

Dear parents and guardians, as you know schools have been asked to plan and prepare for a full reopening for all pupils and preparations have been progressing here in CPC in order to ensure that this full reopening can happen. This has been a significant challenge and I want to thank the team of people who are working tirelessly for the past number of weeks to make the necessary changes in order for us to reopen.

As well as our 'COVID -19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Reopening of Post Primary Schools', we have created the following Questions and Answers document that you may find useful. Please be aware that this is a developing situation and the contents are accurate at the time of writing but are subject to review and change.

Q1. Will all students be required to physically attend school?

Yes, all students who are not in the 'High Risk Category' as outlined in the Department of Education and Skills (DES) / HSE guidelines will be expected to attend school as normal. The DES are expected to provide further guidance on how to support high risk students in the coming days. This guidance is expected to outline what children are considered high risk.

Q2. Will students have a full timetable?

Yes. Students will be expected to attend school as normal. (Monday - Friday)

Q3. Will students have an allocated room to minimise movement?

Yes. Base classrooms will be allocated to each base class for the foreseeable future. It may be necessary to reassign base rooms as we monitor the situation during term 1. Students will also be allocated a desk in each base room. Some movement between classes will be required for subjects requiring specialist rooms such as; Technology, Home Economics, Woodwork, Art etc. and for subjects where levels are different; e.g. Maths, Irish.

Q4. Will the 1m/2m social distancing rule apply in classrooms?

Yes. Each base room has been rearranged to ensure that students are at least 1m (shoulder to shoulder) from each other. Students will sit individually in rows facing the teacher.

Hand sanitising by staff and students is required when entering and exiting rooms.

Where students need to move about within a classroom to perform activities it will be organised to minimise congregation (e.g. in practical classrooms).

Where possible, staff will maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m from students. They will also take measures to avoid close contact at face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

Q5. Will students be required to wear a school uniform?

Yes. The Reopening Schools Guidelines states that changes to uniform policy are not required. There is currently no public health advice that requires students to have a fresh uniform each day. We would encourage students to place their name on all items of clothing.

From a child protection point of view and given that masks must be worn, it is important that students wear full uniform so that the identity of all those in the building is easily verified.

Q6. Do students have to wear face masks.

It is a requirement that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a cloth face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained. **Essentially this means at all times in the school building.**

Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face

coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

Parents/guardians should ensure that their son/daughter has at least 3 reusable cloth face masks – one to wear, one spare with them, one being laundered/washed.

In certain situations, clear visors might be worn, for example staff interacting with students with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

All students on the post primary transport scheme will be asked to wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

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

- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

In keeping with the school setting, all cloth face coverings should be plain in colour. Scarves / bandanas etc. are not acceptable.

If your son/daughter has a medical condition that prohibits him/her from wearing a mask, a written medical certificate must be provided in advance of school reopening.

Q6(a). What about masks during lunch break?

The current guidance is that everyone should physically distance 2m when not wearing a mask. This may be possible outside and off the school grounds. However, there will need to be a common sense approach and so during break time or lunch time if the student is sitting at their table they will need to temporarily remove the mask to eat/drink. This time must be kept to the minimum possible.

Q6(b). I read that children under 13 years of age should not be required to wear a face covering. Does that apply to school?

No. The guidelines state that all students in post primary schools must wear masks as outlined above.

Q7. What happens if a student arrives at school without a mask or refuses to wear one?

Students without a face mask will be removed from class and placed in the care of his/her parents/guardians until the school management meet with the parents/guardians and are satisfied that the student will comply with this requirement and no longer poses a risk to the health and safety of himself/herself and the wider school community.

Q8. Will staff wear face masks?

Yes. All staff are required to wear a face mask/visor as outlined above.

Q9. Will there be a one - way system in corridors?

Yes. Where feasible, there will be a clearly marked one-way system in operation. This will also include a specific stairwell for moving upstairs and a separate stairwell for coming downstairs. Failure to observe this system will be considered a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour and a risk to health and safety.

