



# St Francis National School

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## Covid 19 Return to School Plan Key facts for Parents

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

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

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

- HSE-HPSC: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>
- HSE Hub: <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Department of Health: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/7e0924-latest-updates-on-covid-19-coronavirus/>

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

## **The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:**

- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 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.

## **Best practice for Parents and Pupils:**

In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19

- if you have been in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms
- if you have coughed
- if you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- if you have been on public transport,
- if you have been in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- if you have handled animals or animal waste
- if you move from one room to another room or from inside to outside areas
- if you have physical contact with a child from another group other than their own group
- if your hands are dirty
- when you arrive and leave buildings including your home or anyone else's home
- After using the toilet
- Before having a cigarette or vaping before and after eating
- Before and after preparing food
- Before and after eating your own food – breaks/lunches
- After assisting a child to use the toilet or using the toilet themselves
- After contact with bodily fluids (runny nose, spit, vomit, blood, faeces)
- After cleaning tasks

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

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

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

**You must not engage in handshaking or hugging.**

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

Keep your hands in good condition. Moisturise them often.

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

### **Role of Parents:**

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

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

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

- the child is exhibiting any symptoms of Covid 19 (outside of pre-existing conditions eg. associated with asthma or hayfever).
- the child has a temperature, is coughing, who has been vomiting or has diarrhoea
- a child has been outside of the country in the 14 days prior to August 24<sup>th</sup> (Junior Infants) & August 26<sup>th</sup> (Senior Infants to 6<sup>th</sup> Class) they are not to attend school but must isolate
- If the child has been in contact with any family member and or other person who has Covid19.

## **Interim Arrival and departure procedures for children and parents:**

Please remember that we are going through a Pandemic, and all safety measures we ask of you are to safeguard your children, the staff of our school and yourselves.

To have as few cars as possible entering the school grounds, we urge parents to allow their children to either walk or cycle to school to minimise traffic congestion. There also the option of "park and stride" from Sextons, Rathmount, The Community Centre, Gort na Mara, Gort na Glaise, Cois Farraige etc.

- **Parents must arrive on time for leaving in and collecting their child.**
- Only parents or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised are allowed to drop off and collect children.
- Any parent who is in a high risk category should not drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves. (This of course is at the discretion of the individual parent/carer/grandparent's discretion)
- St. Francis NS will open to facilitate staggered arrival of pupils between 8.45am and 9.15am at the latest.
- Staff will be in the classrooms to receive pupils on arrival.
- On entering the school grounds, a child must proceed immediately to their classroom.
- Once their child has entered school grounds, parents must leave immediately.
- Home times will be staggered for all classes
  - Junior and Senior Infants A finish at 1.35pm; Junior and Senior Infants B at 1.45pm. Further details to follow for collection points.
  - First to Sixth Class - Siblings will leave first at 2.30pm followed by all other pupils will leave at 2.45pm.
- If parents are driving - Drop and go! Parents must not leave their cars.
- Infants will stand 1 metre apart on designated spots for collection. Junior Infants on green spots to the side of the school building/ bicycle shelter and Senior infants on blue spots at the front of the school building.
- Once your child is collected please leave immediately.
- If parents/Guardians are walking or cycling, parents must maintain social distancing in the evening time when dropping off or when waiting to collect a child.
- No parent/Guardian will be allowed within the school building.
- **Should a matter of urgency arise for parents,** they must phone the office and make an appointment. This may have to be more restrictive depending on guidance - it is quite possible that the recommendation

will be for remote meetings/telephonic communications. Access will only be permitted once they have signed the contact tracing log book, and they have used the hand sanitiser. Once inside the school building they must **wear face covering**, maintain the required social distance and follow the directions of the principal/staff member.

- At arrival and departure times, social distancing is to be maintained by pupils and parents **must remain in their cars**.
- Classes have been assigned specific doors.

### **Daily Morning Drop Off: 8.45am**

The main gates will be opened and supervised from 8.45am. **SET DOWN ONLY – Drop and go!** Parents to remain in cars. We would strongly encourage pupils to walk/ cycle, “park and stride” to and from school.

Pupils will enter the school building maintaining social distancing and go straight to their classroom with supervision.

Classes in the main school building enter via the school yard gate (Junior and Senior Infants, 2<sup>nd</sup> class B, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes).

Classes in the prefab classrooms will enter via the gate beside the main school entrance (1<sup>st</sup> class A & B, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class A).

### **Daily End of School Collection: 1.35pm**

Home times will be staggered for all classes – as below.

Infants Classes - the school grounds will be a **pick up area only**.

**Parents to remain in cars.**

**Junior and Senior Infants A** finish at 1.35pm; Junior and Senior Infants B at 1.45pm. See details above.

**First to Sixth Class** - Siblings will leave first at 2.30pm followed by all other pupils will leave at 2.45pm. If possible, allow your children to walk/cycle/ “Park and stride”. If you must drive, please collect at children at the school gate and avoid driving into the grounds.

