

# THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

## COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN

13<sup>th</sup> August 2020



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## **COVID-19 Policy Statement-The Institute of Education**

The Institute of Education is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for our staff and a safe learning environment for our students. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The Principal, Management and all 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 Plan and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and students 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
- establish a committee and worker representatives who are easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and students of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the public health guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and students engage with the induction provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- 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 students to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice.

**Yvonne O'Toole**  
**Principal**

**13<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

## 1.0 Key points

- The measures outlined in this plan are aimed at risk minimisation of COVID-19, for young people, teachers, other staff, their families, and the wider surrounding community, recognising the importance of education for health and wellbeing.
- No person (student, teacher, parent, other staff and visitors) will attend an educational setting if they or any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- Social (Physical) distancing, hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette will be observed by all (students, teachers, parents, other staff and visitors).
- This document does not replace existing health and safety regulations or other legal obligations in The Institute of Education. It is intended to supplement existing infection prevention and control guidance by providing information around specific concerns relating to COVID-19.

## 2.0 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in The Institute of Education.

## 3.0 What is COVID-19?

The virus which causes COVID-19 is called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and belongs to the broad family of viruses known as coronaviruses. It was first identified in the Wuhan province in China in December 2019 and a global pandemic event was declared in March 2020. In Ireland, COVID-19 was added to the Infectious Diseases Regulations in February 2020.

### 3.1 What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to symptoms of cold or flu. The most common symptoms are fever, cough, shortness of breath and loss of sense of smell or taste. More information regarding the most up to date signs and symptoms of COVID 19 is available on the HSE website.

The key recommendations for minimising Covid 19 risk are:

- Minimising Risk of Introduction of Infection (exclusion of students, staff members and visitors who are ill)
- Managing risk of spread
- Practicing regular and effective hand hygiene
- Maintaining physical distancing
- The application of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Environmental hygiene
- The wearing of face coverings in school settings

## 4.0 Minimising the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the school community

### 4.1 Staff, Parents and Students

- Promotion and awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms will be communicated via posters, email and text communications among staff, parents and students
- All staff will undertake and complete COVID-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building.
- Staff members that have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious disease will be advised not to attend work, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- Staff members will be advised not to present for work if they have been identified by HSE as a contact of a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- The contacts of a person with COVID-19 must follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Staff members that develop symptoms at work will be advised to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.  
All staff members will be requested to confirm that they do not have symptoms of COVID-19 infection by filling out a Return to Work form 3 days prior to returning to work, and to inform the Principal of any change in their health regarding COVID-19 symptoms.
- Parents are advised not to allow students to attend school if the student has symptoms of a viral respiratory infection or if there is someone in the household suspected or known to have COVID-19.
- Parents are advised not to allow students to attend school if they have been identified as COVID-19 contacts.
- Students must inform the Year Head if they develop symptoms when at school.
- Parents will be advised that The Institute of Education reserves the right to decline entry to students who appear to have fever or a respiratory tract infection.
- The school will ensure that they have contact numbers for parents/guardians who can be contacted to collect students from school in the event of illness.
- Everyone entering the building will be required to exercise hand hygiene using a hand sanitiser.
- The Institute of Education will take the temperature of staff daily.

### 4.2 Visitors

Visits to the school during the school day will be by prior arrangement and visitors will report to the reception area and will be subject to the same controls that apply to staff entering the school. Physical distancing of 2 metres will be maintained with visitors where possible.

Perspex has been installed in the reception area to ensure the safety of staff and visitors.

Meetings between parents and the Year Head will be organised by appointment and will be facilitated in a way that observes social distancing requirements. Meetings will be arranged to ensure that the congregation of parents in waiting areas is minimised.

### 4.3 Influenza Immunisation

Follow the vaccine programme for 2020 as per National Immunisation Guidelines.

## 5.0 Managing the risk of spread if infection is introduced

### 5.1 Hand Hygiene:

- The Institute of Education will promote good hand hygiene and display posters throughout the facility available on the HPSC website.
- Students and staff will understand that good hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).
- Students and staff will be made aware that hand sanitiser dispensers are deployed at entry and exit points of the school and in corridors.
- Students will be permitted to leave class to wash their hands.

