

Holy Family Junior School Covid-19 Return to School Response Plan

We are delighted to be returning to school on the 27th August 2020, after a difficult six months during which our whole school community worked together to support our pupils in their engagement with distance learning. This year, returning to school will be challenging but we have developed our Response Plan in line with Department of Education and National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) guidelines and we will work with all members of our school community to keep everyone safe. This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in our school and details the policies and practices necessary for Holy Family Junior school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education plan for schools.

It is important that the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the reopening of our school complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so will minimise the risk to pupils, staff and parents. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of Holy Family School where our overriding objective is to protect the health of pupils and staff while promoting the educational and development needs of the pupils in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice as appropriate for our school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents is key to keeping everyone safe and the assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Communication will be very important to ensure that everyone is up to date with all the relevant information and we will be sending regular emails to staff and parents to keep you informed. Please make sure that the secretary, Ita Hanrahan, has your email address and a mobile number. She can be contacted on info.hfj@gmail.com or call 065 6829808. If you do not use emails, please inform Ita and we will arrange for you to receive a hard copy of the information. The Response Plan will also be updated on our school website, www.holyfamilyjuniorschool.com

While we will have the necessary measures in place to ensure the safe return of our pupils and staff, it is very important to recognise that some of you may be anxious and worried at this difficult time. Please feel free to call the principal if you have any concerns that are not addressed in our Response Plan.

Covid-19 – Key facts and what we know so far (Appendix A)

We all know by now that COVID – 19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and has turned our world upside down, affecting every one of us. Coronavirus is spread when we sneeze or cough and can be a mild or severe illness.

The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:

- 1. Cough**
- 2. High temperature**
- 3. Shortness of breath**
- 4. Breathing difficulties**
- 5. Lack of smell**

In order to prevent the spread of the virus, it is very important that we all:

- 1. Wash our hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (which is the best method to get rid of germs) and or use a hand sanitiser**
- 2. Practice good respiratory hygiene**
- 3. Maintain social or physical distancing**
- 4. Not engage in handshaking or hugging**
- 5. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**

Pupils must not come to school if:

- They are exhibiting any symptoms of Covid 19. Stay indoors and phone your GP.**
- They have a temperature, are coughing, vomiting or suffering from diarrhoea.**
- They have been outside of the country in the 14 days prior to August 27th, parents will be asked to fill in a return to school form before the child's return.**
- They have been in contact with any family member and or other person who has Covid.**

It is important that parents and staff of Holy Family Junior School have a very clear understanding of the benefits and risks of returning to school and that, while we will all do our best to protect our school community from this virus, it is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented either at school or in the home. Read **Appendix A** with great care please.

Below is a summary of our planned actions for the safe return of pupils and staff. More specific details are outlined in the appendices. Please take time to read through this document very carefully.

Starting or returning to school is always a very exciting time for our young pupils. It is very important that we all do our best to make sure that their experience this year, while being different, is just as exciting and fun for them, as it was before coronavirus.

1. Holy Family Junior School Covid-19 Policy Statement (Appendix B)

Our COVID-19 policy statement outlines the commitment of Holy Family Junior School to the implementation of our Response Plan and to the prevention of the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the principal and chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of the staff, pupils, parents and others. Schools **must have a COVID-19 policy** statement in place prior to the reopening of schools for the 2020/21 school year.

2. Planning and Preparing for our return to school - overview

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to school of pupils and staff safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

As per Department of Education guidelines, the following processes will be in place,

- We will keep up to date with public health advice and changes to any Government plans and Department of Education updates for the safe reopening of society, which we will pass on to staff, pupils, parents and others as required, in a timely manner. Please ensure that we have an **up to date mobile number and email address for urgent messages**.
- Our school staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education before returning to school
- The Return to Work (RTW) forms will be completed by all members of our school staff three days before returning to school.

