

Saplings Special School Kill Students

Return to School Plan August 2020



Key facts for Parents:

COVID -19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and is caused by a new virus called the Coronavirus. Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. To infect you, it has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into your eyes, nose or mouth. This can be direct or indirect (on hands, objects, surfaces). If you come into close contact with someone who is shedding the virus and who is coughing or sneezing or if you touch - with your hands - surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without having washed your hands thoroughly you may contract the virus.

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



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

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

The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:

- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
- Shortness of Breath
- Breathing Difficulties
- Lack of smell/ taste

Symptomatic people appear to be most likely to infect other people in the early days of having symptoms. Infection can also spread from people in the day or two before they get symptoms. It can spread from some people who are infected with the virus but have no symptoms, or such mild symptoms, that they take little notice of them (asymptomatic spread). The vast majority of people are no longer infectious to other people 14 days after they first developed symptoms.

Here are some things we can all do to minimise the spread of the virus:

- 1. You must wash your hands with soap and water** (which is the best method to get rid of germs) **and/ or use a hand sanitiser**
- 2. You must practice good respiratory hygiene:** that is, when coughing and sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – discard tissue immediately into a closed bin and clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- 3. You must maintain social or physical distancing:** that is, leave at least 2 metres (6 feet) distance between yourself and other people where possible, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.
- 4. You must not engage in handshaking or hugging**
- 5. You must avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth** – if you touch your eyes, nose or mouth with your contaminated hands, you can transfer the virus from the surface to yourself

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



Role of Parents:

It is important that parents have a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of re-opening schools and that it is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented in any setting either in a school, on transport or in the home. The school is doing everything it can to minimise risks, but we cannot eliminate these risks altogether.

The following are protocols that are put in place to safeguard the health and safety of each other. Parents are expected to abide by them and failure to do so may result in a parent being instructed to remove a child from the school building/yard, and or to leave the school premises themselves.

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

- If the child is exhibiting any symptoms of Covid-19.
- If the child has a temperature, is sneezing, coughing, or has been vomiting, or has diarrhoea.
- If a child has been outside of the country in the 14 days prior to August 31th, they are not to attend school and must follow HSE guidelines on isolation.
- If the child has been in contact with any family member and/or other person who has Covid-19.



Arrival and departure procedures for children and parents:

- Only parents/ guardians who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days are allowed to drop off and collect children. Any parent/ guardian who is in a high risk category is advised not to drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves. (This of course is at the discretion of the individual parent/ guardian).
- Staggered arrival times will be put in place at **9.15 – 9.25 am (Classes 1 and 5) and 9.30 – 9.40am (Classes 2, 3 and 4)**. Arrival and collection times will be staggered to avoid groups of parents/children congregating together.
- On entering the school yard, a parent/ guardian must proceed slowly to their child's designated entry point. The parent/ guardian is responsible for ensuring that their child safely exits the car and must remain with their child until the safe handover to a staff member has taken place.
- **If a child appears unwell on entering the classroom, the child's temperature will be taken and in the interests of the safety of the staff and the other children, the principal will contact the parent and ask the parent to take the child home immediately.**
- **Home times will be staggered for classes 2.45 – 2.55 pm (Classes 1 and 5) and 3.00 – 3.10pm (Classes 2, 3 and 4). Any children still on junior hours will continue to finish at 2pm.**
- Parents/ guardians must wait outside the school in their cars and maintain social distancing in the evening time when waiting to collect a child. When a parent/ guardian sees their child, it is their responsibility to exit their car, safely retrieve their child from the staff member and ensure that the child is secured safely in their car.
- All staff and parents/ guardians must leave the yard immediately after collection. It will not be possible to facilitate discussions between staff and parents during these handover times for health and safety reasons.

- No parents/ guardians will be allowed within the school building for health and safety (reduction of virus transmission) reasons and to reduced cleaning requirements.
- Should a matter of urgency arise for parents/ guardians where they need to collect a student earlier than planned, they must phone the office and make an appointment to arrange collection.

***** Entry and Exit points are as follows *****

Classroom One: Main Front Door 9.15 to 9.25am & 2.45 to 2.55pm

Classroom Two: Main Front Door 9.30 to 9.40am & 3.00 to 3.10pm

Classroom Three: Back Entrance Door 9.30 to 9.40am & 3.00 to 3.10pm

Classroom Four: Side Entrance Door 9.30 to 9.40am & 3.00 to 3.10pm

Classroom Five: Back Entrance Door 9.15 to 9.25am & 2.45 to 2.55pm



Other Key Responsibilities for Parents:

