

Gaelscoil Charraig na Siúire

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Plean Freagartha Covid 19 / Response Plan Covid 19 **Bliain 2021-2022**

1. Introduction:

As a school community we have successfully navigated our way through what has been a challenging 18 months. As we look forward to re-opening our school on 26th August 2021 we need to be aware that there will be challenges ahead.

Our school will operate under new norms. As a school community we will have to adapt quickly to new and revised practices and procedures many of which are detailed in this policy. The Health, Safety and Well-being of all members of our school community is of paramount importance to us all.

Procedures have been put in place in line with HSE and Department of Education and Skills advice and guidance. All members of the school community, irrespective of circumstance, are expected to adhere fully to the procedures put in place in an attempt to minimize the risk posed by Covid-19. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

Each and every individual must play their part. We all have an obligation to do what we can to ensure the safety of our school community. Covid-19 poses a serious risk to us all. It is one thing opening the school, but the real challenge is to keep it open.

Aims:

Through the implementation of the practices and procedures as outlined in this policy our school community aims to:

- Do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school.
- Reduce the likelihood of the spread of Covid-19, insofar as possible, within our school if introduced.
- Detail for all members of our school community how our school will reopen for all students from the 26th of August and what the operation of our school will look like so as to be sustainable in a COVID-19 context.
- Balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning.

1. Covid 19 Policy Statement:

COVID-19 Policy Statement

Gaelscoil Charraig na Siúire is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- Continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- Provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- Display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- Agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- Inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- Adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- Keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- Ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- Implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- Provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- Implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the **Lead Worker Representative**, Áine Máire Uí Dhuinn, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners. The **Deputy Lead Worker Representative** is Linda Nic an Bháird.

2. Know the symptoms of Covid-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- Fatigue
- Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms include:

- Sore throat
- Headaches
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Feeling sick or vomiting
- Diarrhoea

3.Minimising the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into our school

As a school community we must do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-student and must be managed in all settings.

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents and visitors, as far as possible, within the school environment. These control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an on-going basis.

It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

Travel from abroad: If you have travelled abroad recently please make sure you have followed all the current guidelines in place for you and your children. See [gov.uk/covid-19-travel-advice](https://www.gov.uk/covid-19-travel-advice) for a live link.

Practices and procedures.

3.1 Promoting awareness:

- All members of our school community will actively promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms.

- Signage informing members of the school community of the symptoms of Covid-19 and the need for social distancing are displayed at all access points to the school.
- All members of the school community will embed in pupils the need for appropriate respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene.
- Staff members will thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

3.2 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal.

A RTW form should only be completed prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide: details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

Note: Induction Training for staff will be developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff

3.3 Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific roll.

Áine Máire Uí Dhuinn, Rúnaí Scoile is the Lead Worker Representative.

Linda Nic an Bhaird is the Deputy Lead Worker Representative.

The role of the worker representative) is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

- Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
- Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

3.4 Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings has been completed and is attached Appendix 1

3.5 Attendance at school:

- Members of the school community who display symptoms of Covid-19 **must not attend or visit school** and should immediately phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Members of the school community **must not attend or visit school** if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact for person with COVID-19 and must follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school must promptly bring this fact to the attention of the Principal, Deputy Principal, as appropriate.
- Staff and pupils must know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school as detailed in Section 8 of the DES Guidelines.
- Everyone entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitiser provided at each entrance.
- **Visits to the school by all persons other than staff and pupils will be by appointment only.** Appointments must be arranged in advance through the school office, by phone on 051 640366 or by e mail at reception@gaelscoilcharraignasiuire.com.

Teachers may be contacted directly by email to the school email. **The only entry to the school for adults is at the office.**

- Each visitor to the school will be required to complete a Contact Tracing Log irrespective of the duration of the visit.
- Each visitor to the school will be required to wear a face covering irrespective of the duration of the visit.
- Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between staff and all visitors to the school.
- Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between all adults when on school grounds.

3.6 Respiratory Hygiene

All members of our school community **MUST** practice and actively promote good respiratory hygiene at home and at school as this will help protect people around us from viruses such as flu and Covid-19.

Good respiratory hygiene entails:

- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Disposing of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.
- Bins have been purchased for all rooms/toilets. These bins will be emptied at regular intervals throughout the day.

3.7 Hand Hygiene

All members of our school community must practice and actively promote effective hand hygiene at home and at school.

- Staff and pupils must understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.
- Hand sanitisers are installed, at both entry points in each classroom and at appropriate locations throughout the school.
- Posters are displayed at each hand washing station throughout the school showing effective hand washing technique.
- HSE guidelines on handwashing are available at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

- All persons entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitisers provided.

