



Covid-19 School Plan & Procedures for the Return to School –

Guide for Parents & Guardians

1. INTRODUCTION

The procedures and guidance in this document are based upon the plan for the safe re-opening of schools received from the Department of Education & Skills on the 27th of July and from subsequent updates to that plan. The Department's plan for the safe re-opening of schools is available on our school website here: http://www.bmesch.ie/uploads/1/1/4/9/114930761/des_covid-19_response_plan.pdf.

In order to achieve the safest possible return to school we have to make a number of changes to how the school operates. These changes, and new procedures for arrival and dismissal of pupils, for meetings with teachers, use of PPE and more are detailed in this document. It is vitally important that you read this document in its entirety.

At the end of the document are two appendices. The first contains key public health information on minimising the risks of transmission of Covid-19. The second details when/if it is safe for your child to come to school.

Please note that the most important factors in returning to school to safely and maintaining a safe environment for your children are:

- social distancing
- good respiratory etiquette
- good hand hygiene practises

2. ROLE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS:

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

It is vitally important that children are aware of the importance of good hand hygiene practises before returning to school. The HSE have a number of resources to help with this. They can be found here: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/hcai/hand-hygiene-in-irish-healthcare-settings/hand-hygiene-videos/>. The HSE have also produced a video showing the correct procedure for washing hands (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsgLivAD2FE>). Please continue to practise this technique regularly with your child(ren), keeping it as fun an activity as possible.

It is also vitally important that children understand and practise 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. This should be practised at home at regular intervals.

It is important that, where possible, children are able to zip their coats, tie their shoelaces, open/close/carry their school bags, open any lunch items with ease etc. This will not always be possible for every child but we ask that you practise these skills frequently with your children before and after they return. This is to ensure that we are able to maintain social distancing in the classroom as much as possible.

The following are protocols that are put in place to safeguard the health and safety of everyone. 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.

If serious or repeated breaches of safety measures occur, the Board of Management and/or, depending on the seriousness of the breach, An Garda Síochána may be informed or called if needed.

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

- the child is exhibiting any symptoms of Covid 19
- the child has a temperature, is sneezing, coughing or has been vomiting or has diarrhoea
- a child has been outside of the government's designated 'Green List' countries at any stage in the 14 days prior to returning to school. Visit: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8868e-view-the-covid-19-travel-advice-list/> for further details. Please note that if a country has been removed from the Green List and a child has visited this country within 14 days prior to August 27th, they must self-isolate and not attend school.
- the child is a close contact of another person who has Covid-19.

****PLEASE READ APPENDIX 2 FOR GREATER DETAIL****

The European CDC are keen to emphasise the importance of following good respiratory etiquette as a key measure in slowing the spread of COVID-19. Please ensure that your children are familiar with and use the procedure of covering their nose and mouth when they cough and sneeze. This should be done into a tissue where possible, otherwise, your child should cough or sneeze into the elbow of their non-dominant arm. Any tissues used should be disposed of immediately and your child should wash his/her hands thereafter.

3. Arrival and departure procedures for children and parents/guardians:

Arrival

- Before leaving for school each child should go to the toilet and wash their hands and parents should ensure that they are visibly clean.
- Only parents/guardians/carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19, or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised, are permitted to drop off and collect children.
- Any parent who is in a high risk category should not drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves. *(This of course is at the discretion of the individual parent/guardian/grandparent etc)*
- The recent Government guidelines recommend children walking or cycling to school where possible.
- Staggered arrival times are being put in place. Each class have been given a 10 minute arrival window. Siblings are permitted to arrive together at the allocated time of the first arriving child *(see below)*.
- In order to assist with maintaining social distancing, pupils are permitted to enter through either the pedestrian gate or the staff car park gate.

