

ST.FELIM'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

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Updated Draft Action Plan for Re-opening of the school

Themes which are critical to our ability to minimising risk associated with COVID-19 in our schools

- *A balanced approach* - one of the key challenges for schools during this pandemic is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for pupils/students and where teachers feel able to engage with pupils in a way that supports their learning.
- *Apply common sense* - An atmosphere of fear and an overwhelming preoccupation with infection and hygiene can be harmful to teachers and pupils and to the quality of the educational experience without materially reducing the risk of infection beyond what can be achieved with a common-sense approach.
- *Create awareness* - heightened awareness by staff, parents and children (where age appropriate) is required so that they know how to protect themselves and each other and how to recognise and report symptoms of COVID-19 infection.
- *Do everything practical to avoid introduction of Covid-19 into the school* - the most critical part of managing the risks of COVID-19 related to schools is doing everything practical to avoid introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If the infection is not introduced it cannot spread. The risk of introduction is related to how common the infection is in the community served by the school at a given time. If the infection is uncommon in the community, then the likelihood of introduction is much lower.
- *Stay at home if unwell* - no person (child, teacher or parent) should attend school if unwell or any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- *Keep doing the key measures to keep us all safe* - physical distancing, hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette should be observed by all (children, teachers, parents and visitors). In addition, face coverings will be worn by adults where a 2m distance cannot be maintained.

Underlying Principles

- The school has a responsibility to make effort to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
- Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.

- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

Plans and Procedures for the return to school

- All staff will fill out the Return to Work form 72 hours prior to the school reopening.
- Parents will fill out a return to school declaration form via Aladdin prior to their child returning to school after an illness or a period of school closure
- All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system
- The school day will begin at the earlier time of 9am to facilitate staggered drop off and collections times
- There will be staggered break times and lunchtimes
- Within each class from Juniors to 2nd Class, physical distancing is not a prerequisite for a safe and sustainable return to school but we will endeavour to limit children’s interactions with each other in as far as practicable.
- Within each class from 3rd to 6th, children will be divided into pods. Physical distancing of 1m will be maintained between the individual Pods and between individual pupils, whenever possible within the limits of the size of each classroom.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points, inside and outside the doors of all classrooms and special education rooms, outside the doors of communal toilets and offices

New School Hours

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| 9:00a.m. – 1:40p.m. | Junior & Senior Infants |
| 9:00a.m. – 2:40p.m. | 1 st to 6 th Class |

Arrival at School

All the children will enter the school grounds through the gates in the main school car park.

Unfortunately, it will not be possible for parents/guardians to come onto the school grounds before/after school. To minimise the risks, and to help us to maintain social distancing, the children may not come onto the school grounds before the school gates open at **8.50a.m.**

Upon arrival children will go directly to their classrooms on arrival through the designated door for their class. Staff members (including Special Education Teachers, SNAs and the Principal) will be available outside and inside the building to receive the children and to help them to their classrooms.

Staggered Times for dropping children at school

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| 8.50a.m. | All class teachers will be in their classrooms |
| 8:50 - 9:10a.m. | Children to arrive and go straight to classrooms. |

Parents are asked to ‘drop and go’ in the car park in as far as is practicable.

Late Arrivals at School

Gates will be closed at 9.15am. Any children that arrive after this time must proceed to front of the school and enter through the main door at the front of the school. They must sanitise their hands and press buzzer for entry. Reminder that parents are also asked to 'drop and go' in this instance also as parents are not permitted access onto school premises

Dismissal from School

At each designated home time children will be walked to the school gate in the main car park by their teacher. Each child will stand on a designated spot which are positioned 1 metre apart to maintain physical distancing.

Parents are asked to stay at their cars to maintain physical distancing, at least 2 metres apart, children will be sent to cars by teachers on duty. When you have picked up your child/children up you are asked to leave the car park promptly.

Those travelling by bus will exit the school at the exit on the Bailieborough side of the school and get on the bus.

Staggered times for collecting children from school

| | |
|----------|--|
| 1.40p.m. | Junior and Senior Infants |
| 2:40p.m. | Children in 1 st and 2 nd Class and their older siblings will be brought to the school gate by the class teacher. Children travelling by bus will exit through the designated exit door |
| 2:50p.m. | Children in classes 3 rd to 6 th will be brought to the school gate by the class teacher. |

This system will apply rain, hail or shine so please make sure that your child comes to school prepared for the weather!