- Miriam Lowe will be the Lead Worker representative, assisted by Geraldine Normoyle and Cathy Hayes as the deputy lead workers.
- Daily routines have changed to maintain class ‘bubbles.’
- The Department of Education recognises 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.’
- Posters and other signage are in place around the school to remind pupils and staff of the importance of proper hand washing procedures and sneezing and coughing etiquette to help prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- Automatic sanitiser dispensers have been installed at each reception door, middle and end doors. Sanitiser is available at the entrance to each classroom. Automatic soap dispensers have been installed for hand washing and paper towels will be used for drying hands.
- Our health and safety risk assessment has been updated.
- Our Code of Behaviour has been updated and all members of our school community are expected to cooperate with school management in implementing this Response Plan.
- The school has been deep cleaned over the summer months by our caretaker and cleaner. The high standards of cleanliness will be maintained on our return and a detailed daily cleaning plan has been put in place for our safe return to school. A fogger will also be used to sanitise the classrooms every evening.
- There is very limited access to the school except for pupils and staff for the foreseeable future. Parents will not be allowed into classrooms and must maintain a 2m distance when dropping and collecting children.
- It is very important that children are dropped to school on time. Drop off time will be between **8.55 and 9.10** each day (all classes).
- School lunches will be provided.
- Staff and parents have been informed of the requirement to seek the advice of their GP if they are in the high risk category and to keep the school informed. Please phone the school if your child has been diagnosed with the virus. When returning to school after Covid-19, a letter will be required from your doctor advising the school that it is safe to do so.

- Arrangements will be put in place for distance learning for high risk pupils who have a letter from their specialist advising against returning in September.

More details for Parents (Appendix C)

More details for teachers (Appendix D)

3. How will school be different this term?

We are very fortunate in Holy Family School that our yards are big enough to allow us all to maintain the 2 m social distance required, that there are enough entrances and exits and that the classrooms all have their own door to the yard. Nevertheless, there are strict guidelines for dropping and collecting children and parents are expected to abide by these.

Morning routine

- Parents must wear a mask on school grounds and maintain the 2m distance from others entering, leaving and in the school grounds. **The HSE does not recommend any children under 13 years of age to wear a mask as it has the potential to do more harm than good.**
- Pupils can be dropped to their classroom from 8.55 to 9.10 each day.
- Parents are not allowed into the classrooms and must stay behind the 2m line outside the classroom door. If you wish to speak with a teacher, please call the school to make an appointment.
- Pupils will sanitise their hands at the classroom door and will follow a strict hand-washing routine throughout the day.

In class

- As we are a junior school, our pupils are not expected to social distance themselves in the classroom. However, their class will be their 'bubble' and they will only interact with the pupils, teachers and SNA in their own room.

- Pupils will no longer bring any food or drinks to school. The Department of Education has given us funding for a healthy snack for our short break and a healthy lunch. More details will be sent home to parents before we return.
- Pupils must have their own pencils and colours as they will no longer be able to share with other pupils. It would be best if parents put the pupil's name on their property.

In the yard

- The school-yard will be divided into four play areas and breaks will be staggered. The pupils will play with their own class on the school yard in a designated area.
- First aid will be administered as required by our qualified first aiders. A mask and gloves will be worn.

In school

- We will not gather together for our Monday morning assembly in the hall for September, but we will find a way to have a different type of Monday morning routine and continue with our pupil of the week awards and other assembly activities.
- There will not be any homework for the month of September as the children settle back into school.
- The well-being of our pupils is central to everything we do as a staff and we will continue to monitor the progress of all our pupils very carefully.

School collections

- The same procedures as for the morning (parents to wear mask and social distance).
- Senior infant pupils may be collected from 1.35 to 1.45.
- Junior infants will have separate drop off and collections for the first few weeks of term.

- First class and senior special class pupils can be collected from 2.35 to 2.45.

4. Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 (Appendix E)

- While we are delighted to be returning to school and would love to see all our pupils in attendance every day, if they display any symptoms of Covid-19 as outlined above, they must remain at home. (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>)
- Staff must also remain at home if they display any of the Covid-19 symptoms.
- The principal's office will be used as the isolation area, where a pupil who is sick will wait to be collected. This will be reviewed after the mid-term.

We will all work together to do our best to keep the virus out of our school and, in the event that it somehow manages to creep in, we will do our best to ensure that our pupils, staff and parents are protected. While you all worked very hard last term to keep the pupils on track with their learning, the children have not been in school since last March. We all need to work together to ensure that they feel safe and secure and their wellbeing and the wellbeing of our staff will be at the centre of everything we do as we settle back into our school routines. Please read the appendices below for further information and feel free to give us a call or send an email.

Appendix A

Coronavirus – key facts

COVID – 19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and is spread in a 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 has the virus and who is coughing or sneezing, or if you touch 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 become infected.