- With the exception of parents of pupils in Infant classes & the ASD class, parents **must** leave their child at the school gates.
- Children, while maintaining social distancing from non-family members, should walk directly to their classroom using their designated entrance. Each child should enter by their designated class entrance regardless of their arrival time (*see below for designated entrances*).
- At each entry point to the school there will be a hand sanitising station. Children must sanitise their hands before proceeding to their classroom.
- Entry and exit points to the school will be supervised by school staff in the morning.
- After leaving their children at the school gates, parents should immediately leave the vicinity of the school to allow for other families to arrive and to maintain social distancing.
- Where children of our Infant classes have no older siblings within the school, a parent or guardian may walk with their child to the yard where they will be met by a member of staff who will bring/direct the child to their class. Parents must ensure their child remains at their side at all times and that their child maintains at least 1m, preferably 2m distance, from others at all times. Parents should immediately leave the vicinity of the school thereafter.

Departure

- Collection / finishing times will be staggered for all classes (*see below*).
- Parents/collectors must wait outside the school in their cars and/or maintain social distancing in the afternoon when waiting to collect a child.
- Parents/collectors are permitted to wait on the footpath or in the school car park to collect their child. This is to aid with social distancing. Parents/collectors should not be at the school more than a few minutes before their child's collection time.
- The class teacher will lead the class & their siblings to the car park and release the children for collection.
- All must leave the vicinity of the school immediately after collection.
- No parent or guardian will be allowed within the school building apart from in exceptional circumstances.
- At arrival and departure times of children, social distancing is to be maintained by children and parents.
- Under no circumstances are parents/guardians/carers to gather in groups while waiting to collect their child.

i. Those arriving by school transport

For children arriving to school by the bus, they must:

- Sit next to their siblings (if travelling with siblings)
- Sit next or close to members of their class
- Maintain social distancing from others in situations where this is possible

Current school practise will continue to be observed by those who avail of the standard school transport scheme upon arriving to school. Children are permitted to wait in the shelter (while maintaining social distance) or play in the yard. Parents are asked to encourage children not to hold hands, hug, high five or be in physical contact with the other children on the bus. Where possible, they should follow social distancing guidelines.

Just before 8.40am, those who have come to school by bus, or other Dept of Education sanctioned modes of transport, may go to their class using their class designated entrance and following the procedure listed above.

ii. Arrival and departure times

Arrival	Classes	Departure	Approx no. of pupils
8.40 – 8.50	Junior Infants & 1st Class <i>& their siblings</i>	Jnr Infants & junior hours siblings: 1.20pm* <i>For the first 14 school days, Junior Infants will finish at 11.50am</i> 1 st Class & siblings: 2.20pm	66
8.50 – 9.00	Senior Infants & Ms Higgins's 4th/5th Class <i>& their siblings</i>	Snr Infants: 1.30pm 4 th /5 th Class & siblings: 2.25pm	64
9.00 – 9.10	Ms Mescall's 2nd/3rd Class, Ms Kenny's 3rd/4th Class, 6th Class & ASD Class <i>& any siblings</i>	ASD Class: 1.35pm 2 nd /3 rd Class: 2.30pm 3 rd /4 th Class: 2.35pm 6 th Class: 2.35pm	62

iii. Entry & Exit Points

Class	Entry / Exit Point
ASD Class	Main Door
Junior Infants	Main Door
Senior Infants	Entry: Main Door Exit: Far Door
1 st Class	Far Door
2 nd /3 rd Class	Far Door
3 rd /4 th Class	Main Door
4 th /5 th Class	Side Door
6 th Class	Side Door

The main door is the door closest to the school office. The far door is the door located at the front of the school near the basketball court. The side door is located at the side of the school near the basketball court. A video highlighting these entrances is available on the school website (<http://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html>).

4. Belongings, uniforms etc.

- Children are encouraged to bring their own hand sanitiser or sanitising hand wipes with them as it will reduce the need for children to wait to visit the class sanitising station. However, any personal sanitiser that a child brings to school **must be alcohol-free** – this is a requirement of the Department of Education & Skills.