(Separate, special arrangements are in place for our Junior Infants and their parents at the beginning of the school year. This will be communicated separately)

Early Collections from school

If it is necessary for a child/children to be collected early from school, the parent/guardian must inform the school prior to the collection time. This can be done by phoning the school office on 042-9665605 or by sending an email to office@thevalens.com.

Children will be called from their class/classes and asked to come to the main office. You can collect them from the main school entrance at the front of the school. Parents must come to the main door, wearing a mask, sanitise their hands, then press the buzzer. You will be buzzed where you will must sign your child/children out and leave as soon as is practicable.

Change to Classroom Layout and 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.

Entrances and Exits

- Children will enter the school premises through the green gates in the main school car park.
- They will walk up the ramp maintaining physical distancing.
- Staff members will be present to show children where to go and to remind them to hand sanitise on the way in.
- Children will exit these doors at home time.

| Classes | Door |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Junior & Senior Infants | Infant Back Door |
| 1 st & 3 rd Class | Door in Link Corridor to Hall |
| 5 th & 6 th Class | Door at New Classroom |
| 2 nd & 4 th Class | Double Doors |

Classrooms

In order to maintain physical distancing in our classrooms, the following measures have been taken:

- All unnecessary furniture has been removed from all classrooms to create as much space as possible.
- One half of our school hall has been repurposed into a 60m² classroom
- Teacher's desks are at least 1 metre and where possible 2 metres away from pupil's desks.

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 a maximum of 6 pupils per Pod. There will be 1 metre distance between Pods and between individual children in the Pod, whenever possible.

Breaktimes

The DES guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low. They also state that it is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in primary school play outdoors together, but in so far as practical it is helpful to keep to consistent groups. To fulfil this recommendation, we are operating staggered playtime at both breaks. As is current practice the first 10 minutes of lunchtime will be in the classroom to facilitate children eating their lunch.

| Group | Classes | Breaktime | Lunchtime |
|--------------|--|------------------|------------------|
| Group 1 | Juniors, 1 st , 3 rd & 5 th | 10:30-10:40 | 12:10-12:40 |
| Group 2 | Seniors, 2 nd , 4 th & 6 th | 10:50-11:00 | 12:30-1.00 |

Play Areas

- Each class is considered a 'Bubble' and will have a designated play area for use at both breaktime and lunchtime.
- They will only be permitted to play in the designated area.
- At the end of each break, they will line up observing physical distancing on their play area, where their teacher will collect them.
- Each class will have a designated door for access to and from their designated play area.

| Group 1 - Juniors, 1st, 3rd & 5th | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Class | Play Area | Exit Door |
| Junior Infants | Behind New Classroom | Infant Back Door |
| First Class | Concrete Pitch | Double Doors |
| Third Class | Ramp & Triangle | Fire Exit on Corridor |
| Fifth Class | Tarmac | Door at New Classroom |
| Group 2 - Seniors, 2nd, 4th & 6th | | |
| Class | Play Area | Exit Door |
| Senior Infants | Behind New Classroom | Infant Back Door |
| Second Class | Ramp & Triangle | Double Doors |
| Fourth Class | Concrete Pitch | Infant Back Door |
| Sixth Class | Tarmac | Door at New Classroom |

Yard Supervision

A rota will be organised based on Class Bubbles and the SETs and SNAs allocated those classes. Class teachers from Junior Infants, First, Third and Fifth and SETs allocated to those classes to work together

Class teachers from Senior Infants, Second, Fourth and Sixth and Sixth Classes and SETs allocated to those classes to work together.

SNAs and the Principal will also be doing supervision at breaktimes.

Social Interactions

While we will all be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

Toilets

Junior Infants, Senior Infants, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Class each have a set of toilets designated for their class.

First Class, Second Class and Third Class, will use the communal toilets at each end of the main school corridor. Each set of communal toilets has three cubicles, the door of each cubicle will be painted a different colour, a specific colour will be assigned to each of the classes using the communal toilets. In addition to this control measure, timetables will be drawn up so that only one class group at a time is present in the communal toilets where practicable.

Liquid soap dispensers have been installed in all toilets.

Water heaters have been installed under all classrooms sinks and in all toilets. Hot water is also available in the staffroom and one of SET Rooms

General Purpose (GP) Room

The GP Room may not be used for Assemblies, Physical Education or for any other gatherings of pupils. For the present, it will be divided for use as a classroom and for storage of P.E. equipment and furniture that has been removed from classrooms.

Corridors

Briefly passing someone 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.

All staff and children will be asked to walk on the left in the corridors.

