

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny

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This is a living document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie or agreements with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

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Introduction:

The following document features the control measures Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny, has put in place to reduce the risk of infection and transmission of Covid 19. It is important that staff, students, parents and the wider school community adopt and cooperate with these control measures to help mitigate the risk of infection from Covid 19.

The document has been created in line with the following guidance documents and best practice:

The department of Education and Skills – Reopening of our Schools – The Roadmap for the full return to School. The Department of Education and Skills – Covid 19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary School. The Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Health – Return to work Safety Protocol for Employers and Workers

This document has been ratified by the Principal: Sr Gerardine Mullen and the Chairperson of the Board of Management: Mr Noel O'Connell.
This is a dynamic working document – it will be updated as outlined by Department of Education guidelines

Responsibility

The Board of Management have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to assess the risks associated with Covid 19, implement control measures to eliminate/reduce the associated risks, design, provide and maintain a safe working environment, plan a safe system of work and provide suitable training and PPE measures.

Staff should note they have a legal obligation under section 13 of the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

The Board of Management, staff, students, parents and guardians have a collective responsibility to ensure the safety of themselves and others in the implementation of these measures. The assistance and cooperation of all is critical to the success of this plan.

One of the key challenges which the DES has identified is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. The department has identified the steps schools can take to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid 19 into the school and the steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself in the event that Covid 19 is introduced to the school.

This Covid 19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, students, parents and others.

1) What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM)/Education Training Board (ETB) in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education plan for school reopening that will aim to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of schools complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to students, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice and any other relevant agreement with education partners as appropriate for post primary schools.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and sustainable return to work, and reopening of schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM/ETB, staff, students and parents.

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

2) School COVID-19 Policy

A COVID-19 policy outlines the commitment of the school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson and principal of the BOM and brought to the attention of the staff, students, parents and others. Schools must have a COVID-19 policy in place prior to the reopening of schools for the 2020/21 school year. A template of a School COVID-19 policy can be found at **Appendix 1**.

3) Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The BOM aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the workplace must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

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

Before reopening schools for the 2020/21 school year Loreto Secondary School will have processes in place to include the following:

- Means of keeping up to date with public health advice, changes to any Government plans for the safe reopening of society and Department of Education updates;
- Means of passing on this information in a timely manner to staff, students, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education (**details at Section 4.1**);
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form (**details at Section 4.2**);
- Identified 2 Lead Worker representatives (**details at Section 4.3**);
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19(**details at Section 4.4**);
- Made the necessary changes to the school layout to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing (**details at Section 4.5**);
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school but take into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment (**details at Section 4.6**);

- Made necessary arrangements to restrict access to the school and maintain records of contacts to the school (**details at 4.7**);
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following:
 - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
 - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
 - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed.

There are checklists in place to assist schools on the details of what is needed for these arrangements in the appendices of this plan.

OUR AIM

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

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

Building Organisation

Before re-opening the school will ensure the following changes have been put in place:

Corridors and Circulation Areas

To ease congestion and ensure safe circulation in the corridors and lobby, the school has implemented a one way system in 3 particular areas.

- A. One set of stairs leading to classrooms 103,104 and 105 is used as an entrance point and another set of stairs is used as an exit point. Directional signage indicating the one way system is in place.
- B. A one way system has also been signposted in the area beside science rooms **216 and 218** there is a 'split' leading to the link corridor. Signage indicating 'Keep to the left' is on display in this area
- C. A one way system has also been organised in the corridor above the lobby. Signage is clearly posted around this narrow circulation area.

Senior prefects are posted at these points throughout the day, they encourage students to use the one-way system correctly

The school community are also encouraged to walk on the left hand side of the corridor keeping 2m apart where possible and a minimum of 1m apart.

'Keep to the left and you will always be right'

Staff and students are asked to move quickly between classes

While in the corridors everyone is asked to ensure that all students maintain social distance

Students are asked to pay attention to the signs and arrows on the corridors.