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff must 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.

3.8 Physical Distancing

- Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- Physical distancing will be usefully applied in our school allowing for some flexibility when needed. It will be applied in a practical way that recognises that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing in our school will look different across the various ages and stages of learning.
- It is recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

- However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.
- All adult visitors to the school, as scheduled by appointment, must maintain a 2m distance from school staff.
- Our school community is committed to the two principles of physical distancing, namely, increasing separation and decreasing interaction, as a means of minimising the risk of the introduction of Covid-19 to our school.

3.9 Increasing Separation

In order to minimise contact between pupils, insofar as possible, the school will operate the following procedures for arrival, dismissal, movement through the school and break times.

Arrival: Pupils will enter the school by themselves and go straight to their classrooms via the following doors:

- Linda's class through the emergency door to the front of her classroom
- Neasa's class through the main door
- Samantha's class through the emergency door at the side of her classroom
- Siobhán's class through the emergency door to the front of her classroom
- Isobel's class through the main door of her prefab

Arrival Times:

Pupils may be dropped to school from 8:45 am.

When pupils are dropped at the designated time they must proceed unaccompanied (except for Naíonáin Bheaga & Naíonáin Mhóra) to their classroom. Naíonáin Bheaga & Naíonáin Mhóra may be accompanied by one adult to the Drop Off/Collection Point at the bollards.

Please do not drop any pupil before 8.45 a.m.

All staff must be at school by 8.45 a.m. to help with the smooth return to school for all our pupils. This extra time will make up Croke Park Hours.

Collection

Naíonáin Bheaga & Naíonáin Mhóra will finish at 1:40 and exit through their emergency doors. Parents will collect at Collection Point remembering social distance at all times.

All classes from 1st – 6th will finish from 2.35 p.m. These classes will exit their classrooms at staggered times from 2:35pm.

Rang 1 , 2 ,3 will finish at 2:35 pm and leave through their respective doors.

Rang Neasa will finish at 2:38 pm.

Rang Linda at 2:40 pm

If a pupil walks, cycles or sees his/her parents they will proceed straight out of the school grounds. If no parent is there to collect, pupils will wait **in their family group** until their parents arrive. (This will be taught to the pupils on the first day back)

Please do not delay at this busy time for traffic in the evening, collect your child and depart promptly .

Parental responsibilities on arrival and collection:

- **Parents must arrive on time for dropping off and collecting their child.**
- Parents must not congregate in groups or stand around chatting.
- Parents must ensure their child remains at their side at all times and that their child does not interact with other children.
- The junior and senior infants will go home at the normal time exiting through different doors.
- At arrival and departure times of children, social distancing is to be maintained by children and parents.
- Parents and carers are asked not to gather in groups while waiting for the bell to sound.
- **Parents/visitors who enter the school grounds must wear a face covering .**

4.0 Changes to Classroom and School Layout and to School Routines

The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

The children and their teachers will work in Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until the children go home at the end of the school day.

Junior Infants to Second Class

It is recognised 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

Third Class to Sixth Class

Children from Third Class to Sixth Class will be arranged in Pods within their Class Bubbles, with 4-6 pupils per Pod where possible. Each Pod will be at least 1 metre distance from the next Pod. All unnecessary furniture has been removed from these classrooms to create as much space as possible.

Pods: Class teachers will assign the pupils to the particular Pods having consulted with the previous class teacher. These Pods can be changed at Christmas and Easter as there is a natural break of 14 days.

Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants

Staff members (particularly Support Teachers and SNAs) can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimised where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

In keeping with our Special Education policy, 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 will work as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble (class)

- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different pupils or small groups attending.

Corridors

- Adults briefly passing each other in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.

Additional Measures to Limit Interactions

- Children will go straight to their classrooms from the yard and will not congregate in the corridors.
- While we will all be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

Ventilation : To ensure that classrooms are well ventilated, windows will be kept open as often as possible, and will be opened while children are taking breaks in the playground.

Signage: Social distancing signs have been erected in the grounds, at the main gate and at the entrances to both buildings. We have also put social distancing signs on the corridors and outside both offices and staffroom

Lunches

- Parents must make sure that children bring their lunches to school to avoid adults having to come to the school during the day. Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children.
- Please make sure your child is self-sufficient ie. they can open/peel any lunch/drink you pack for them. Please pay particular attention to any drinks that require a straw.
- Please make sure they have enough drinks to last them throughout the day as we will not be in a position to refill drinks bottles.
- Children will eat their lunches at their desks. No food will be allowed onto the yard.
- Snacks from Glanmore will still be provided and shared by class teacher with each pod. All unwanted food will be returned to the company.

Break times:

All classes will have their own designated area on the school premises for playing at break.