Doors

Hand sanitiser has been positioned outside of each classroom and communal toilets, children and staff will be asked to sanitise prior to entry. Where practical, internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common surfaces.

Windows/Ventilation

The Department has published guidance for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice '*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*' The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools 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 provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

Uniforms/Tracksuits

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is probably not practical for most families.

We will follow our usual practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn every day, except on P.E. days, or when otherwise requested by teachers.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **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.

Teachers will be unable to assist your child with any part of their school uniform. Please ensure your child can

- Open and close their own coat independently
- Turn their jumper and coat inside out.
- Put on their jumper
- Tie their own shoelaces or ensure your child wears shoes with velcro

Due to the necessity for windows to be open all day, it is strongly recommended that children would wear an extra layer under their uniform.

Coats

Children will not be permitted to hang their coat on the coat hooks in the corridors or in their classrooms. Coats will have to be stored in school bags or under the table in the classrooms. Please provide your child with a small reusable shopping bag to store the coat in during the day.

Lunches

Parents/Guardians must make sure that children bring their lunches to school to avoid adults having to come to the school during the day.

Ensure lunchboxes are child friendly and can be easily opened and closed by your child.

Unfortunately, teachers will be unable to peel fruit or open yoghurts etc. so consider this when packing lunches. These are skills that can be practised at home in advance of reopening.

Frubes are not permitted this year.

Children will eat their lunches at their desks, as per our usual practice. Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children. There will be no compost this year, all food waste and wrappers will be sent home in your child's lunchbox.

Books, Copies, Pencils, etc.

Children should use their own books, pens, pencils, etc. and as far as possible should not share with other pupils.

Children from 1st to 6th class are asked to get a plastic box with a lid to store their books and copies. A box of approximately 40cm long and 30cm wide would be suitable.

Children will leave their pencil cases with all the necessary equipment in it, at school on the first day. These includes pencils, pens, colours, twistables, gluestick, erasers and parer. It is advisable to have a second set for use at home.

Please have all your child's name on all his/her personal equipment for ease of identification.

Parent/ Teacher Meetings

The structure of Parent/Teacher Meetings remains uncertain. We will assess the situation closer to the time.

Office / Photocopying

Only two members of staff are allowed in the office at one time.

All Parents/Guardians are asked to co-operate in helping to keep school staff safe by using Aladdin for all payments that need to made to the school.

Children should only be sent to the Secretary's Office to collect something when absolutely necessary.

An additional photocopier has been purchased and put in the staffroom for teachers use.

Staff members should sanitise their hands, before using the photocopier.

Staffroom

Only four members of staff will be permitted. All staff members should 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. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, face coverings should be worn.

Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

Staff members are required to sanitise hands on entry and exit of the staffroom. Staff members should avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible. Staff are required to put their utensils into the dishwasher and clean down the area they have used at break/lunchtime before leaving the staffroom.

Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged. Posters will be displayed throughout the school on how to wash your hands. Children and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After petting animals;
- After playing outdoors;
- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.

- When entering and exiting vehicles
- When entering and exiting school buildings

Parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message and by Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing outlined below:

How to wash your hands with soap and water

1. Wet your hands with warm water and apply soap.
2. Rub your hands together palm to palm until the soap forms a lather.
3. Rub the back of one hand with your palm and fingers spread so you wash between fingers. Repeat with the other hand.
4. Interlock the top of your hands and rub your fingertips - this cleans your fingertips and knuckles.
5. Then finally grasp your thumb tightly and twist to make sure your thumbs are cleaned. Repeat with the other hand.
6. This should take at least 20 seconds.
7. Rinse your hands under running water.
8. Dry your hands with a clean towel or paper towel.

A video for children on how to wash hands correctly can be viewed at the following link
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9VjeIWLnEg>

Sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at each entrance, in each classroom. Liquid soap is available in all the classrooms, toilets, in one SET Room, and staff room.

Teaching and Learning

As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 12th. 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 2020/2021 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

Homework will be set each day Monday to Thursday. Homework will be set in the traditional way as well as on Seesaw. Reading books that are shared between pupils will be quarantined for 72 hours when returned to school before being used by another child.

Shared Equipment

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared e.g. iPads, Maths and Science equipment, and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection. A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common iPads.

Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Staff members and pupils may take additional breaks outside during the school day. All classes are encouraged to participate in 'The Daily Mile'.

Music/Singing

Current health and safety guidelines advise that gatherings be discouraged. Large school groups such as choirs should be avoided at present. Wind and brass instruments, including tin whistles and recorders, should not be played indoors due to the additional risk of infection such activity poses.

