



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 on the 27th of July 2020 and from subsequent updates to that plan including the most recent update issued in August 2021. The Department's most recent plan for the safe re-opening of schools is available on our school website here: <http://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html>.

At the end of the document there is an appendix that contains key public health information on minimising the risks of transmission of Covid-19. Please note that 'sore throat' has been added to the list of symptoms for Covid-19 – this is an increasingly common symptom associated with the delta variant. Please also note that the most important factors in returning to school to safely and maintaining a safe environment for your children remain:

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

For further information on returning to school please visit: <http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool/>. This website provides information on a range of topics from school transport to wellbeing.

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/>. Please continue to practise this technique regularly with your child(ren), keeping it as fun an activity as possible. The Department of Education have also produced video advice for children on returning to school which includes advice around handwashing and much more: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/#returning-to-school>.

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 have been 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 travelled from a non-designated country within the past 5 days (for further information on Covid-19 travel restrictions visit: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/77952-government-advice-on-international-travel/> or https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel_and_recreation/travel_to_ireland/travel_to_ireland_during_covid.html)
- the child is a close contact of a person who has, or is exhibiting symptoms of, Covid-19.

Parents and guardians of pupils are requested 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.

3. Returning to school following an absence

There is no longer a requirement to submit a 'Return to School' Covid-19 declaration form following your child's absence or following a return from holidays. However this form is still available on our website if you prefer to use it in place of a standard absence note. Please note that absence notes are still a requirement of Túsla to explain/categorise any absence from school. This form can be filled out on the school website: <http://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html> or at the following link <https://forms.gle/qVGxE3U3havNFfid9>.

4. 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 have been put in place. Each class have been given a 5 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.

- Parents/Guardians are requested maintain social distancing from other families and to encourage their children to do the same.
- With the exception of parents of pupils in Junior 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 and upon exiting the classroom or school.
- Pupils are also asked to sanitise their hands when entering or exiting vehicles. Please ensure you have sanitiser available in your car. If your child gets the bus to school, please ensure that there is sanitiser available on the bus or your child has their own personal non-alcoholic based hand sanitiser.
- Entry and exit points to the school will be supervised by school staff in the morning in the initial weeks after opening.
- 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.
- There should be no congregation by parents outside schools.
- Parents should not attempt to engage staff during entry or exit times. Requests for meetings or conversations with staff should be requested through the school and will generally be provided by telephone or online.

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 & wear a mask 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 to 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.

At 8.45am, 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.

Further information and advice relating to school transport for the 2021/22 school year is available here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/64a88-school-transport/> or on the school website.

ii. Arrival and departure times

Arrival and departure times have changed slightly and will be further adjusted when the entire school returns.

Arrival

8.45 – 8.50: Junior Infants & 1st Class

8.50 – 8.55: Senior Infants, 2nd Class & 4th/5th Class

8.55 – 9.00: ASD Class, 3rd/4th Class & 5th/6th Class

Siblings, or those travelling together, should arrive during the arrival slot of the earliest arriving child. Children should, as before, use the same designated entrance and proceed directly to their classroom.

Entrances:

Main Door: Jnr & Snr Infants, ASD Class & 3rd/4th Class **Far Door:** 1st & 2nd Class **Side Door:** 4th/5th & 5th/6th Class

Departure Times:

1.25pm: Junior Infants

1.30pm: Senior Infants

1.35pm: ASD Class

Junior Infants who have a sibling/travelling companion in Senior Infants may wait in the yard (maintaining social distancing) until Senior Infants finish for the day.

2.25pm: 1st Class

2.30pm: 2nd/3rd & 4th/5th Classes

2.35pm: 3rd/4th & 5th/6th Classes

Pupils who have siblings/travelling companions in other classes will no longer leave early. Pupils from earlier finishing classes are permitted to wait in the yard until their sibling's class has departed.

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 Class	Far Door
3 rd /4 th Class	Main Door
4 th /5 th Class	Side Door
5 th /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 a little after the basketball court. A video highlighting these entrances is available on the school website (<http://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html>).

5. 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.

6. Classroom Organisation

Classrooms are being organised/configured as per guidance and models issued by the Department of Education. Junior classes (J1 to 2nd) will be organised in a pod (group-based) system. Senior classes (3rd to 6th) will be organised on either a pod basis or in rows (as happened last year). This is at the discretion of the class teacher.

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.

Unfortunately classes will not have the option of mixing with one another. Assemblies and other school events will be conducted using Zoom. The yard will be zoned so that children from a particular class bubble will be separated from other class bubbles.

Physical Distancing

Parents are requested to ensure that their children understand what is meant by the term social distancing. Pupils will be asked in school to maintain social distancing from their peers as much as is practicable within the classroom. Pupils will be asked to refrain from embracing, holding hands, physical contact with other pupils while in school. We ask that parents re-emphasise these important messages at home.