- Please ensure that each child has a packet or box of tissues (labelled if possible) with them in school and please ensure that these are replaced when empty.
- Parents/guardians must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books should not be shared.
- Rental books that your child will use in school will be numbered and each child assigned a number to ensure that rental books are not shared between children.
- Although this will be covered in school, parents/guardians must ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers prior to returning to school.
- Parents must ensure that all **lunch boxes/water bottles/other items that travel between home and school** are thoroughly cleaned each day and/or wiped with a sanitising wipe before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Your child will bring home any lunch waste generated in school in their lunch box. Again this is to reduce the frequency of trips to the bin etc.
- Water bottles are to be filled at home.
- Each child should have their own set of colouring pencils, rubbers and other stationery items that they will leave in school. Preferably, children will have a pencil case with a hard surface as these are easier to wipe clean, if required.
- Parents should change their child's uniform regularly during the week. However, there is no obligation to change uniforms on a daily basis. Please ensure that the uniform being worn to school is clean. PE tracksuit can be worn whenever the main uniform is unavailable. If all school clothing is unavailable, any clean, suitable tracksuit can be worn. Nobody will be in trouble for not having the correct uniform on.

5. Classroom Organisation

Classrooms are being organised as per Department of Education & Skills guidelines. Classrooms are being reconfigured as per guidance and models issued by the Department of Education & Skills. A return to school video that includes a section on layouts of classrooms is available on the school website (<http://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html>) or at this link: <https://youtu.be/ykO-48oA5Ec>. Each class is referred to as a bubble and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles. In Junior Classes (Jnr Inf – 2nd class), within the bubbles, children will be organised into pods. A pod is a group of children who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom. Children from the senior classes (3rd class upwards) will be seated in rows, at approximately 1m distance, from those nearest to them.

6. Yard / Lunch

- The current plan is that children will have their lunch and go to yard at roughly the same time. Exiting will be staggered to ensure that each 'bubble' / class will not interact with another.
- We intend to use the field at the back of the school and the green space at the front of the school to maximise the children's play area. Therefore each child from 2nd class to 6th will require a spare pair of shoes/runners that can be left in the school, in order for them to be able to play on the grass. Please send an additional pair of runners/boots with your child in a string tie bag, or other closable bag, on the first day back
- The field and yard will be divided into zones for the children to play in. Each class will be informed of their zone and will not be permitted to enter another zone.

- Unfortunately, children in split classes will not be able to play with children in the other split classes. This restriction is based on the guidance of the Department of Education & Skills to ensure the class ‘bubbles’ mix as infrequently as possible.

7. Parents/Guardians/Others visiting the school

Scoil Mhuire has long been a school that welcomes parents in. It has long been tradition for parents to congregate in the school yard in the morning, to come in to the school to drop letters/envelopes into the school office, to collect children early for appointments, to have a cup of tea in the hall on their child’s first day or to grab a teacher for a ‘quick chat’. Unfortunately, in the current times, this will not be possible. In order to give our school the best possible chance of remaining Covid-free for as long as possible and to minimise the number of close contacts that each staff member and pupil have, visitors to the school will be very strictly limited.

- Parents/guardians are requested not to approach a teacher or staff member for a short conversation on the yard at departure or arrival time
- If a parent or guardian needs to speak to their child’s teacher, they should phone the office and request a meeting or a return phone call.
- Unless the matter is of a sensitive or serious nature, most parent-teacher contact should take place over the phone.
- Meetings between parents and teachers will take place in the principal’s office or the room next to the secretary’s office.
- If parents/guardians, are coming into the school, they must wear protective face covering, sanitise or wash hands upon entry to the school, complete a Covid-19 Declaration Form and Visitor Log entry (to assist with contact tracing if necessary) and maintain 2m social distancing from others (where possible).
- Meetings, where possible, should be kept to a maximum length of 15 minutes.
- If any notes, letters etc need to be given to the school teacher or into the office, this should be sent in with your child(ren). Where possible notes or letters should be returned to the school via email (office@bmesch.ie) or directly to your child’s teacher’s email address.
- If you have concerns about the notes or letters reaching their destination, a follow-up email or call with the office will suffice in most scenarios.
- We have recently begun using ePayments and we would be very grateful if you would consider paying any monies owed to the school using this system rather than sending in cash.
- If you need to collect your child(ren) early on a given day, please email in a note or contact the office in advance. Please give as much notice as possible.
- You will not be permitted to enter the school building to collect your child but you may wait in the yard outside of the office. If it is raining you are permitted to wait in the shelter at the side of the school near the office.
- There will be times when a parent or guardian will have to enter the building such as if a child has particular medical needs, is in deep distress etc. During these times the parent/guardian must wait to be invited to enter the building, must sanitise hands upon entry, will wear or be given a face covering to wear if 2m social distancing cannot be maintained and must consent to a contact log entry being completed.