**Those pupils from first to sixth going to Homework Club will be collected by Suzanne and taken to the Club. Fifth and sixth class pupils may go on their own. They will line up at the rear of the lines.**

### **Other Responsibilities for Parents:**

- Parents are to ensure that their child knows and uses the **protocols** around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers **prior to returning to school.**
- Parents must ensure that all **lunch boxes/water bottles** are sanitised in a dishwasher at 60 degrees or in hot soapy water and clearly labelled with child's name.
- Water bottles are to be filled **at home every evening.**
- Children are to go to the bathroom **before** they leave home for school daily.
- Children are to wash their hands **before** leaving for school.

### **Parents and Uniforms:**

- Classrooms may be cooler than usual due to extra ventilation. Your child might feel more comfortable wearing an extra layer under their jumper.
- Children's uniforms (and hats, coats etc) must be clean and washed regularly at a minimum of 60 degrees as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.
- **NO SCHOOL BAGS** please. Children must not bring a schoolbag to school. Lunch box/ lunch bag ONLY. School things will remain in school. Home things are to remain at home. The children will only require their lunch and coat.
- If they are unable to tie shoe laces, children must wear shoes with Velcro straps.

### **Children who may have symptoms:**

- **Any child who is unwell with a fever, has a cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms or is displaying any of the symptoms of Covid19 is to stay at home.**  
The child's parent should contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for Covid19 testing.

## **Protocols if a child becomes unwell or presents as a suspected case of COVID19 while at school:**

- The child will be brought to the Isolation Area by a staff member keeping at least 2 metres apart from the staff member.
- The parent will be immediately contacted and asked to come to the school to take the child either to the doctor or home. The handover will take place at the front door. **The parent will be asked to sign their child out. The parent is then deemed to have undertaken to have their child seen by their GP and/or tested.**
- A mask will be given to the child to wear until he/she is picked up. The designated staff member will remain with the child until he/she is picked up.
- Dedicated waste bins will be in use.
- The staff member caring for the child in isolation will wear personal protective equipment i.e. face mask, disposable apron and gloves.
- The child should be encouraged not to touch surfaces, people or any objects.
- Public transport of any kind should not be used by the parent to take the child home.
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area and the child's work station will be carried out immediately.
- The principal and the DLW will carry out an assessment of the incident which will form any part of follow up actions.
- The principal will inform the HSE in line with correct protocols.
- **Parents must supply evidence from their GP or of a negative Covid test for their child to return to school.**

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

- The school will be contacted by local Public Health staff of the HSE to discuss the case. They will identify people who have been in contact with the person and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken.
- An assessment will be undertaken by HSE public health staff.
- Advice on the management of children and staff who came into contact with the person will be based on this assessment.

Symptomatic people should self-isolate and arrange to get tested for COVID-19. Confirmed COVID-19 cases should continue to self-isolate at home for a minimum of 14 days and should not return to school until they are advised that it is safe to do so. Close contacts of a confirmed case (their partner/family member should be notified and go home if at work and restrict their movements for 14 days. They should not attend work during that time.

## **Children in High Risk Groups:**

Parents should seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in a high risk group. They must make an informed decision if it is safe for their child to return to school. They should inform the principal of the advice given. If there are any parents out there who have concerns about their child's health, please contact the class teacher (see contact details on our school website) or the principal at [principal@stfrancisns.ie](mailto:principal@stfrancisns.ie). The Minister of Health recently announced that the Flu Vaccine will be available free to all children aged between 2 and 12 in the coming weeks. The vaccine will be given as drops on the tongue. We are awaiting further information on this and will let you know as soon as we get an update. It is more than likely that the vaccine will be given in the schools so as to avoid thousands of families descending on GPs.

## **Use of Face Masks:**

- It is currently not recommended in Ireland for children under 13 to wear face masks as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of the Covid19.
- If a parent wishes their child to wear a mask, this will be permitted. Children must understand how to use and wear a mask correctly and safely. The use of a visor instead will be recommended

## **Children's learning spaces:**

- All excess furniture will be removed from the classroom where possible so as to provide additional space.
- All staff will reconfigure their classrooms to ensure a one metre distance between pupils where possible. Pupils will be organised into pods within the classroom as is reasonably practical.
- Classes will be organised into bubbles and interaction between classes outside of the bubble will not take place.
- Resources that can be easily cleaned will be used and toys and materials that are difficult to clean e.g. dress up clothes or soft toys during this temporary Covid-19 emergency will not to be used.
- Pupils will hand sanitise before and after using any materials.
- Pupils will not be allowed to share materials/resources.
- Toilet breaks will be staggered.
- The toilets will be disinfected after use by the cleaning staff at break times.
- Additional time will be spent by the cleaning staff to ensure DES cleaning standards are being met.
- All staff and pupils are responsible for cleaning their own work surfaces daily.
- All classrooms must be kept well ventilated at all times.
- Corridor doors will be left open to allow ease of movement around the school.
- A strict "walk on the left" policy will apply.