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene

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

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 bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into pedal bin. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid 19.

Personal Equipment Each individual pupil will be given a box with personal stationery and resources. They will not be handled by other pupils.

Lunches

- Lunches will be provided as usual
- Please remind children not to share food
- No lunch will be allowed on the yard.
- All left over lunches will be sent home, please clean students bag **DAILY**

Shared Equipment By necessity some classroom equipment needs to be shared including I-pads and some structured activities and play in classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

Yard and Break times Each class bubble will have access to their designated play areas at break times. Yard times will be broken into 2 parts

Junior and Senior Infants – 12.00 – 12.30

First and Second Classes – 12.30 – 1.00

We will incorporate a third yard space to ensure each class bubble has a designated adequate space. Yards will be supervised by staff in that bubble.

Special Education In keeping with our Special Education Needs 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 and SNA's will work within the confines of a bubble in so much as possible following social distance guidelines. The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending.

PPE It is currently not recommended in Ireland for children under 13 to wear face masks as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of the coronavirus. It is currently the opinion of public health that their use, especially among young children, has the potential to cause more harm than good.

- It is recommended that staff wear face coverings when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained and in communal areas.. Staff who are attending to particular care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves, aprons and face coverings.

Cleaning the school will be cleaned on a daily basis. Additional cleaning will take place during the day on frequently touched surfaces- door handles, chairs, tables and toilet facilities. All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Staff will clean and disinfect their work before and after use each day. The designated isolation room will be cleaned thoroughly if there is a suspected case of Covid.

Children in High Risk Groups: Parents should seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in a high-risk group. They should inform principal on/before August 27th if they have been advised their child cannot attend school. They should inform the principal of the advice given.

Children's learning spaces:

- All excess furniture will be removed from the classroom where possible to provide additional space.
- All staff will reconfigure their classrooms to ensure a one metre distance between pupils where possible. Pupils will be organised into pods within the classroom.
- Classes will be organised into bubbles and interaction between classes outside of the bubble is not to take place.
- P.E. will take place outside.
- All equipment will be cleaned in accordance with Covid 19 guidelines
- Each child will be given an individual box with stationery and resources.
- Pupils will hand sanitise before and after using any materials.
- Toilet breaks will be staggered.

Implementation and Monitoring

This is a live working document subject to change. We will amend if and when is necessary and as we receive more guidelines from the Dept. of Education.

Signed: *Joan Ashbrook* Date: 12th November 2020

[Chairperson]