8. Children in Very High Risk Groups

Parents should seek advice from their GP/Specialist if they think their child is in the very high risk group. They must make an informed decision on whether it is safe or not for their child to return to school. They should

inform the principal of any advice given. If there are any parents out there who have concerns about their child's health or the return to school, please contact the principal on (045)864085 or office@bmesch.ie. If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time due to being in the very high risk group, a teacher will provide suggested activities to support the child's learning at home.

9. Use of face coverings and PPE

It is currently not recommended in Ireland for children under 13 to wear face coverings as a mitigation strategy against the transmission of the coronavirus. It is currently the opinion of public health that their use, especially among young children, has the potential to cause more harm than good.

If a parent wishes their child to wear a face covering, this will be permitted. However, parents/guardians are asked to ensure that their child has been instructed as to the correct use of the face covering. If a child is not using their face covering correctly in class, it may be removed from them. The use of a visor is an alternative to the standard face covering. A visor will be provided to any child whose parent(s)/guardian(s) request one.

School staff are being advised to wear face coverings if they are unable to maintain a minimum 2m distance from others. Therefore, it is likely that your child's teacher will be wearing a mask and/or visor at some points during the school day.

10. Suspected cases of COVID-19

Children who may have symptoms:

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

Protocols 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 keeping at least 2 meters apart from the staff member (*see plan/protocol for a suspected case of COVID-19 on the school website*).

11. Updated Contact Information

In the event that your child develops symptoms of COVID-19 while in school it is imperative that we are in a position to contact you. Please ensure that we have the most recent up to date contact information for you including your address and mobile phone number. It is also extremely important that we have up to date contact information for any of your listed emergency contacts. If you are working at a distance from the school, it is important that we can contact somebody living closer-by to collect and care for your child.

Each family in the school would ideally have at least two emergency contacts listed.

If you have any or concerns relating to this document, please contact Principal via email at office@bmesch.ie

This plan was adopted by the Board of Management on August 24th 2020. However, the Board of Management have given the Principal and the school's Lead Worker Representative (Anne Scanlan) the

authority to amend this plan in line with health advice, DES requirements and local developments without seeking prior approval. The Board of Management will be kept up to date with changes made to the plan.

Signed



John McCarville,
Chairperson, Board of Management



Peter Roche,
Principal

Appendix 1

Key facts for Parents/Guardians

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/>
- Dept of Health: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/7e0924-latest-updates-on-covid-19- coronavirus/>

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

The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:

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

Symptomatic people appear to be most infectious for other people in the early days after symptoms begin. Infection can also spread from people in the day or two before they get symptoms and it can spread from some people who get an infection but have no symptoms or such mild symptoms that they take little notice of them (asymptomatic spread). People are no longer infectious for other people 14 days after they have developed symptoms.