Prefects direct students to make their way to classrooms each morning, they also ensure masks are worn and hand sanitiser is used. Teachers also supervise students each morning. Monitors supervise junior classes while they await the arrival of their teachers. This eliminates the possibility of students congregating on corridors and in the lobby area.

Signage

The following signage is in place:

- Sanitising locations in corridors, entry and exit points
- Correct use of hand sanitiser
- No visitor access at avenues and doorways, except with prior appointment
- Main door sign indicating protocols for visitors/parents
- The signs and symptoms of Covid 19
- Promoting good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene
- One way directional signage in corridors
- Appropriate signage is located in all classrooms, meeting rooms, staff room, offices, toilets, canteen and lobby
- Face mask signage
- 'Keep to the left' signage
- 'Respect' for all signage

Maximum occupancy classrooms and sanitising arrangements

All classrooms, including specialist rooms, staffroom, lobby and canteen have been reconfigured in order to place a limit the number of students and staff who can safely occupy each space. Classrooms have set occupancy limits therefore requests to change subjects/classes may be refused as we will not exceed any safe limit.

Junior classes have been assigned base classrooms, they will remain in this classroom throughout the day with the exception of those times when they will need to attend classes in specialist rooms or to attend higher or ordinary level classes.

Desks in classrooms have been numbered and class seating plans have been placed on notice boards by each teacher in relevant classrooms (a master copy of each seating plan will be located in a file in the Principals office in relation to contact tracing)

Each room will be supplied with products which will be used to sanitise rooms as classes move into rooms. Staff must also sanitise their work area, computer, ladybug, seat etc for the next staff member, sanitising arrangements include specialist rooms.

Senior classes will be located in the sections of the school which comprises rooms numbered 100 and 200 with the exception of those times when they will need to proceed to specialist rooms.

Each classroom will have a seating plan and students must sit in their assigned seats. The Principal also has copies of the seating plans. Desks and chairs will be given a matching number. Therefore surnames beginning with 'A' will be seated at desk and chair No 1 and so on. This arrangement may not be feasible in all circumstances especially with regard to students who have particular needs

Staff must use their own whiteboard markers, these will be available in the staffroom

Students must not share books or stationery

Furniture should not be moved in the classroom, as it will be arranged to ensure social distancing. If it is moved accidentally, markings are placed on the floor to indicate where the desk should be, desks and chairs should always be returned to their original position

If a student asks to go to the toilet, they must go one at a time, teacher do not sign journals.

Teachers will be asked to ensure each of their classes is set up on Google Classroom.

Staff will be asked to endeavour to remain 2m from students and staff should not walk around the classroom but remain at the teachers' desk area.

Windows should be open in each classroom, where possible, to aid ventilation. Classroom doors can be left open too to aid ventilation.

5 masks and 5 pairs of gloves will be placed in each classroom in case of emergencies.

Bins should be placed close to classroom doors as it is likely they will need to be emptied during the school day, especially after break and lunch. The cleaning staff will enter the classroom to collect the bins.

Safety screens

Protective perspex screens are placed at teacher desks, in each office and meeting room, including the reception area.

8 x portable perspex screens are available for SNA's for use in classrooms

Lunch seating, staggered lunch and breaks

The canteen will have capacity for 50 students, the lobby will also provide seating and tables for a limited overflow of students from the canteen – The catering company; 'Get Fresh', will organise and monitor a safe queuing system. Food served will be wrapped, no hot food will be served.

Staggered lunch times have been developed into the timetable, this will reduce canteen numbers which has a determined capacity

This also will allow for a full sanitisation programme to take place in the canteen between groups and for staff to manage numbers correctly.

