COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Gorey Community School

Updated 23rd August 2021.

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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie , www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie or agreements with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

1) <u>Introduction</u>

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in post primary schools. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole.

This document focuses on the practical steps which can be taken in post primary schools to minimise the risk of infection while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The documentation and templates in this booklet are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities.

One of the key challenges is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. This document identifies the steps schools can take to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school and the steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself.

2)   <u>What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?</u>

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in Gorey Community School in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for Gorey Community School to meet the Government's '*Work Safely Protocol'*, to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that school-based teaching and learning and the operation of school facilities complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to students, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable operation of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students while promoting the educational and development needs of the students in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice and any other relevant agreement with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to maintaining a safe school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM, staff, students and parents.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

3)   Gorey Community School COVID-19 Policy

A COVID-19 policy outlines the ongoing commitment of the school to implementing the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The revised updated policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson and principal of the BOM and will be brought to the attention of the staff, students, parents and all other members of the school community.

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GOREY COMMUNITY
S   C   H   O   O   L

COVID-19 Policy Statement.

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

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and 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
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is 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
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and students engage with the induction / familiarization 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 students 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(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

4) Reviewing the safe operation of school.

The BOM aims to facilitate the continuation of school-based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff.The operation of school must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Details for the safe reopening of Gorey Community School and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Before reopening school for the 2021/22 school year Gorey Community School will have processes in place to include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice and Department of Education updates:
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education *(details at Section 4.1);*
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form (*details at Section 4.2);*
- Identified a Lead Worker representative *(details at Section 4.3);*
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 *(details at Section 4.4);*
- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support physical distancing *(details at Section 4.5);*
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school but take into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment *(details at Section 4.6);*
- Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school *(details at 4.7);*
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:

    - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease
    - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again.
    - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

4.1)   Induction Training (To be completed by new staff)

All new staff of Gorey Community School will undertake and complete COVID-19 InductionTraining prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- COVID-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- Outline of the COVID-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the COVID-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal who is supported in this role by the BOM

4.2)   <u>Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)</u>

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 be completed and returned to the school before returning to work.

Schools should request staff to confirm that the details in the Return-to-Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff 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.

Details of the working arrangements that apply to very high risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Departments's website.who may be unable to return to school.

4.3)   <u>Lead Worker Representative</u>

The protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the school management to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID- 19 in the workplace.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in Gorey Community School.   The process for appointment of the lead worker representative has been agreed centrally between the Department of Education and the education partners.

Responsibility for the development, updating and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies with the Board of Management and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach are key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Return-to-Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared obligation in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others, they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management.

GCS Lead worker Representatives:

Lead worker Representatives LWR's	Contact Details
Miriam Walsh	087-4187795
Martina Kehoe	086-3277642

 All staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors have a responsibility, both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

Full details of the arrangements which apply for the LWR in post primary schools is set out below:

Lead Worker Representative – Post primary Schools

The Work Safely Protocol is designed to support employers and workers to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The Protocol was developed following discussion and agreement between the Government, Trade Unions and Employers at the Labour Employer Economic Forum.

The Protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID- 19 in the workplace.

The purpose of this section is to set out the provisions in respect of the LWR in schools. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review by the parties.

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- The Work Safely Protocol;
- The Guidance and FAQs for Public Service Employers during COVID-19;
- COVID-19 Response Plan for Post primary Schools (available on the Department of Education website).

1. Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR 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.
- In conjunction with school management 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 school management with implementing infection prevention control measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice.

- In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Conduct regular reviews of safety measures .
- 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.
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required.
- 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.

2. Collaborative Approach

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies with the Board of Management and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach are key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Work Safety Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared obligation in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others, they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management.

3. What can a Lead Worker Representative Do?

The LWR may consult with, and make representations to, school management on any issue of concern in relation to COVID-19. These include issues in relation to:

- Cleaning protocols and their implementation
- Physical Distancing
- Configuration/re-configuration of the school facilities, including classrooms, corridors, halls, open areas, entry and exit points, school grounds etc.
- Implementation of one-way systems in the school to ensure social distancing

including when entering and exiting the school
- Hand Hygiene facilities including their location and whether they are stocked and maintained
- Hand sanitising
- Staff awareness around hand hygiene in the school
- Respiratory hygiene
- Personal Protective Equipment
- At Risk Groups
- Visitors/Contractors

4. Does a LWR Have any legal responsibilities?

No. A Lead Worker Representative does not have any duties in relation to COVID 19 other than those that apply to employees generally.In other words, the LWR is not responsible for the control measures within an organization,which remains the employers responsibility.

5. Supports for the Lead Worker Representative/s

The LWR(s) shall be entitled to:

- Be provided with information and training in respect of their role [*further detail to be provided*]
- Be consulted by school management on the control measures being put in place by the school to minimise the risk of being exposed to COVID-19.
- Regular communication with school management on issues related to COVID-19
- Be informed of changes in practice arising from COVID-19 response measures.
- Have access to any risk assessments prepared or carried out in relation to COVID-19 and to details of incidents of suspected COVID-19 cases that have been notified to the HSE, where they occurred, and any actions taken.
- Be provided with the necessary facilities to enable them to consult with employees or prepare any submissions or reports. These might include access to a meeting room, photocopier, communications, and equipment.