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 38 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.

In order to prevent the spread of the virus, it is very important that we all:

- 1. Wash our hands with soap and water (which is the best method to get rid of germs) and or use a hand sanitiser**
- 2. Practice good respiratory hygiene**
- 3. Maintain social or physical distancing**
- 4. Not engage in handshaking or hugging**
- 5. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**

Please take time to discuss how to prevent the spread of the virus with your child before they return to school. We will also be teaching these best practices to the pupils at school. As they are very young, it is important that we use child friendly language and are calm and matter of fact so as not to frighten them.

Appendix B

Holy Family Junior School COVID-19 Policy Statement

Holy Family Junior School 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 Board of Management and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort by all members of our school community 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 pupils, staff and parents on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct handwashing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for pupils and staff 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: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Information for parents

We have always had an open door policy here in Holy Family Junior School where you, the parents were welcome to join in school activities, attend classes in the Parents' Room or have a chat with a teacher or the principal. Unfortunately, until mid-term at least, parental involvement during school time will no longer be possible and if you wish to speak with a teacher or the principal, please phone to make an appointment. More than likely, the meetings will be over the phone or by Zoom. The principal will also be on the yard every morning if you need a quick chat.

- We ask any adults coming onto our school grounds to wear face coverings. **The HSE does not recommend any children under 13 years of age to wear a mask as it has the potential to do more harm than good.**
- Please observe social distancing in the school yard. There are 2m markings outside each class door. We ask parents not to step over the line when dropping and collecting children.
- It is very important that children are dropped to school on time. Drop off time will be between **8.55 and 9.10** each day (all classes). Collection from **1.35 to 1.45 for junior* and senior infants** (five classes) and from **2.40 to 2.45** (two classes). Special classes will be collected at either 1.45 (infants) or 2.45 (senior classes). Our yards are big enough for parents to social distance themselves. The little bit of extra time will make it easier for pupils entering and leaving the classrooms.
- It is very important that your child is on time for school each day, to help them to learn the new routines and settle back into school. If, on the rare occasion that you arrive at school after 9.10, you must go to reception with your child, to sign in.
- Only one parent in reception at any time. Please wait outside until the school secretary lets you in.

- Make sure that your child's name is written on all their belongings, including uniform and tracksuit.
- Please wipe down your child's school bag every evening
- Please ensure that your child changes out of their uniform/tracksuit every evening when they go home.
- The Department of Education has provided funding for lunches for our pupils this year. You will not need to send in any food or drink with your child. More details before we return to school.
- It is **very important** that we are able to contact you the parents in case of an emergency and also send you any updates to our Covid-10 Response Plan. Please ensure that Ita has your up to date details.
- If your child becomes unwell at school, you will receive a call and your child will be waiting to be collected from the principal's office.
- In the event of an identified Covid 19 case in the school, we will follow the HSE guidelines.

Appendix D

Information for staff

Our return to school will be challenging but you have already shown your dedication and willingness to embrace change by your commitment to the distance teaching of your pupils. During last term. While there are new procedures in place for the safety of our whole school community, it is very important to recognise the challenges and the concerns that we all have and to ensure that we take care of each other during these unprecedented times. The support of your colleagues may not be enough and the Department of Education has set up a dedicated Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme that is available to all the staff of Holy Family Junior School. (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).

Prior to returning to school, all staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form and return to the principal **by the 23rd August 2020**. Details of the mandatory **Induction Training** for completion by staff and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school will be circulated to facilitate the safe return of all our staff. The aim of the training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

1. Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
2. Covid-19 symptoms
3. What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school
4. Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

Guidelines

- Face coverings

All staff in schools are now required to wear face coverings. Visors and face masks have been purchased and will be distributed to staff on the 26th August. It is the responsibility of all staff members to take care of their PPE.

- Protocols for hand washing and hand sanitising

While pupils will sanitise their hands on entering the classroom each morning, proper handwashing is recognised as the best way to fight infection. Pupils will need to be taught the recommended handwashing techniques on our return to school. Each class should have timetabled hand washing routines in place.

- Cleaning of workspaces

In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, desks, chairs, and toilet facilities. A fogger with disinfectant spray has been purchased to disinfect the school on a daily basis. This will allow us to continue with our Aistear programme in the classrooms. 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.