Zones have been developed whereby Year Groups can occupy during break and lunch specific areas where they can eat if they are not availing of the canteen

There are 3 different breaktimes 10.20-10.40, 10.40-11.00, and 11.00-11.20. These times are posted in each classroom

There are 2 different lunchtimes: 12.40-1.20 and 1.20-2.00

Staff and students are asked to take note of break time and lunchtime as indicated in timetables. Breaktime schedules are posted in each classroom

Staff and students are asked to vacate the school by 4.15 Monday to Thursday and 1.30 on Friday

Covid 19 Guideline summary

A Covid 19 guideline and general information summary has been compiled and issued to each student

A Covid 19 guideline and general information summary has been issued to all staff members including PME's

Access to the school building /contact log

Each year group will have a separate exit and entrance. These will be clearly signposted. There will be six separate exits and entrances. Upon entering the building at 8.30am, students will proceed directly to their classrooms where they will be supervised until class begins at 9.00am. This will limit congregation of students on corridors

1st Year – Door at the top of the stairs accessed by ramp

2nd Year – Door opposite library

3rd Year – Double doors in the lobby

TY – Gym side door with steps

5th Year – Concert hall door

6th Year – Front door at reception

All year groups will use the same entry and exit points at break and lunch times

Staff may enter and leave the school using any door

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

Arrangements for necessary visitors will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal

A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school building will be maintained

The school maintains a log of staff and students contacts

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace.

A sign will be placed outside the 2 main entrance points indicating visitors to say; STOP! It will convey the message that students and staff ONLY are allowed to proceed to the school premises from the location of the sign onwards. At the rear entrance this sign is situated at the brow of the hill for a maximum vantage purpose. If it is necessary to come in person to the school premises, an appointment should be made in advance via the office, the office phone number will be clearly posted on signage.

Toilet Zones:

1st Year – toilets beside canteen in lobby

2nd Year – Downstairs in new block

3rd Year – Upstairs toilets in new block

TY – Toilets on Gym Corridor

5th Year – Toilets opposite caretakers room

6th Year – Toilets close to concert hall

Staff Room

A max of 27 people can sit in the staffroom at any one time

Teachers are requested not to move the chairs as they have been set up for social distancing

Staff must use their own cups, plates and cutlery and everyone is requested to clean and store these when finished

Everyone is requested to keep the staffroom clean and tidy

Isolation rooms, feeling sick.

Three isolation rooms have been identified: Front office isolation room for students, Room 211 isolation room for wheelchair access and Deputy Principal Ms C McHughs' office for staff members. Appropriate furniture, signage, PPE supplies and disinfecting supplies has been installed.

Teachers and students will be asked to have their phone in class at all times in the event they need to be used to contact family members

If a student feels unwell, they will be asked to move to a chair outside the classroom door and keep the door open and a member of the senior management team should be alerted:

Sr Ger, Ms Caroline McHugh or Ms Shiobaun McGee

The student will be accompanied to the isolation room which is located in the last office behind reception or in the case of a wheelchair user, the isolation room in the Constance Centre.

If a staff member feels unwell at school call one of the above and go your nearest staff isolation room. This is room 418 (Ms McHugh's office)

If a staff member feels unwell at home, please inform the school as soon as possible by calling the office 074 9121850 and then call your GP for advice. If you show symptoms of Covid

If a staff family member has suspected symptoms, the staff member is advised to inform management, stay at home and wait until test results are issued. Please inform management of outcome

If the person with the suspected case is a student, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. Parents must ensure their speedy response to phone calls from the school at all times throughout the school day. The student will be accompanied to the isolation room via the **isolation route**, keeping at least 2 m away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 m from the symptomatic person at all times

Public transport of any kind should not be used

If the individual is too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid 19 suspect

The symptomatic individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects and wear a mask at all times

Advice will be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the nearest waste paper bin

The symptomatic student must be collected within one hour from the school by a parent/guardian

Arrangements for the appropriate cleaning of the isolation area after symptomatic student or staff member has left

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/student confidentiality is essential at all times

Registration, photocopies, copy books, online teaching and homework

A roll call must be taken at the beginning of each class

All classes are set up on Google classroom. Most homework will be submitted via Google classroom. All students will have their own Loreto, Letterkenny school email address to access this system.