### 5.2 Hand washing facilities

- Wash hand basins, warm running water, liquid soap dispensers and hand drying facilities will be provided in all toilets, kitchens and other food preparation areas.
- Bins will be located near wash hand basins for disposing of paper towels.
- Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of paper towels and soap will be topped up regularly to encourage students to use them.
- Cleaning staff will be reminded to check the soap dispensers at frequent intervals.
- Good quality disposable paper towels will be available at or near the wash hand basins for drying hands. Shared towels will not be used.

### 5.3 Hand washing products

- Liquid soap and warm running water will be provided.
- Refillable soap dispensers will be emptied, cleaned, and dried completely before being refilled.

### 5.4 Hand sanitiser

- Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean)

### 5.5 Frequency of hand hygiene

Students and staff will perform hand hygiene on arrival at school and:

- before and after eating or drinking
- after using the toilet
- when their hands are physically dirty
- when they cough or sneeze

## 5.6 Wearing of Face Coverings/Masks

In light of the change in Government Guidelines (Department of Education and Skills, 07/08/2020), it is recommended that students wear a face mask/covering in school when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

## 5.7 Wearing of Gloves

- The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by students or teachers is not appropriate. It does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves.

## 6.0 Physical Distancing

Physical distancing measures fall into two broad categories:

- Increasing separation;
- Decreasing interaction.

Staff will not always be able to maintain physical distance from their students and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the student.

- The Institute of Education will reduce the need for students/teachers to physically touch common objects/ doors.
- Where possible room ventilation especially in classrooms will be improved. The opening of doors and windows will be encouraged to increase natural ventilation and also to reduce contact with door handles.

### 6.1 Physical Distancing in the Classroom

#### Increasing separation

- Students will be encouraged to maintain as much distance as is reasonably practicable within the classroom.

#### Decreasing interaction

The following measures will be encouraged:

- limiting interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared spaces
- social physical contact (hand to hand greeting/hugs) will be discouraged.

Where students need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (for example, to access a shared resource) this will be organised, to the greatest extent possible, in a manner which minimises congregation around the point of access to the shared resource.



- Students and teachers will avoid sharing personal items such as pens and other writing materials.
- Students will avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (eg. putting pens/pencils in the mouth).
- Where teaching and learning involves the use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surfaces of the devices will be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.
- Where sub-groups are formed within a class for group work, to the greatest extent possible the same students will generally be in the same group, although movement between groups may be necessary on occasion.

## 6.2 Physical distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

- Meetings will be organised to maintain a distance of 2 metres between parents and guardians and the school staff.
- The congregation of people at school entry and exit points will be avoided.
- Additional access points will be opened to reduce congestion.
- In the morning students will go to their designated learning space/classroom.

## 6.3 Physical distancing considerations for staff

- A distance of 2 metres is recommended for physical distancing by staff in the school building.
- If a distance of 2m cannot be maintained in staff group interactions, as much distance as possible will be maintained and guidance on face coverings will be observed.
- Physical distancing will be observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks etc.
- Gatherings of school staff in the workplace at the beginning or the end of the school day will be minimised.

## 7.0 Canteen facilities

- Physical distancing in canteen facilities will be applied.
- Canteen use will be staggered.
- A queue management system with appropriate signage will be implemented to maintain social distancing.
- Students will be instructed to clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.

## 8.0 Corridors & Stairwell

- A supervised circulation plan will be in place in The Institute of Education. This will be monitored to ensure the constant and effective movement of students and staff from one location to another.

## 9.0 Activities

### 9.1 Sport Activities

See HPSC guidance on Return to Sports activities.

## 9.2 Art Equipment

Where possible students will be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

## 9.3 Music Equipment/Instruments

To every extent possible, instruments will not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments will be cleaned between use. Wind instruments will be cleaned and disinfected between use.

## 9.4 Shared Sports Equipment

Students will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after these activities. Minimise equipment sharing, and clean shared equipment between use by different people.

