



Rathbeggan N.S.

Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath

Tel: 01 8259891 e-mail: office@rathbegganns.ie

Registered Charity Number: 20131616

Covid-19 Response Plan - February 2021.

1. Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Rathbeggan N.S.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education and Skills plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address will inevitably change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents.

This document aims to provide details of:

1. COVID-19 School Policy
2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School
3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
4. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)
5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment
6. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus
7. Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19
 - a. Wash your Hands Frequently
 - b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitiser
 - c. Avoid Touching your Eyes, Nose and Mouth

- d. Physical Distancing
- e. Practice Respiratory Hygiene
- f. Do
- g. Do Not
- 8. Control Measures**
 - a. Return to Work Form
 - b. Induction Training
 - c. Induction Training – On-line Video
 - d. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette
 - e. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
 - f. Wearing of Gloves
 - g. Cleaning
 - h. Access to the School Building / Contact Log
 - i. First Aid / Emergency Procedure
- 9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
- 10. Staff Duties**
- 11. COVID related absence management**
- 12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, 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.

Note: The plan is a live working 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;

1. Rathbeggan NS COVID-19 Policy



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Covid-19 Response Policy

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

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

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions. This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. This policy was adopted by the board of management at a meeting on August 21st 2020. A copy is available for viewing on the website.

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

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
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- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative and if necessary the Deputy Lead Worker Representative, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on August 21st 2020.

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

Details for the reopening of the school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document.

Staff will be kept up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates; this will be done via Aladdin. Parents/Guardians will also be updated by weekly letters via email outlining the plans and new arrangements.

a. School Buildings

- All staff will review the layout of their classroom with a view to making the necessary changes to support maximum physical distancing between staff and pupils and between individual pods in the classrooms.
- Unnecessary furniture will be removed.
- All staff will remove unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school, taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
- The staffroom will be reconfigured to maximise physical distancing of staff.

b. Signage

Our School will display signage throughout the school outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. Posters will be displayed in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

3. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (School) [RTW(s)]** form, which is available electronically. A copy of the form will be emailed to each staff member.

A RTW form should be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

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

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.

There are some school staff who may be unable to return to school. Current public health guidelines have identified these people as being in groups who are defined as being at **very high risk**. This will be updated in line with public health advice.

People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

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

- are over 70 years of age - even if fit and well
- 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)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Details of the arrangements that will apply for these staff, which will be in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, will be updated by the Department of Education following consultation with management bodies and unions and a circular will issue to all schools. See Circular 0049/2020.

4. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

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

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- 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;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;

- 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 the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- 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 the Principal via email 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 via email, on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

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

Name(s) of Lead Worker representative:	Contact details
Carol Cromwell	

All staff, parents/guardians, 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.

5. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. An updated Risk Assessment has been carried out, to reflect the new risks posed by COVID-19. A copy has been provided to all staff. It is attached at the end of this document.

6. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

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

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This can be achieved through the following measures:

- Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- Advise staff and parents of pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases not to attend school, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- Advise staff and pupils not to return to or attend school in the event of the following: → if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 → if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus → If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel. → Advise staff and pupils 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 outbreak in the school;
- Advise staff and parents of pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID-19 not to attend schools and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.
- Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- Everyone entering the school building will be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- Visitors to school during the day will be by prior arrangement only and will be received at a specific contact point.

Staff, pupils and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. Rathbeggan N.S. will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors via the school website.

7. Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19

a. Wash your Hands Frequently

Regular hand washing with soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19. Soap dispensers are installed at handwashing facilities throughout the school. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing: For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful: <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers

c. Hand Hygiene • There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands • Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame. Hand hygiene can also be achieved by the use of a hand sanitiser (when hands are clean). They will be available at the entry point to each classroom and at school entrance doors.

d. Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

e. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. Classrooms will be reconfigured to maximise physical distancing. Ventilation – new section
The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps 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 2 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.

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

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

g. Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

h. Do Not

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

8. Control Measures

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, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school.

These control measures are outlined below. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

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

Staff, in particular, 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.

The following control measures have been put in place:

a. Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

b. Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training 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 informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and 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.

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

c. Induction Training for Return to School

The Department has prepared short induction training for schools operating the summer provision this year. It is intended that this training will be updated and become more comprehensive to cover all aspects of the return to school safely protocols. The Induction training for the Summer Provision may be of interest in the context of the kind of training which staff will need to undertake is available at the following link.

d. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school facility.

e. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Current advice is that PPE will be required to be worn within the school where social distancing is difficult to maintain. PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. Face masks and a visor will be provided to all staff. Medical Grade Masks Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN16483 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

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

f. Wearing of Gloves:

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not appropriate. It 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.

g. Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed daily.

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.

Staff will clean and disinfect toys, equipment and resources weekly

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

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

h. Access to the school building /contact log

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

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

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 by the Secretary. The school will maintain a log of staff and students contacts. Contact tracing log attached at end of this document.

i. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedures shall continue to apply in Rathbeggan N.S.

9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how Rathbeggan N.S. will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contact tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

A designated isolation area will be identified within the school building. The possibility of having more than one person displaying signs of Covid-19 will be considered and a contingency plan for dealing with additional cases put in place. The designated isolation area will be behind a closed door and away from other staff and pupils.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- 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
- 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
- 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

- 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
- 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
- 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.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

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 confidentiality is essential at all times.

10. 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. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained where reasonably practicable
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- Self-isolate and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19
- Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances
- If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work
- 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
- Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following: – if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus – If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances

staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

- 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 their school
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their school as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

11. Covid-19 related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES. See Circular 0049/2020

12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.