Under current national guidelines online teaching is only available in the high risk category as outlined in the Covid 19 response plan. Online teaching is not available to any other students at this time. However, our use of Google Classroom will ensure they will be able to check up and submit work in the case of absence from school

If the school is closed, either due to national guidelines or local restrictions, further restrictions will be issued about how our teaching and learning will continue

In an effort to reduce the weight of school bags we suggest that students use an A4 refill pad to record notes etc and insert those notes into a folder and dividers upon returning home.

Students are responsible for their own schoolbag. Students are advised to label everything and bring it home. We are not in a position to store or find lost property

Photocopies are not advised. Notes can be placed on Google Classroom for students to access.

Collecting copies is also not advised. Students could submit their homework via Google Classroom

Staff can decide what works best for them but should remember any paper must sit for 48 hours after collecting and again before returning to the students

Face coverings

Masks/visors must be worn at all times. A staff member may remove the mask if they are behind a screen but they are advised to wear them as much as possible.

If you forget a mask, there are some available in the office

If a student is unable to wear a mask or a visor due to medical reasons, management will inform staff

Coloured named badges

All Year Groups will be supplied with coloured named badges. Colours will differ for each Year Group. This should allow for easy and immediate recognition of students from each Year Group. It should help to identify if students are in the correct location at all times.

4.1) Induction Training

All staff and PME's will undertake and complete COVID-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building. The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- COVID-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- Outline of the COVID-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and will be updated with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the COVID-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal who is supported in this role by the BOM/ETB.

Note: Induction Training for reopening schools in the new school year is under development by the Department. This will be made available to all schools and staff in advance of school reopening.

[Details of the training, once it becomes available, will be found here.](#)

A national information campaign to support parents and students will happen in advance of schools reopening on issues such as COVID-19 awareness and to help minimise the risk of introduction and spread of the virus in schools.

4.2) Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 2**.

A RTW form should be completed and returned **3 days** before returning to work.

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

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

People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

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

- are over 70 years of age – even if fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

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

4.3) Lead Worker Representative

The protocol provides for the appointment of a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in each workplace. The LWR will work in collaboration with the employer to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.

This section sets out how the provisions will operate in respect of schools. These arrangements will operate for the 2020/21 school year and will be kept under review.

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies with the Board of Management/ Education and Training Board and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and students. Adherence to the Return to Work Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared obligation in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or others, they should contact the LWR who will engage with school management.

The role of LWR is separate to that of the Safety Representative under the health and safety legislation. However the Safety Representative may act as the LWR if selected to do so by the staff.

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

- Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;
- Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;
- Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;
- Consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to COVID-19;

- Promote good hygiene practices, in conjunction with school management, such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice;
- Assist school management with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;
- Monitor, in conjunction with school management, adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
- Conduct reviews of safety measures that are in place to address and suppress COVID-19 in the workplace. Reviews (including an examination of the workplace) should be conducted on a regular basis (at least twice per week);
- Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;
- Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;
- Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;
- Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;
- Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 response plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, students or other s/he should contact the LWR/s who will engage with the Principal/ETB.

Names of Lead Worker Representatives:	Contact details:
Mrs Sarah Crumlish	scrumlish@loretoletterkenny.ie
Ms Adrienne Randles	arandles@loretoletterkenny.ie

All staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors have a responsibility, both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

Full details of the arrangements which apply for the LWR in post primary schools is set out at **Appendix 3**.

4.4) Signage

Schools will be required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. The Department will provide printed posters to schools with age appropriate key health messages – hand washing, sneeze and cough etiquette etc.

Note: Signage is under development by the Department. This will be made available to all schools and staff in advance of school reopening.

Schools can then arrange to display the posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

4.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Further information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is found at **Section 5.4** below including a link to the *“Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all students for the 2020/21 School Year.*

Schools are required to reconfigure classrooms and other areas to support physical distancing in line with the guidance in advance of school reopening.