## 9.5 Toilets

- School toilets will be clean and in good repair and monitored regularly.
- All toilet areas will have hand-washing facilities.
- Toilets, wash hand basins and surrounding areas will be cleaned at least daily and whenever there is visible soiling.
- The cleaning of toilets, bathroom sinks and sanitary facilities used by students or staff will be carefully performed.
- Toilets will be cleaned thoroughly using a general-purpose detergent, paying particular attention to frequently touched areas such as toilet flush handles, toilet seats, basins and taps, and toilet door handles.
- Waste bins will be emptied regularly.

## 9.6 Schedule of environmental cleaning

- Each setting will be cleaned at least once per day. Additional cleaning support during school hours will focus on frequently touched objects and surfaces e.g., door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sinks and toilet facilities.
- Surfaces in dining areas will be wiped cleaned in between each sitting.
- Cleaning of the staff areas will be considered as part of the overall cleaning strategy.
- Any crockery and cutlery in shared kitchen areas will be cleaned with warm water and washing up liquid and dried thoroughly or washed in the dishwasher before being stored for re-use.
- A written cleaning schedule will be available for cleaning staff which details:
  - Item(s) and area(s) to be cleaned;
  - Cleaning materials to be used;
  - Equipment to be used and its method of operation;
  - Written cleaning schedules will be available and will be monitored to ensure that they are adequate and that they are being adhered to.

## 9.7 Cleaning /disinfecting rooms where a student or staff member with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 was present

- 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 clean the area will avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and will wear household gloves and a plastic apron
- They will clean the environment and the furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine-based product such as sodium hypochlorite (often referred to as household bleach).
- Attention will focus on frequently touched flat surfaces, the backs of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces or items that are visibly soiled with body fluids.
- Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be put back into use.
- Carpets (if present) do not require special cleaning unless there has been a spillage, however, for ease of cleaning, it is preferable to avoid carpets in areas where possible (Existing carpets do not need to be removed)

## 9.8 Cleaning of communal areas if a person is diagnosed with COVID-19

If a student or adult diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a canteen or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then these areas will be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined above) as soon as is practicably possible.

Special attention will be paid to frequently touched sites including door handles, backs of chairs, taps of washbasins, toilet handles. Once cleaning and disinfection have been completed and all surfaces are completely dry, the area can be put back into use.

## 10.0 What to do if a student is in the school/educational facility and they suddenly feel unwell or develop symptoms?

If a student develops any symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever, shortness of breath or sudden loss of taste or smell while in the school, a staff member will need to take them to the place that is designated for isolation and inform the Year Head.

- The Year Head will call their parent or guardian and ask them to collect their student as soon as possible.
- If a distance of 2m cannot be maintained, then a staff member caring for a student waiting for pick-up will wear a cloth face covering or mask.
- The staff member will be aware that it is essential to avoid touching his or her own nose, mouth or eyes while caring for a symptomatic student and to perform hand hygiene.
- If a member of staff has helped someone with symptoms, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves.

## 10.1 What to do if a staff member is in the school/ educational facility and they manifest symptoms?

- If a staff member develops symptoms of acute respiratory infection including cough, fever or shortness of breath, they will be requested to go home without delay and contact their GP by telephone.
- They will remain 2 m away from others if possible.
- They will avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and they will be advised to maintain sneezing/coughing etiquette.
- They will wear a clean cloth face covering or a surgical mask.
- If they must wait, then they will do so in an office or other area away from others, mindful of the need to observe good respiratory and hand hygiene.

## 11.0 LEAD WORKER REPRESENTATIVES

In line with the Department of Education's Response Plan guidelines, the Institute of Education will appoint Lead Worker Representatives (LWRs). The LWRs will work in collaboration with the Principal to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and monitor adherence to those measures in the workplace.

The Lead Worker Representatives in The Institute of Education are:

Karen Cullen  
Derick Clarke  
Randall Buckler

In summary, the role of the LWRs is to:

- represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts
- keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice
- 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
- consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19
- promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice
- assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice
- monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week)
- report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them
- consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area
- consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace
- make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

The Institute of Education reserves the right to amend, review and update this Policy at any time.