Q10. Will there be a canteen facility?

No. Unfortunately the current canteen facility will not be available. Students should bring a packed healthy lunch to school. Water fountains will also be out of use. Please ensure that students have enough water with them to drink.

No students are permitted to leave the school grounds during morning break.

During lunchtime 1st year students must stay in the school grounds. Other year groups may leave the grounds but must return to school on time for afternoon class. There must be no congregating on corridors during break/lunch times. Students should follow the guidelines on social distancing and the wearing of face masks at all times.

Students in the building will be required to remain in their base classroom (in their designated seat) to eat their lunch.

Q11. Will evening study be available this term?

At this time, it is unclear whether the school will be able to provide this facility. The increased cleaning processes required pose a difficulty in readying rooms for the following day in the time available. This will be kept under review and if it is possible to run evening study students and parents/guardians will be notified.

Q12. Will lockers be available for students?

No. Unfortunately lockers have been identified as a point of congestion and congregation in schools as well as touch points and therefore lockers will not be available for the foreseeable future. Students are encouraged to use two bags - one to be left at their table in their base classroom and one to bring home material required for homework. It is essential that students write their names clearly on books and belongings and keep them inside their bag. Each year it is staggering to see the number of books etc. left lying around carelessly by students. Teachers will make every effort to minimise the number of books required at home for homework. Most textbooks come with a free e-book which can be accessed online at home.

Q14. Can a parent/guardian drop items into the school for collection by their son/daughter?

No. Arrangements for necessary visitors will be restricted to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal (as per guidelines). The vast majority of issues can be dealt with by phone and/or video conference. In order to minimise the risk of COVID-19 Transmission, parent(s)/guardian(s) cannot leave any belongings in the office for collection. The school office may only be contacted via phone or email.

Any unauthorised visitors to the school will be asked to leave and follow the process outlined above.

Please do not contact your son/daughter directly to circumvent this requirement.

Q15. I believe other measures should be taken by the school in addition to what is in the Covid-19 Response Plan. Why are they not taken?

The Board of Management has approved the Covid-19 Response Plan signed by the Chairperson and the Principal. This plan, and accompanying documentation, was drawn up following consultation with the Education Partners, including the teacher unions and parent and student representative bodies. It complies with public health advice. Schools should operate in line with this plan.

Q16. What happens if there is a suspected Covid 19 student case?

Parents/guardians will be contacted to collect the student in the first instance. Full details are contained in the Covid-19 Response Plan.

Parents and pupils are to follow the HSE advice including to self-isolate while awaiting a test. If the outcome of the test is negative and the pupil is symptom free, they should return to school. If the test is positive the HSE will advise on appropriate next steps in the circumstances.

Q17. Does a teacher or student who displays COVID 19 symptoms have to undergo a test before they can return to work/school?

The public health advice on what to do if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms can be found here:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

The teacher must self-isolate, contact their GP who will arrange for a test.

Q18. Are parents obliged to tell schools if they or their children have tested positive for Covid?

The HSE will advise close contacts of anyone with a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. Parents should follow the advice of the HSE in these situations.

Q19. What are the guidelines for a school if a parent works abroad for periods of time and then returns home. Do their children continue to come to school or do they remain at home for a period?

The general public health advice for returning to Ireland having worked abroad should be followed by the person who has worked abroad (in this case the parent). This will not prevent that person's children from attending school. The parent should follow all of the HSE guidelines on their return home.

Q20. Are siblings of suspected Covid cases also to be isolated in school prior to collection from the building?

No. The advice in relation to dealing with a suspected case is set out in the HPSC health advice on reopening schools and in the School COVID-19 Response Plan.

The person (staff or pupil) with the symptoms should go home to self-isolate, contact their GP for advice and the HSE will then decide, based on the circumstances in each case, what constitutes a close contact for the purpose of deciding who else in the school/family requires to self-isolate and/or be tested.