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at **Appendix 4.**

It is important that schools review their emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the schools existing emergency procedures should be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

Schools should also review their existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments should also be documented and be incorporated into the schools statement.

First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in schools. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, schools should call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

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

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts. A sample contact log is available at **Appendix 5**.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found here:

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/en/news-media/data-protection-implications-return-work-safely-protocol>

Schools are reminded that all school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The

responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school (or ETB) in their role as data controller.

4) Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student - student, teacher - teacher and teacher- student, and must be managed in all settings.

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, students, parents and visitors as far as possible within the school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

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

Staff, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into schools:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms (***details at Section 5.1***);

- Advise staff and students that have symptoms not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Advise staff and students not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Advise staff and students that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the principal (or deputy principal if the principal is unavailable) promptly;

- Ensure that staff and students know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details at Section 8**);
- Advise everyone entering the school building that they need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Advise all relevant parties that visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement with the principal and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing of 2 metres should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

5.1) Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

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

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

5.2) Respiratory Hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.

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

5.3) Hand Hygiene

Staff and students should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Schools should promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins needs to be managed so as to avoid congregation of people waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.

Hand sanitiser dispensers can be deployed more readily at exit and entry points of schools and classrooms and care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitizer spills to prevent risks of falls.

Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water should be used.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities should be provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

Hand washing facilities should be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels should be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

Hot air dryers are an acceptable alternative for hand drying but must be regularly maintained. There is no evidence that hand dryers are associated with increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing should be placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities and can be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve.

Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs can be used too.

When hand rubs/gels are being used in school care should be taken to ensure that students do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Students and staff should perform hand hygiene:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After petting animals;
- After playing outdoors;

- When their hands are physically dirty;
- When they cough or sneeze.

The Department has arranged for a drawdown framework to be established to enable schools purchase hand-sanitisers and any other necessary PPE supplies for use in the school. The procurement process for this framework is at an advanced stage and it is intended that these materials will be available for drawdown in early August. Further guidelines will be issued shortly. The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with the hand sanitising and PPE requirements in schools. This funding will be available in advance of school reopening at the end of August.

5.4) Physical Distancing

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in a post primary school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at time.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from students and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the student.

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

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

Given that each school setting is different in terms of (i) location; (ii) physical layout (iii) available space within the school; and (iv) student numbers; schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate reconfigurations / operational changes necessary to maintain physical distancing.

In recognition that a 'one size fits all' approach would not be appropriate as schools themselves are best placed to decide on the appropriate configuration for their school, the Department has developed a *Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the*

Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year. The Framework sets out a suite of available measures that must be implemented at individual school level to the greatest possible extent.

The suite of measures set out in the Framework are:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing;
2. Utilising and reconfiguring all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing;
3. Review Timetables;
4. Reconfiguring Classes;
5. Consider Use of Live Streaming within the School; and
6. Accessing available spaces within the local community

[A link to the “Framework to maintain Physical Distancing in the Classroom in Post Primary Schools with a full return of all Students for the 2020/21 School Year” is provided here.](#)

[You can see a link to illustrated classroom layouts to maintain social distancing here.](#)

Decreasing interaction

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a post primary school will depend on the school setting and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between students.

In post primary schools physical distancing of 2m where possible or at least 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual students or staff.

As far as possible and practical, students would remain in the classroom and teachers would move between rooms.

As far as possible and practical students would be assigned to a main class cohort which would remain in the classroom for most subjects, with teachers moving between rooms.

Where possible and practical double classes should be planned to minimise movement during the day.

Where students have an elective subject they would move quickly into the new class and would be seated with members of their class cohort, observing as much physical distance as possible.

Hand washing and/or sanitising would be required when moving between classes by teachers and students.

Physical distancing between the teacher and class would be observed.

Where movement of class groups between rooms is required it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.

Where students need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimise congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items.

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting students should be arranged to maintain physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Walking/cycling to school should be encouraged as much as possible.

Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people at the school gates where physical distancing requirements may not be respected. Senior prefects are monitoring this situation

Staggered drop off/pick up times should be arranged where feasible. First year students will leave school at 3. 55

If schools have additional access points, consideration may be given to whether they can be used to reduce congestion.

Students should head straight to their designated learning space/classroom.

Staff

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work.

If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and guidance on face covering should be observed.

At post primary level consideration could be given to formation of staff “pods” or teams who work together and take breaks together.

Staff meetings should be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

Implement no hand shaking policy.

Minimise gathering at the beginning or end of the school day.

Canteen

Ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities

Stagger canteen use and extend serving times where possible to align with class groupings.

Implement a queue management system.

Make sure students clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.

Corridors and Stairwells

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.

5.5) Use of PPE in Schools

PPE will not be required to be worn within schools according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

These might include roles such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category.

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Masks

Students are requested to wear masks/visors while they are on the school premises.

It is essential for those wearing a cloth face covering to understand that the purpose is not to protect themselves but to reduce onward transmission and the benefit is reliant on wearing the covering appropriately.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

For staff, face coverings should not be required if physical distancing is possible and practiced appropriately.

The use of a visor as an alternative may be considered where there is a concern regarding prolonged close contact and exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets. It can also be used, in exceptional circumstances, where it has not been possible, notwithstanding the application of the measures in the framework on physical distancing set out above, to achieve physical distancing by organisational means for large classes. [Advice on how to properly use face coverings can be found here.](#)

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by students or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for matters such as cleaning or intimate care settings. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves.

Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

5) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

The Department will work with stakeholders to provide more detailed advice on school activities in advance of school reopening.

Choir/Music Performance

Choir practices/performances and music practices/performances involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration should be given to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained.

Sport Activities

Schools should refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport.

Shared Equipment

Art – Where possible students should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between students and if sharing is required, the instruments should be

Library Policy – Where practical students should have their own books. Textbooks that are shared should be covered in a wipeable plastic covering that can be wiped with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Students should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

6) Hygiene and Cleaning in Schools

The Department of Education will provide additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. Details of the funding supports will be provided to schools by way of circular and will be updated as required. The funding will be provided to schools in advance of reopening.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and will be covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate.

Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny takes particular care of the hygiene arrangements for wash hand and toilet facilities.

Loreto Secondary School, Letterkenny is cleaned at **least once per day**. Additional cleaning is carried out on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

When students are moving between classrooms cleaning products are provided to enable them to wipe down their desk, chair and surface when they enter each room.

All staff will have access to cleaning wipes and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building.

Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day.

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

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

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

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a student/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

The room is cleaned as soon as practicable possible.

Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until it has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

Disinfection only works on things that are clean. Therefore when disinfection is required it is always in addition to cleaning.

Person/s assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).

Special attention is paid to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.

7) **Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19**

Staff or students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how a school should deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

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

If a staff member/student displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- If the person with the suspected case is a student, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately;
- Isolate the person and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times;
- The isolation area does not have to be a room but if it is not a room it should be 2m away from others in the room;
- Remember that the virus is spread by droplets and is not airborne so physical separation is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others even if they are in the same room;
- If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a student should wear a face covering or mask. Gloves should not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
- Assess whether the individual who is displaying symptoms can immediately be directed to go home/be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their doctor. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;

- If the person is well enough to go home, arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible and advise them to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect;
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved – **(details at Section 7)**

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 student confidentiality is essential at all times.

8) Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties.

The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of COVID19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.

In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- Must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Coordinate practices and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical

distancing is maintained.

- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Adhere to the procedure outlined above if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility. .
- Keep themselves informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

9) COVID-19 related absence management

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

11) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for individual staff members in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum.Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home). A bespoke wellbeing portal and app which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service.

They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year.

APPENDIX 1

COVID-19 Policy Statement

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

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

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

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____

Date: _____