Singing whilst maintaining social distancing and within normal pod structures can take place outdoors.

Visiting Teachers/Coaches

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored. However, it is not recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time, for example, during music lessons.

The Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. The Department has accepted this recommendation.

Accordingly, it is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with learning needs.
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category
- Administering first aid
- Parent Teacher meetings

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Masks

At present children are not required to wear masks or face coverings in school. We will not be discouraging children from doing so if it makes them and you as their parents more comfortable sending your child to school. However, staff will not be responsible for ensuring that your child wears the mask or face covering while at school.

The school recommends that all children travelling to school by bus will wear face mask while on the bus as is required for public transport.

It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. In certain situations, the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Medical grade masks in the EN14683 category will be supplied to all SETs and SNAs and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Gloves

There is no need for the children to wear disposable gloves. They are considered inappropriate under the guidelines.

Staff members do not need to wear disposable gloves unless they are looking after a pupil's intimate care needs or administering First Aid.

There will be an emphasis on hand hygiene rather than on the wearing of disposable gloves.

Cleaning

In accordance with the DES guidelines, additional cleaning hours have been allocated to ensure that the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities. In addition to this, the communal toilets at either end of the main school corridor and common touched surfaces throughout the school will be cleaned once during the day also.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.

Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)

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.

Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants/Team Teaching

Staff members (particularly Special Education 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 teaching 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.

- 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.

SETs and SNAs will wear a medical grade face mask when working with children. In certain situations, the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Very high-risk Pupils

Pupils at high risk may not be able to return to school. These pupils will receive appropriate support to engage with learning. Ongoing connection with the classmates and school community will be ensured.

The list of people in very high risk groups includes people who:

- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)

Children who should not attend school

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school –

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who are a household contact of a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad from countries which are not on the Green List and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell.

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 suggested activities to support the child's learning at home and this will be shared with parents/guardians.

Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Pupils/Staff should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The symptoms of Covid-19 include:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath or Difficulty Breathing
- Loss of smell or taste, or distortion of taste

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

A designated isolation area has been created in the room beside the main office or at the end of the main corridor.

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 designated isolation area by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child.
- If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone.
- To help us in this regard, parents/guardians are asked to make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times. This can be done through the Aladdin App.
- 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.

Impact of a Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class

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.

COVID-19 Related Absence Management

COVID-19 related absences will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

Teacher Absence and Substitution

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class/pupil to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, a special education teacher may be redeployed from their role to teach the class for the day. In the event of multiple staff absences, it may not be possible for a class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

SNA Absence and Substitution

In the event that a SNA is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute SNA for the pupil. If a substitute SNA is not available, one of the other SNAs may be asked to provide a little support to the child for the day. In the event of multiple SNA absences, it may not be possible for a pupil to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

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.

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 Chéille'.

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.

Summary of how you can help your child to prepare to return to school

- Practice washing hands properly, with soap, for 20 seconds. Make sure that your child also knows how to dry their hand thoroughly.
- Children should also know how to use hand-sanitiser correctly, and that it should not be ingested. Sanitiser will be provided by the school – children do not need to bring their own supply.

- Teach your child correct cough and sneeze etiquette – they should cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into their elbow if they do not have a tissue. Put the tissue in the bin and wash or sanitise your hands. All classrooms have been supplied with pedal operated bins with lids.
- Make sure that your child can INDEPENDENTLY open and close their schoolbag, lunch box and bottle. Please do not send *Frubes* or any other items which are difficult to open as teachers will not be able to help.
- Choose lunchboxes, bottles and pencil cases that are easy to clean, as they will need to be cleaned frequently.
- Ensure that your child does not have any unnecessary items such as toys in their schoolbag.
- Teach your child to put on and take off their coat independently.
- Teach your child to tie their shoelaces independently. If your child is unable to do so, please buy shoes with Velcro straps.
- If your child seems anxious about returning to school, talk to them about their concerns. Ensure they feel heard and reassure them that the teachers will help to settle them into their new routines as quickly as possible. Remind them that, even though some things will be different, they will see their friends again daily and still be able to have lots of fun.

We thank all parents in advance for their cooperation in complying with these measures to ensure the health and safety of our pupils, staff and local community. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school principal via email to office@thevalens.com

Our schools action plan was ratified by the Board of Management on: 25/02/2021

Signed: *Gerry Sheanon*

Gerry Sheanon – Chairperson BOM

Signed: *Cathriona Molloy*

Cathriona Molloy – Principal