- It is strongly advised that parents/ guardians temperature check their children before dropping them to school or putting them on transport to minimise the likelihood that a sick child is brought into school or put on a bus with other children, a bus driver and a bus escort.
- **Parents must ensure that their child has his/her own hand sanitiser (a brand/ texture that he/ she likes) and box of tissues which are labelled coming to school. These must be replaced when empty.** (Please buy cardboard boxes of tissues that can be stored on the child's desk as opposed to the small packets)
- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books cannot be shared.
- Parents are to ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/ sneezing/ use of tissues/ hand washing/ hand sanitising etc prior to returning to school, in so far as is practicable.
- Parents must ensure that all **lunch boxes/water bottles/ communication devices are sanitised using alcohol wipes every evening after school** before being placed back into the child's schoolbag to reduce virus transmission. It is strongly recommended that parents buy a plastic covered school bag for easy cleaning, or use a 'Bag for Life' that can be easily wiped down both at home and in school.
- Please ensure, as much as possible, that your child has cold, pre-prepared food for snack and lunch. This will reduce the need for the children to access the life skills room to prepare food which will reduce the likelihood of two class pods crossing over. We understand that some children only eat very limited foods and we will accommodate children who require hot food, but please only send this in if there are no alternatives.
- Given that there will be no community trips for the initial half term (minimum), it will be vital that students who normally buy some of their lunch items in the local Eurospar are instead provided sufficient food daily for their snack and lunch. It will not be possible for staff to purchase additional items for them (to limit virus transmission).
- Parents must ensure that clothing worn to school is washed every evening to reduce virus transmission.

- Children are to go to the bathroom **before** they leave home for school daily.
- Children are to wash their hands **before** leaving for school daily.

What happens if a child displays symptoms?

- Any child who is unwell with a fever, has a cold, influenza or infectious respiratory symptoms or is displaying **any of the symptoms of coronavirus is to stay at home.**
- The child's parent should contact their GP and seek their guidance on referral for coronavirus testing.
- Temperature testing will take place as is currently the practice for children who may be unwell. Parents will be contacted immediately and must remove the child if the temperature is over 37.5 Celsius (37.6 and higher).

What happens if a child becomes unwell or presents as a suspected case of COVID-19 while at school?

- The child will be brought to the Isolation Room by a staff member, who will endeavour to keep at least 2 meters apart from the child. The staff member will be wearing PPE i.e. face mask, visor, disposable apron and gloves.
- The parent will be immediately contacted and asked to come to the school to take the child home. The handover will take place just outside the main door, due to proximity to the isolation space.
- The child will be encouraged not to touch surfaces, people or any objects.
- Public transport of any kind should not be used by the parent to take the child home.
- Appropriate cleaning and disinfection of the isolation area and the child's work station and classroom will be carried out immediately. Dedicated waste bins will be used. Contact tracing will be carried out as a matter of urgency.
- The principal and the Lead Worker Representative will carry out an assessment of the incident which will form any part of follow up actions.
- The principal will inform the HSE in line with correct protocols.



What happens if there is a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 in school?

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

- Certain pods, or the entire school, may have to close - based on advice received from the HSE.
- Symptomatic people who have come into contact with the confirmed case either at home or at school should self-isolate and arrange to get tested for COVID-19. Confirmed COVID-19 cases should continue to self-isolate at home for a minimum of 14 days and should not return to school until they are advised that it is safe to do so. Close contacts of a confirmed case (their partner/family member should be notified and go home if at work and restrict their movements for 14 days. They should not attend work during that time.

Children in High Risk Groups:

Parents should seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in a high risk group. They must make an informed decision if it is safe for their child to return to school on August 31st. They should inform the principal of the advice given. If there are any parents out there who have concerns about their child's health, please contact the principal at louise@saplins.org.

Use of Face masks:

- It is currently not recommended in Ireland for children under 13, children with special educational needs, or children with anxiety disorders to wear face masks as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of the coronavirus.
- However, if a parent/ guardian wishes their child to wear a mask or visor, this will be permitted. The parent/ guardian will have to provide these masks and visors.



Children's learning spaces:

- All available space will be used to allow for as much physical distancing as possible in our setting.
- All excess furniture will be removed from the classroom where possible so as to provide additional space.
- All staff will reconfigure their classrooms to ensure a one metre distance between pupils where possible and to ensure a two metre distance between all staff members.
- Pupils will be organised into pods within the school. Interaction between classes outside of the pod is not to take place,



unless in emergency situations. Each pod will have their own physically learning spaces, toilet area, entry/ exit space and time in each of the reinforcement areas.

- Resources that can be easily cleaned will be used and toys and materials that are difficult to clean e.g. dress up clothes or soft toys during this temporary Covid-19 emergency will not to be used.
- Pupils will hand sanitise before and after using any materials.
- Pupils will not be allowed to share materials/resources.
- Additional time will be spent by the hygiene staff in cleaning the school.

School Transport & Increased Risks:

- The current advice from Bus Eireann is that school transport will operate exactly as it did pre-Covid 19, with no social distancing and no regard for the 'pod' systems being advocated by the Department of Education and Skills in schools.
- This will mean that despite the great efforts the school has undertaken to ensure that each classroom (pod) has their own physically distant learning spaces, toilet areas, entry/ exit doors and time in each of the reinforcement areas and scheduling to ensure that these pods do not mix during the school day, students will arrive and depart from school with children from one, two, or even three other pods.
- The major worry here is that if there is a confirmed case within the school, it cannot be confined to a singular pod (class) if someone within that pod (class) accesses transport with children from other pods (classes). This may mean that the entire school would have to shut down, rather than a single point.
- Obviously the decision to use Bus Eireann's school transport service is at the discretion of the parent/ guardian, but it is the school's duty to make you aware of the increased risks associated with doing so.



Home/ School Communication:

- The school will not be using communication books for the first term (minimum) due to the risk of home/ school virus transmission.
- The school will either use an email based communication book between September and the October midterm and will look at moving towards an app such as Seesaw or Class Dojo.
- All meetings will be held via teleconference or Zoom for the first term (minimum).