6. Procedures for dealing with issues that arise

Where a COVID-19 control concern is identified by the LWR (or is notified to the LWR by a staff member), the LWR should bring this to the attention of the Principal. Action points for addressing the issue should where possible be agreed between the LWR and the Principal. Staff should be informed of the outcome.

If agreement cannot be reached, the LWR should notify the Board of Management (Chairperson in the first instance) of the issue. Action points for addressing the issue should where possible be agreed between the LWR and the BoM as a matter of urgency. Staff should be informed of the outcome.

4.4)   <u>Signage</u>

Gorey Community School will display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene.

4.5)   <u>Making Changes to School Layout</u>

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Information on how physical distancing can be used in a school environment is found at *Section 5.4* below contains a link to the suite of illustrative post primary classroom layouts.

Gorey Community school will in so far as possible, reconfigure classrooms and other areas to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening.

4.6)   <u>Health and Safety Risk Assessment</u>

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 will be undertaken before return to school in 2020/2021.

Gorey Community School will review its emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents, and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures will be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

Gorey Community School will also review the existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments will also be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

First Aid/ Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Gorey Community

School. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, schools should call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

4.7)   Access to School and Contact Log

Access to the school building will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors, and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities will be maintained. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts.
The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return-to-work protocols. This advice can be found here:https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/news-media/data-protection-implications-return-work-safely-protocol

5) Infection Prevention Control Measures- To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the 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 COVID-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, students, parents, and visitors as far as possible within the school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that staff, students, parents, and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements**.**
The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene,follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

Staff should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Schools:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms (***details at Section 5.1***):

    a. Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation

    b. Advise staff and students to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test

    c. Advise staff and students to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/confirmed case of Covid 19.

    ➢ If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advise in relation to foreign travel.

    ➢ Advise staff and students to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or an outbreak in the school:

    d. Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the principal (or deputy principal if the principal is unavailable) promptly.

    e. Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school ***(details at Section 8).***

    f. Advise everyone entering the school building that they need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitizer.

    g. Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contract point.

h. Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

5.1) <u>Know the Symptoms of COVID-19</u>

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

- ✓ A fever (high temperature-38 degrees celsius or above)
- ✓ A new cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- ✓ Loss or change in your sense of smell or taste- this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything or things smell or taste different to normal.
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

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

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

If you have any symptoms of COVID- 19 (coronavirus), <u>self- isolate</u> (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a free <u>COVID-19 test.</u>

Getting an early diagnosis means,you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid Spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms ,please refer to the <u>HSE Website</u>. Symptoms may be subject to change so regular review of the HSE Website is advised. If you do not have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a <u>COVID-19 walk in test centre.</u>

<u>Covid-19 Tracker App.</u>

COVID Tracker App is a free and easy- to- use mobile phone App that will:

- Alert you if you been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID- 19
- Keep other App users safe by alerting them if you have tested positive for COVID-19
- Give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms.

You can download the free App from Apple's AppStore or the GooglePlayStore

Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis .Public Health information on close contacts, casual contacts and testing is available from the HSE website.

5.2)   Respiratory Hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

5.3)   Hand Hygiene

Staff and students should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Gorey Community School will promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the school on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

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

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

- Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins will be managed to avoid congregation of students and staff waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitizers.

- For activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities, hands must be washed at a wash hand basin

- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be deployed at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitizer spills to prevent risks of falls.

- Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water will be provided.

- Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities will be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

- Hand washing facilities will be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

- Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.

- Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing will be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities.

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

- Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol-based hand rubs, but non-alcohol-based hand rubs can be used too.

- When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that students do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

- Alcohol based sanitizer must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Students and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On entering and exiting the school building.
- On entering and exiting vehicles.

- 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.
- Wash hands at regular intervals

5.4)   **Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in a post primary school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from 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 ie, if a student sustains an injury and requires first aid.

However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1 m 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.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout and referenced at section 5.4 above will be used by Gorey Community School to increase separation to the greatest degree possible.

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom Gorey Community School will endeavour to:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing.
2. Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school to maximise physical distancing.
3. The teacher's desk will be at least 1m and where possible 2m from the student's desks.
4. Install a screen around desk area of all staff.

A link to the "*Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year"* is provided here.,

You can see a link to illustrated classroom layouts to maintain social distancing here.

Decreasing interaction

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a post primary school will depend on the school setting and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between students.

In post primary schools physical distancing of 2m where possible or at least 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual students or staff.

Where students have an elective subject, they will move quickly into the new class, observing as much physical distance as possible.

Hand washing and/or sanitising will be required when moving between classes by

teachers and students.

Physical distancing between the teacher and class will be observed.

Where movement of class groups between rooms is required it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.

Where students need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimise congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items.

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly, and hand hygiene encouraged.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School Drop-off/ Collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting students should be arranged to maintain physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible.

Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing requirements may not be respected.

Staggered drop off/pick up times should be arranged where feasible.

The school will use additional access points, throughout the day to reduce congestion on the corridors.

Students will be requested to go straight to their designated learning space/classroom.

Staff

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work.

If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.

Physical distancing will be observed by staff members within the staffroom through the use of staggered breaks.

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

There will be a no hand shaking policy.

Gathering of school staff will be minimized at the beginning or end of the school day.

Canteen

Physical distancing will be applied in canteen facilities.

Staggered breaks will enable extended canteen serving times and aligned with class grouping to ensure social distancing.

A queue management system will be implemented.

Students must clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.

Corridors and Stairwells

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.

Ventilation

The Department has issued guidance setting out practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice. *'Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools'*
Windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use e.g. during breaktimes and lunchtimes and also at the end of the school day.
Windows should be partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing unnecessary discomfort, particularly during cold weather.
The Department has also published guidance on the use of Carbon Dioxide Monitors (CO2) to supplement and enhance the guidance on good ventilation practices.

5.5)   <u>Use of PPE in Schools</u>

PPE will not be required to be worn within schools according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of 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
- 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.

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment, they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Masks
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Face Coverings i.e., Masks are required for all staff and students where it is not possible to maintain 2m social distancing.

It is essential for those wearing a cloth face covering to understand that the purpose is not to protect themselves but to reduce onward transmission and the benefit is reliant on wearing the covering appropriately.

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

For staff, face coverings should not be required if physical distancing is possible and practiced appropriately. Wearing a face covering will conceal facial expression and make communication difficult.

. [Advice on how to properly use face coverings can be found here.](#)

All students on the post primary transport scheme must wear a face covering unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Any person with breathing difficulties

- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated

- Any person who is unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing a face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by students or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for matters such as cleaning or intimate care settings. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves.

Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Aprons

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID19

6) **Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities**

Choir/Music Performance

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration should be given to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained.

Sport Activities

Gorey Community School will refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here.

Https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sports-protocols/

Shared Equipment

Art – Where possible students should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use and consideration will be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments will be cleaned between uses.

Library Policy – Where practical students should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Students should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimize equipment sharing will be minimized and hared equipment should be cleaned between uses by different people.

7) <u>Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools</u>

The Department of Education will provide additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimize the risks of COVID-19.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and will be covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate.

Schools are reminded to take particular care of the hygiene arrangements for wash hand and toilet facilities.

In summary, each school setting should be cleaned at **least once per day**. Additional cleaning if available should be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

If students are moving between classrooms consideration may be given to appropriate cleaning products being provided to enable them to wipe down their desk, chair and surface before leaving the room.

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.

There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility**.**

Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or students due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas. This shall be reviewed in line with government guidance.

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

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a student/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

The rooms should be cleaned as soon as practicable possible.

Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

Disinfection only works on things that are clean, therefore when disinfection is required it is always in addition to cleaning.

Person/s assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine-based product (household bleach).

Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.

If a student or staff diagnosed with COVID19 spent time in a communal area like a canteen, play area or if they used the bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HSPC interim health advice)as soon as is practically possible.

8) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Staff or students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building**. (Room 206)** The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of COVID-19 should be considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area should be behind a closed door and away from other staff and students.
If a staff member/student displays symptom of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

> i.   If the person with the suspected case is a student, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately.
> j.   Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times
> k.   The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be 2m away from others in the room

l. If it is not possible to maintain 2m a staff member caring for a student should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass-through skin.

m. Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.

n. Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home.

o. Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided.

p. If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.

q. If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect.

r. Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.

s. Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved – (**details at Section 7**)

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 student confidentiality are essential at all times.

Staff can assist Public Health in the process of contact tracing by downloading the HSE COVID-19 Tracker App.

9) Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties.

The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of COVID19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.

In this regard and to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.

b. Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
c. Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
d. New staff must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
e. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Coordinate practices and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
f. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
g. Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
h. Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances
i. Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
j. If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow the latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
k. Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the pub**lic** health authorities and comply with same.
l. Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in the school
m. Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health.

10) COVID-19 related absence management

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

11) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self- care. 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 individual staff members 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'.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc.The service is also available via SMS, What'sApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request.. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experience mental health professionals.

Where required, short- term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).
The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts, blogs,live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition.E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are also available . In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.

Return to Work Form

This form must be completed by staff in advance of returning to work.
If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice before returning to work.

Name: _____

Name of School: _____

Name of Principal: _____   Date: _____

	Questions	YES	NO
1.	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, difficulty breathing, loss or change in your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days?		
2.	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3	Are you awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test?		
4	In the past 14 days, have you been in contact with a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19?		
5	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
6	Have you been advised to restrict your movements at this time?		
7	Have you been advised to cocoon at this time? Note: if you're at very high risk (extremely vulnerable) from COVID-19 you may be advised to cocoon.		

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test and have not been advised to restrict my movements.

Please note: The school is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and this data will be held securely in line with our retention policy.

Signed: _____