For children with special educational needs (SEN) we understand that maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on parents/guardians having a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school. A precautionary approach should be taken.

Similarly staff are also aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

Ventilation

Good ventilation is a critical component in reducing the potential spread of Covid-19. Windows and doors will be left open as fully as possible throughout the day so during cold weather, please ensure that your children are wearing additional layers to keep themselves warm. The heating will be left on in the classrooms for the entire day also to reduce the impact of the windows and doors left open. Windows may be closed partially if classroom temperatures remain below 16 degrees Celsius. The teacher may, if necessary, bring the children for additional outdoor time during the day to allow the classrooms to ventilate.

7. Yard / Lunch

As was the case last year, each class will have a separate zone/area for their outdoor lunch/yard time. We plan to use the field and grass area to the front of the school for the first few weeks – hopefully until the Hallowe'en midterm – if conditions allow. This will enable each class to have their lunch at the same time.

- When using the grass areas 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. Football boots or other studded footwear is not permitted.
- 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.
- Entries to and exits from these zones have been staggered to ensure that bubbles do not interact with each other.
- 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 to ensure the class 'bubbles' mix as infrequently as possible.

8. 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. The Department of Education's advice has not changed – only essential visitors are permitted to enter the school building.

- 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 a face mask, sanitise or wash hands upon entry to the school, complete a Covid-19 Visitor Log (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 now use an ePayments system 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.

9. 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.

10. Remote Learning Plan

The Department of Education issued a document to schools entitled "Guidance on Remote Learning in a COVID-19 Context: September – December 2020 For primary schools and special schools" on October 8th 2020. This document issues guidance to schools on engaging with remote learning in the event that a pupil or pupils are absent from school for an extended period of time due to Covid-19. This document is available from the DES's website: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/183b2-guidance-on-remote-learning-in-a-covid-19-context-september-december-2020/>. This plan has been amended to suit our school context and the key points from this plan are outlined below.

Requirements from Department of Education	Our response:
<p>All schools should put in place arrangements to facilitate:</p> <p>Digital communication between staff and pupils</p>	<p>Staff and pupils are familiar with using Zoom from the initial closure period that began in March. Zoom would continue to be used for assemblies, feedback sessions etc. All staff members have an educator license from Zoom that has additional security and administrative protections.</p> <p>Staff and pupils are familiar with Class Dojo. This platform will be used to assign work, give feedback on work and communicate with class groups or individuals. This platform will also be used, along with email and Twitter, to disseminate school news and important information.</p>
<p>All schools should put in place arrangements to facilitate:</p> <p>Digital communication between schools and parents/guardians, including a designated email address or attended phone number for contact during school closures</p>	<p>During any type of closure, all parents can contact the school via office@bmesch.ie or can use the contact form on the school website (http://www.bmesch.ie/contact.html)</p> <p>In the event of a partial school closure, parents can contact the school office on (045)864085.</p> <p>Parents will be able to contact teachers directly through Class Dojo.</p>
<p>All schools should put in place arrangements to facilitate:</p> <p>Remote teaching and learning</p>	<p>School work will be assigned through Class Dojo. Oral or video instructions to assist with completing tasks may accompany these tasks where necessary.</p> <p>Teachers will use Zoom for class feedback and, at times, for pupils to present work to their class.</p>
<p>In some schools, the use of digital communication platforms may not be appropriate or possible for some pupils. In these cases, alternative arrangements should be identified, including using the postal service, emails and phone calls.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the case for a minority of pupils within the school. • If parents are having difficulty connecting with the school through the online platforms, they should make contact with the school office via phone or email. • In the event of future full class closures or school closures, teachers should maintain occasional phone contact with pupils who are not engaging with the digital platforms. A weekly check-in would be appropriate. • If the lack of use of the digital platforms is due to internet difficulties, procedures should be agreed between teacher and parent for posting of resources/materials – if required/requested. • If the lack of use of digital platforms is due to no device being available, the school will make one of its devices available to the family. • In the event of partial class closures, a teacher on Covid-19 leave or a Special Education Teacher will be assigned to assist pupils absent due to Covid-19 leave.
<p>Enable pupils to develop the necessary skills set</p>	<p>Pupils are engaging with our chosen platform, Class Dojo, at home in order to ensure they have the necessary skillset in the event of a class or school closure.</p> <p>Teachers will identify pupils who are not engaging with the platform and the Principal will arrange a demonstration with those pupils.</p>

	Parents have been sent videos and support links to ensure that they can also use the platform.
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The Department of Education & Skills have outlined five distinct scenarios in which pupils may not be allowed to come to school. These scenarios, and how we plan to respond to these, are outlined below.

