

Holy Family Junior School Covid-19 Response Plan

We are delighted to be returning to school again during these challenging times as we live with Covid 19. Since March 2020 our whole school community has worked together to support our pupils' learning at home and at school. We have once again reviewed and updated our Holy Family Junior School Covid-19 Response Plan in line with updated Department of Education guidelines and we will continue to work with all members of our school community to maximise safety in our school. 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 remain in compliance with the Government's Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 and the 'Work Safely Protocol'.

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 developmental 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.

A 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. We will be sending regular emails and messages 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 secretary.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 Holy Family Junior School Covid-19 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

We all know by now that COVID – 19 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.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms of coronavirus (which includes the DELTA variant).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal
- Fatigue
- Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

- sore throat
- headaches
- runny or stuffy noses
- feeling sick or vomiting
- diarrhoea

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**
- 6. Use the Coivd 19 Tracker App**

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
- When entering and exiting vehicles

Ventilation

The Department has published guidance regarding ventilation in schools. It recommends that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance states that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors.

Pupils and staff must not come to school if:

- **They are exhibiting any symptoms of Covid 19. They should phone their doctor to arrange a test, following HSE guidance on self-isolation.**
- **They have a temperature, are coughing, vomiting or suffering from diarrhoea.**
- **They are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19**
- **They live with someone who has symptoms of the virus**
- **They have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff and parents are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.**

If pupils or staff develop symptoms at school, please bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly.

Staff and pupils should cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school. It is recommended to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

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.

Planned actions for the safe return of pupils and staff

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 while being different, will continue to be 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 2021/22 school year.

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

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the continuation 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 new 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 before returning to school.
- The *Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form* should be completed by parents of pupils before returning to school.

- Geraldine Normoyle will be the Lead Worker Representative, assisted by Cathy Hayes as the deputy lead worker. The Lead Worker Representatives work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- 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.
- Sanitiser dispensers have been installed at each reception door, middle and end doors. Sanitiser is available at the entrance to each classroom. 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 was deep cleaned during the Summer 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. Anyone entering the school yard is requested to wear a mask.
- It is very important that children are dropped to school and collected on time. Drop off time is between **8.55 and 9.10** each day (all classes). Collection times are
 - Junior Infants – From 1st – 17th September – **12.15pm**
 - and between 1.35pm and 1.45pm from the 20th September.

- Senior Infants – between **1.35pm and 1.45pm**
- First Class – between **2.35pm and 2.45pm**
- 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 *Return To Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form* should be completed by a parent or guardian.
- **More details for Parents (Appendix C)**

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 2m 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.
- There is no need for pupils to 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.
- 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 schoolyard 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 for our Monday morning assembly in the hall but will have a Zoom assembly each Monday morning to continue with our pupil of the week awards and other assembly activities.
- 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).
 - Junior Infants – From 1st – 17th September – **12.15pm**
and between 1.35pm and 1.45pm from the 20th September.
 - Senior Infants – between **1.35pm and 1.45pm**
 - First Class – between **2.35pm and 2.45pm**

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

- 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.

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. We all need to work together to ensure that the children feel safe and secure. The wellbeing of the children and the wellbeing of our staff will be at the centre of everything we do as we settle back to school.

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 an 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/campaigns/c36c85-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 include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal
- Fatigue
- Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

- sore throat
- headaches
- runny or stuffy noses
- feeling sick or vomiting
- diarrhoea

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.

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 and updated 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.

August 2021

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representatives, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Principal

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, 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 **2.35 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.
- 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 bag/folder 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.
- 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

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.
- If a pupil or a staff member displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:
 - The teacher should phone reception so that the Principal's Office can be prepared to receive the sick child.
 - The child (with coat and school bag) should be accompanied directly to the principal's office. The person accompanying the child must wear a face covering.
 - Parents will be notified and asked to collect the 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 than 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.