Best practice in order to prevent the spread of the virus:

- if you have been in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms
- If you have coughed or sneezed
- if you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- if you have been on public transport,
- if you have been in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- if you have handled animals or animal waste
- If you move from one room to another room **or** from inside to outside areas

- If you have physical contact with a child from another group other than their own group
- if your hands are dirty
- when you arrive and leave buildings including your home or anyone else's home
- After using the toilet
- Before having a cigarette or vaping before and after eating
- Before and after preparing food
- Before and after eating your own food – breaks/lunches
- After assisting a child to use the toilet or using the toilet themselves
- After contact with bodily fluids (runny nose, spit, vomit, blood, faeces)
- After cleaning tasks

You must - wash your hands with soap and water (which is the best method to get rid of germs) or use a hand sanitiser. If your hands are visibly dirty you must wash your hands.

You must - Practice good respiratory hygiene: 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 sanitiser or soap and water.

You must - Maintain social or physical distancing: that is, leave 2 metres (6 feet) distance, where possible, between yourself and other people where possible, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever. If you cannot leave a 2 metre distance you should wear a face covering and try to leave 1 metre distance.

You must – try to 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

You must not - engage in handshaking or hugging

Try to keep your hands in good condition. Moisturise them often. Your child’s teacher will complete multiple lessons on correct hygiene, the importance of hand sanitising, staying within their pods/bubbles etc. with the children during the first weeks back in school.



Appendix 2: Keeping your child at home /

Sending your child to school

When to keep your child at home

If you answer 'Yes' to any of the following statements, please do not send your child to school

<u>Statement</u>	<u>Action</u>
My child has vomited and/or has had an episode of diarrhoea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child stays at home for 48 hours after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea. • Treat your child at home for their symptoms.
My child has a high temperature (a temperature of 38 degrees celsius or above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate your child. This means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP. • Phone your GP. They will advise you if your child needs a coronavirus test. • Everyone that your child lives with should also restrict their movements, at least until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a coronavirus test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work. • Treat your child at home for their symptoms.
My child has a new cough or loss or changed sense of taste or smell, or shortness of breath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate your child. This means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP. • Phone your GP. They will advise you if your child needs a coronavirus test. • Everyone that your child lives with should also restrict their movements, at least until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a coronavirus test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work. • Treat your child at home for their symptoms.
My child has no symptoms of Covid-19 but is living in a household with someone who has symptoms/is suspected of having Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate your child. This means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP. • Phone your GP. They will advise you if your child needs a coronavirus test. • Everyone that your child lives with should also restrict their movements, at least until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a coronavirus test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work.
My child has no symptoms of Covid-19 but is a close contact of a proven case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate your child. This means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP. • Phone your GP. They will advise you if your child needs a coronavirus test. • Everyone that your child lives with should also restrict their movements, at least until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a coronavirus test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work.
My child has been to a country outside of the "Green List" within the past 14 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolate your child. This means keeping them at home and completely avoiding contact with other people, as much as possible. Your child should only leave your home to have a test or to see your GP. • Phone your GP. They will advise you if your child needs a coronavirus test. • Everyone that your child lives with should also restrict their movements, for 14 days or until your child gets a diagnosis from their GP or a coronavirus test result. This means not going to school, childcare or work.

When to send your child to school

It's usually okay to send your child to school or childcare if all of the following statements are true:

<u>Statement</u>
• My child has nasal symptoms, such as a runny nose or a sneeze but is generally feeling well with good energy levels and normal appetite
• My child does not have a temperature of 38 degrees celsius or more <i>(as long as their temperature has not been lowered by taking any form of paracetamol or ibuprofen)</i>
• My child does not have a new cough
• There have been no recent changes to my child's sense of taste or smell
• My child is not experiencing any shortness of breath
• My child has not been in close contact with anyone who has coronavirus Covid-19
• My child does not live with anyone who is unwell and may have coronavirus Covid-19
• My child has been told by a GP that their illness is caused by something else, that is not coronavirus. Your GP will tell you when they can return to school or childcare
• Your child has received a negative ('not detected') coronavirus Covid-19 test result AND has not had symptoms for 48 hours

Most of the time, you do not need to phone your GP if a runny nose or sneezing are your child's only symptoms. Talk to your pharmacist instead.