**St. Brendan’s PS**

**School Covid-19 Response Plan**

**Updated December 2021**

**Table of Contents**

[1 Introduction 1](#_Toc43910469)

[2 (St brendans ps) COVID-19 Policy 2](#_Toc43910470)

[3 Planning and Preparing for Return to School 3](#_Toc43910471)

[4 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW) 3](#_Toc43910472)

[5 Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative 3](#_Toc43910473)

[6 Safety Statement and Risk Assessment 4](#_Toc43910474)

[7 General advice to prevent the spread of the virus 4](#_Toc43910475)

[7.1 Wash your hands frequently 4](#_Toc43910476)

[7.2 Maintain social distancing 5](#_Toc43910477)

[7.3 Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth 5](#_Toc43910478)

[7.4 Practice respiratory hygiene 5](#_Toc43910479)

[7.4.1 Do 5](#_Toc43910480)

[7.4.2 Do Not 5](#_Toc43910481)

[7.4.3 You should wash your hands: 5](#_Toc43910482)

[7.4.4 People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable): 6](#_Toc43910483)

[8 Control Measures 6](#_Toc43910484)

[8.1 Return to Work Form 7](#_Toc43910485)

[8.2 Induction Training 7](#_Toc43910486)

[8.3 Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette 7](#_Toc43910487)

[8.4 Cleaning 8](#_Toc43910488)

[8.5 Access to the school building /contact log 8](#_Toc43910489)

[8.6 Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- face coverings 8](#_Toc43910490)

[8.7 First Aid/emergency procedure 9](#_Toc43910491)

[9 Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19 9](#_Toc43910492)

[10 Staff Duties 10](#_Toc43910493)

[11 Covid related absence management 10](#_Toc43910494)

[12 Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme 10](#_Toc43910495)

13 NEW SCHOOL ANTIGEN TESTING PROGRAMME from 29th November 2021

**13. PUPIL MASK WEARING in classes 3rd to 6th from 1st December 2021**

# Introduction

Revised and updated with HSE / DES guidelines – DECEMBER 2021

This *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 will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in St. Brendan’s PS

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 and Skills Plan for School Re-opening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET).

It is important that any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol and to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHET continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

This document aims to provide details of:

1. **COVID-19 School Policy**
2. **Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
3. **Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s**)
4. **Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
5. **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**

**5.1 Know the Symptoms of COVID-19- new for school reopening September 2021**

**5.2 Ventilation – August 2021**

1. **Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
2. **Control Measures**

**Face Coverings/Masks- Updated August 2021**

1. **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
2. **Staff Duties**
3. **Covid related absence management**
4. **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, 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.

**Note:** The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from[www.Gov.ie](http://www.Gov.ie), [www.dbei.ie](http://www.dbei.ie) [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie), [www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie), [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie); [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie);

# St. Brendan’s PS COVID-19 Policy

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, pupils, parents and others.

|  |
| --- |
| **COVID 19 Policy Statement**  St. Brendan’s PS is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM 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 pupils 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, the worker representatives who are easily identifiable to carry out the roles outlined in this plan in relation to return to school * inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements * adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills * keep a contact log to help with contact tracing * ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills * 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 pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time * implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice   All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions. BOM will oversee and review accordingly.  This can be done through clear communication with the Lead Worker Representative(s)  Signed:  Date: 23/8/2020 |

**2. 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 advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

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

# 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. New form – February 2021

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

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.

# Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

However, all staff, parents/guardians, 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.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name(s): | Contact details |
| Yvonne Forde  Nuala Hogan | [yforde@stbrendansps.ie](mailto:yforde@stbrendansps.ie)  [nhogan@stbrendansps.ie](mailto:hkirwan@stbrendansps.ie) |

The role of the worker representative is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

* Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
  + Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
  + Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
  + Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
  + Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
  + Make representations 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 and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

# Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

**The Department of Education and Skills are engaging with the HSA in order to provide schools with guidance on updating their Risk Assessments and Safety Statements.**

# General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

Staff and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. St. Brendan’s PS will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

* 1. **Know the Symptoms of COVID-19- new for school reopening September 2021**

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms of coronavirus (which includes the DELTA variant).

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

* a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
* a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
* shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
* loss or change in 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
* Fatigue
* Aches and Pains

Other uncommon symptoms of coronavirus include:

* sore throat
* headaches
* runny or stuffy noses
* feeling sick or vomiting
* diarrhoea

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of [cold](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/common-cold.html) and [flu](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/flu/flu-symptoms-and-diagnosis.html).

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), [self-isolate](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/self-isolation/how-to-self-isolate.html) (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need [a free COVID-19 test](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/how-to-get-tested.html).

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE [Website](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html). Symptoms may be subject to change so regular review of the HSE Website is advised. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a [COVID-19 walk-in test centre](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/testing/covid-19-walk-in-test-centres.html).