Closure Scenarios	Our response
<i>Scenario 1: "An individual pupil from a class is advised to self-isolate or restrict his/her movements. No other pupils in the school are affected."</i>	<p>If available, a teacher within the school on Covid-19 leave will liaise with the class teacher to provide learning opportunities to the pupil using Class Dojo and, perhaps, Zoom. If there are no teachers on Covid-19 leave, an SET may be asked to assign some time to provide learning opportunities to the pupil using Class Dojo and, perhaps, Zoom.</p> <p>The Class Teacher may also assign work that has been covered in class for the pupil to engage with at home. Books, copies etc may be posted home if required or requested. Our response will depend on the duration of absence, health of the pupil etc.</p>
<i>Scenario 2: "The pupils in a number of pods in a classroom are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements. Some of the pods in the classroom are deemed to be unaffected and can continue to attend school."</i>	<p>If available, a teacher within the school on Covid-19 leave will liaise with the class teacher to provide learning opportunities to the affected pupils using Class Dojo and Zoom. If there are no teachers on Covid-19 leave, an SET will assign some time to provide learning opportunities to the pupils using the Class Dojo and, perhaps, Zoom.</p> <p>The Class Teacher may also assign work that has been covered in class for the pupil to engage with at home. The Class Teacher may facilitate affected pupils live communicating with class members on project work etc via Zoom during the day where possible or appropriate. Books, copies etc may be posted home if required or requested. Our response will depend on the duration of absence, health of the pupils etc.</p>
<i>Scenario 3: "All pupils in one or more classes are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements"</i>	<p>The class teacher will be required to provide remote/distance teaching to all pupils in the class, using Class Dojo and Zoom. This should take place from the school if the teacher is not required to self-isolate or restrict his/her movements.</p> <p>If the class teacher is unwell, a substitute teacher may be appointed to provide remote teaching/distance learning to the class.</p>
<i>Scenario 4: "A teacher / number of teachers in the school are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements."</i>	<p>Any teacher who is medically fit for work but has been advised to restrict his/her movements is available to work remotely. If the teacher's class group is still attending school a substitute teacher should be arranged to cover this teacher's teaching responsibilities in the school for this period. The class teacher will be available to support children from the class or throughout the school who may be self-isolating or restricting their movements.</p> <p>If the teacher's class is also self-isolating or restricting their movements the class teacher(s) will be required to provide remote/distance teaching to all pupils in the class, using Class Dojo and Zoom from home. No substitute will be appointed.</p>
<i>Scenario 5: "The school is required to close on foot of public health advice."</i>	<p>In this case, all teachers who are medically fit to work, including SETs, are available to work remotely and should provide remote teaching and learning to all pupils in their class or on their caseload. Substitute</p>

	teachers should be arranged to provide remote teaching for pupils in classes where the teacher has been diagnosed with Covid-19 and is medically unfit to work. The school will ensure substitute teachers have access to appropriate digital technology and school systems/files etc.
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11. 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.

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.

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 often during the school day.

12. 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*).

The Department of Education has confirmed with Public Health that the enhanced/ augmented Public Health schools teams will be available to fully support schools that are opening during the interim reopening phase starting in February 2021. They have also confirmed that full contact tracing and bulk fast-track testing within the school setting will resume immediately for schools as they reopen. As of 10/02/2021, all close contacts will be tested at Day 0 and Day 10 after their last exposure to a case. They may end their period of restricted movements on receipt of a 'not detected' (negative) test result from a test conducted on Day 10 since last exposure, as long as they have no symptoms.

13. 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 (LWR) (Emer Miley) the authority to amend this plan in line with health advice, DES requirements and local developments without seeking prior approval. The Board of Management has appointed Annona Deegan as the school's Deputy Lead Worker Representative. She may be required to assume the duties of the LWR in her absence. The Board of Management will be kept up to date with changes made to the plan.

The most recent changes to this document were made on the 23rd of August 2021.

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 particular type of Coronavirus. COVID-19 is mainly spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth. For example, from someone who is talking loud, singing, shouting, coughing or sneezing. COVID-19 can also be spread through airborne transmission. Airborne transmission is the spread of a virus in very tiny water particles, known as aerosols. This can happen over a longer distance than droplets, such as across a room. COVID-19 can spread easily in crowded or poorly ventilated areas.

Please use the links below to access the most up to date information and public health guidance:

- HSE Hub: <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- HSE-HPSC: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>

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
- Sore throat
- Breathing Difficulties
- Loss or change in sense of taste or smell.

Additional guidance on COVID-19 in relation to school is available from the Department of Education:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/#>. Much of this information is also available on our school website, along with all of our COVID-19 plans and procedures, at the following link: <https://www.bmesch.ie/covid-19-hub.html>.