Q21. If a pupil is sent home with suspected Covid and is asked to isolate and await a test, what happens to their siblings in other classes?

It is a matter for the HSE to advise as to who is considered a close contact and therefore required to either self-isolate and or present for testing. See answer to the question above.

Q22. If a pupil complains of being unwell and is isolated and sent home should siblings of the pupil be isolated and go home also?

No. See answer to questions directly above.

Q23. Impact of a suspected case. Are all families of children in the class informed if there is a suspected case? Are all families of children to include siblings informed - including neighbouring schools?

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

Q24. Does the school have an isolation area?

Yes. We have repurposed a room to be the isolation area. Where more than one person is in the room they will be 2 metres away from others in that room.

Q25. Is there a definitive published procedure for dealing with suspect Covid 19 cases both with children and teachers?

Yes. The HPSC public health on reopening schools and the School COVID-19 Response Plan sets out a step by step guide of how to manage a suspected case and includes a checklist to ensure that all the steps are followed at Appendix 7 of the School Response Plan.

Q26. What steps must be taken when pupils / staff present with a symptom of Covid-19 either at home or at school?

If you have any common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), you should self-isolate and phone your GP straight away to get a coronavirus test.

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you have ANY common symptom of COVID-19 you should follow the steps set out above.

DO NOT COME INTO THE SCHOOL IF YOU HAVE ANY ONE OR MORE OF THESE SYMPTOMS.

Q27. If there is a Covid case in the school, is it the responsibility of the school or the HSE to let parents know?

This is dealt with at Section 8 of the School COVID-19 Response plan which states that it is the HSE who will inform parents/staff 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 COVID19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.

Q28. Please outline the procedure in relation to pupils displaying symptoms in school.

This is dealt with at Section 8 of the School COVID-19 Response Plan.

Q29. If there is one suspected case must you close that room for 72 hours? And does that mean leaving that class at home for 72 hours?

The HPSC public health advice on reopening schools (page 22 cleaning/disinfecting rooms where a pupil or staff member with a suspected case was present) and the School COVID-19 Response Plan Section 7 Page 25 and 26) sets out the cleaning regime that should apply. It does not require the room to be out of use for 72 hours – “once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused”.

Q30. What about pupils with medical conditions who have been told that they can go back to school, but parents don't want to send them?

Some pupils or their parents may be experiencing anxiety about the return to school in a Covid19 context to such an extent that the pupil does not return as expected.

All schools are expected to support such pupils in making a full return to school and to provide supports to ensure their anxiety is managed in such a way as to enable them to engage productively in learning in school.

The DES will provide further guidance on how to support high risk students in the coming days.

Q31. If a family has travelled recently and returned to Ireland – must they quarantine or can the children return to school?

Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone.

It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of ‘normal precautions’ (“green”), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

It is essential that no member of the school community puts the health and safety of others at risk by contravening this requirement.

Q32. What if a parent or other member of a household has to self-isolate? Do the children in the family still attend school?

The HSE will advise who within a family are considered close contacts and who should self-isolate and/or present for testing.

Q33. Will the school be taking student temperatures?

The Response Plan does not provide for the taking of temperatures. It is not the role of the school to take anyone's temperature. Parental support in this matter is vital by monitoring possible Covid symptoms in children which include high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above.

Q34. Will there be a meeting of parents of incoming students or other parent meetings?

Current regulations restrict outside groups to no more than six people. Schools will explore other options such as online meetings.

Individual meetings will be largely by phone call and/or email and in the first instance will be with the individual teacher or year head.

Q35. Physical Education – will there be PE and will changing rooms be in use?

PE will take place. Every effort will be made to maintain 2 metre distancing. Where this is not possible a face mask will be worn. Teachers will make every effort to minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

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

Students who have PE should wear plain black tracksuit bottoms, pale blue polo shirt and the pale blue CPC hoodie with crest on the day they have PE.