- Revised timetabling (*includes 25 min. CP up to mid-term*)

Drop off time will be between **8.55 and 9.10** each day (all classes). Collection from **1.35 to 1.45 for junior* and senior infants** (seven classes) and from **2.35 to 2.45** (two classes). Special classes will be collected at either 1.45 (infants) or 2.45 (senior classes). Our yards are big enough for parents to social distance themselves. The little bit of extra time will make it easier for pupils entering and leaving the classrooms.

- Staffing

Where possible, and up until mid-term, each member of the SEN team will work with the class that they are assigned to and only the pupils from this class will be allowed in the teacher's resource room. The only exception will be for Literacy Lift Off. First class maths will be taught by four teachers instead of the usual five but extra support for maths can still be given throughout the day. As with teachers, we have tried to keep our SNAs with their pupils from last year where possible, to help the pupils to settle back into school.

- Staggered breaks

We will have two sessions for both sos and lunch.

A: Sos 10.45-11.00 Lunch 12.15-12.45

B: Sos 11.00-11.15 Lunch 12.45-1.15

For September, Group 1 will be on the A rota and group 2 the B rota. The break times for the groups will be swapped every month.

Group 1: Rooms 1, 3, 5 and 12

Group 2: Rooms 2, 4, 8, 13 and 16 (8 and 16 will share a yard)

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- Supervision and the yard

The supervision rota will be particularly challenging this year. We will discuss how this will be managed at our staff meeting on the 26th.

The yard will be divided into four playing areas and classes will remain in their designated area during breaks.

- Reception

There will be sanitisers at both doors. Please sanitise after using the keypads.

Visitors will be kept to a minimum. Anyone visiting for more than 15 minutes will be required to fill in a tracing log and everyone else will need to sign our normal parents/visitors book. If parents wish to speak with you, they will need to make an appointment as they are not allowed into the classrooms.

Ita will allow one parent/visitor in reception at a time.

If you have to use the phone in reception, please sanitise before use.

- Staffroom

Staff breaks will depend on their class rota and supervision, no separate breaks for teachers and SNAs as before. Please sanitise before entering the staffroom then you can use the kettle or boiler safely (sanitiser on wall on your left). Staff have the option to bring their own ware and cutlery each day or use what's there already. If you bring your own, please take it home with you every day. If you use what is there, please put straight into dishwasher when you are finished. Nothing can be left on the worktop.

All food must be taken home each day, so unfortunately, no shared butter, jam etc. in the fridge or cupboards for now. Please observe social distancing in the staffroom.

- Classroom management and curriculum

As a school, team teaching is not new to us. The class and SEN teacher will work together to in the best interests of the pupils and are free to use whatever model suits their classroom setting the best. Team planning will continue. Our children have never needed to be nurtured more. Unfortunately, we cannot run our nurture room as before but we will carefully monitor the needs of the children and ensure that supports are put in place where needed most. Incredible Years and SPHE will be very important this term, the routines helping our seniors, firsts and special classes to settle back into the 'known.' IY will also help the new juniors to settle and develop new routines.

The Department of Education and Skills has published curriculum guidelines for our return. These are attached and will be discussed in our teams on our return.

- Use of IT equipment

Photocopier – Please ask Ita to photocopy. If you must use the photocopier, please sanitise beforehand.

The computer room and the playroom will not be in use for the first few weeks. We will discuss best practice for use of computers and Ipads on our return.

- Information

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 you, as a staff member, are unsure about any aspect of the Covid-19 Response Plan, please speak with the Principal, who is supported in this role by the BOM.

Appendix E

Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

- While we are delighted to be returning to school and would love to see all our pupils in attendance every day, if they display any symptoms of Covid-19 as outlined above, they must remain at home. (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>)
- Staff must also remain at home if they display any of the Covid-19 symptoms.
- The principal's office will be used as the isolation area until mid-term and will then be reviewed
- If a pupil or a staff member displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:
- The pupil will be accompanied to the principal's office. A distance of 2 meters will be maintained. If this is not possible, the person accompanying the child must wear a face covering.
- If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone and asked to collect their child immediately.
- Staff members who are symptomatic should immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and go to the isolation area.
- Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms.
- If the staff a pupil or member of staff is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- The isolation area and work areas will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.

- 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.
- It is important to remember that any of us can get sick or unwell, and if we do, we need understanding and support from those around us. It is essential that anyone who feels unwell informs the principal as soon as possible.