- Balls will be allowed for play and these balls will be sanitised before and after break time.
- When the bell goes after break pupils will not line up. Instead they will remain in their place on the yard (freeze) and wait to be called by the teacher on duty to enter their classroom whilst maintaining social distancing.

Books, Copies, Pencils, Hand sanitisers etc.

- Children should use their own books, pens, pencils, etc. and must not be shared with other pupils.
- Pupils should have a separate pencil case for use at home that won't be brought into school and another one for school that won't be brought home.
- Pupils may bring in their own hand sanitiser, wipes, or washbag if they so wish.

Uniforms/Tracksuits

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is not practical for most families. However, children's uniforms must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms only for school related activities. Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc.

Office

- We are in the process of introducing epayments to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled. Parents/Guardians are asked to co-operate in helping to keep school staff safe by arranging for contactless payments through the school office when set up is complete. Until then you are asked to send in school fees (exact amount please) clearly labelled with your child. It will be collected by the class teacher.
- All visitors to the school must fill in a Contact Tracing Log
- Pupils must not be sent to the office to deliver messages.
- As far as possible, staff members should minimise their entry to the office area

Photocopying

Any staff member who uses the photocopier must clean it down after use with the wipes provided.

Visiting Teachers/Coaches

The possibility of facilitating activities such as dancing, music, gymnastics, swimming etc. will eventually be explored in time. For now all of these activities are suspended. GAA training, Athletics and outdoor activities can continue.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

The sequence for covering all teacher absences will be in accordance with DES circular 0045/2020. A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/SNA. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction training.

Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Teachers will organise lessons that require very little if any equipment. Staff members and pupils will be encouraged to take additional breaks outside during the school day. While these breaks are taking place all windows in the classroom should be opened to allow for ventilation. All PE equipment if used must be sanitised after use.

Wet Days: teachers must provide activities for pupils to engage in during break times.

Staffroom

- All staff members must maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not engaged in teaching e.g. when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. The Halla will be used for breaks this year.
- Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible.

5. Teaching and Learning

- As a staff, we are very aware that the children have had a very disruptive 2 years of school life. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families.
- Each child will be a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2021/2022 school year.
- The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

Homework: No written homework will be assigned for the first week to reduce books transitioning from home to school. This will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

6. Other Parental Responsibilities:

- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books cannot and will not be shared.
- 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.
- Water bottles are to be filled at home every morning.
- Lunches. Make sure your child can open /close their lunch box/drinks bottles. Regarding food please make sure they can open or peel any food that you send in. Please pay particular attention to yogurt cartons, oranges, drinks that needs straws etc. As we will not be in a position to refill water bottles please ensure your child has enough drinks for the day.
- Regarding clothing, please ensure your child can or teach your child to open/close their own coat and tie their own shoes.

9. Supporting the Learning of Children who Cannot Attend School

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher, where relevant) will provide work to support the child's learning at home and this will be shared with parents/guardians.

10. The Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hygiene and Cleaning

- 16 sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at the entrance and exit of each classroom and support room, at the entrances to the office and in the staffroom
- Emulsifying soap is available in all the toilets.
- Paper towel dispensers have been installed in all toilets and bins provided for waste
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.
- 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, handrails, tables and chairs, sink and toilet facilities.
- 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.
- Waste will be collected regularly from the office and other areas within the school.
- Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)
- Staff will wear a face covering as per Department guidelines
- Any staff (Teachers and SNAs) involved in intimate care need to wear PPE

11. Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

- We love to see all of our children at school every day. However, under the current circumstances, parents/guardians must keep children at home if they display any Covid-19 Symptoms. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>
- Staff must not attend school if they display any symptoms.
- A designated isolation area has been created in the Club House. If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:
 - ✓ The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation area. A distance of 2 metres will be maintained. 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. To help us in this regard, parents are asked to make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times.
 - ✓ Staff members who are symptomatic should immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and go to the isolation area.
 - ✓ A face covering will be provided to the staff member/child who is symptomatic.
 - ✓ The staff member or child who is symptomatic should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
 - ✓ If the staff member/child is well enough to go home, arrangements will be made for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible.
 - ✓ Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used to travel home.
 - ✓ If the staff member/child 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 makes that known to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

7. Wellbeing of the School Community

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- A sense of hope

Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on what is known as the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

COVID-19 Related Absence Management

COVID-19 related absences will be managed in line with DES circular 0042/2021, DES Information Note 0008/2020 and other agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

Pupil Wellness:

The Stay Safe programme will be taught in all classes during the school year. Increased emphasis will be placed in all classes on SPHE / PE and outdoor activities.

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

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.

Please Note: This plan will be amended if the Board of Management feels it necessary in order to ensure the continued Health and Safety of all the school community.