**COVID-19 Tracker App**

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that will:

* alert you if you have been in [close contact](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/close-contact-and-casual-contact.html) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)
* keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
* give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms

You can download the free app from [Apple's AppStore](https://apps.apple.com/ie/app/covid-tracker-ireland/id1505596721) or the [GooglePlay store](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.covidtracker.hse)

**Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis.** Public Health information on [close contacts, casual contacts and testing](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/close-contact-and-casual-contact.html) is available from the HSE website.

Staff must inform the Principal of this situation as soon as possible. The following advice is provided to inform school staff and pupils **how to reduce the chance of getting infected by the coronavirus**:

***5.2 Ventilation- August 2021***

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice ‘*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools’* The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ad236-guidance-on-ventilation-in-schools/).

## Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser in line with the health guidance, especially after touching another person or their personal items, after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser kills viruses that may be on your hands.

## Maintain social distancing

*This section will be constantly updated with public health advice. The advice to date is for staff to try to maintain distance of 1-2 m indoors and to wear Visor / facemask if need to be closer eg – Care needs.*

## Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

## Practice 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.

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

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

### Do

* Wash your hands properly and often
* Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
* Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
* Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### Do Not

* Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
* Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

### You should wash your hands:

* After coughing or sneezing
* Before and after eating
* Before and after preparing food
* If you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
* Before and after being on public transport
* Before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
* When you arrive and leave buildings
* If your hands are dirty
* After toilet use

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:

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

### People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups, which include people who:

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

* are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
* have had an organ transplant
* are undergoing active chemotherapy for [cancer](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/cancer-patients.html)
* 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
* severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, [severe asthma](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/asthma.html), pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and [severe COPD](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/copd.html)
* have a condition that means you 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](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/weak-immune-system.html) (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
* have a serious heart condition and you are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the leave arrangements that will apply will be updated by the Department of Education and Skills.

If the Board/Principal is unsure whether or not staff fall into the very high-risk category, advice will be sought from the Occupational Health Service. It is not envisaged that anyone considered very high risk would volunteer for Summer Provision 2020.

# Control Measures- St Brendan’s PS Birr

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, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school .

These control measures for our school are outlined as follows:

* Hand Hygiene • Alcohol-based sanitiser must not be stored or used near heat or naked flame
* All staff to complete “ pre-return to work questionnaire” and complete the DES COVID19 safety training –
* COVID19 policy and risk assessment updated.
* Increased cleaning organised for the school
* Signage ( both inside and outside building) and hands-free sanitizing stations set up in school.
* PPE supplies in school to be used accordingly.
* Pupil parents will be asked to ensure no pupil comes to school feeling unwell.
* As per the protocols, staff will for the most part not wear masks/visors unless engaged in intimate care situations but will instead maintain social distancing and good hand/ respiratory hygiene habits. Each staff member must consider their own health and personal circumstances and adapt their use of PPE accordingly.
* Pupils will be required to wear masks from 3rd to 6th Classes unless parents wish it re underlying condition / family reason. See relevant section of plan
* As Current health guidelines do not outline the use of facemasks for children U13 and from Junior infants to 2nd class , parents must inform school management of the medical need ( cert) for wearing such during school.
* Pupils may bring their own small sanitizer if they wish but school will provide for both staff and pupils regardless.
* With regard to local visits , walks excursions which were always part of our programme, we will try to continue taking the safety steps necessary and it may be possible to go. We have contacted local library , castle and will see what their protocols are. Our school garden is an amazing resource that will be used daily no doubt.
* For garden / computer / aistear use, we have purchased at great expense- a sanitizer machine which can allow different pupils / groups to access equipment and sensory room.
* An isolation room has been set up so any pupil / staff member who displays symptoms can go there and be supervised safely until collection. Then contact tracing sheet at door can be used in case of positive test. We also have a contactless thermometer on site for use in such situations.
* All classes and toilets set up with soap / sanitizer / paper towels / pedal bins.
* Toilet blocks have been altered to ensure no cross-contamination occurs between bubbles.
* Staff supplied with some cleaning and sanitizing equipment to look after own areas and touch points.
* Break and lunch times staggered to support social distancing and preserving the integrity of the class / staff bubbles.
* Staggered opening / closing times for the school to support social distancing and preserving the integrity of the class / staff bubbles.
* Parents to be asked to stay at school gate (out of shed) in mornings and evenings.

**Physical Distancing**

Ventilation – new section

DES has issued the school with 6 CO2 monitors for use in school. These are allocated on a weekly timetabled basis to ensure good ventilation in all rooms in school. November 2021 Principal applied for further CO2 monitors for school use.

The Department has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice ‘Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools’ The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance 2 provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather.

The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

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

Any staff / pupils who have travelled to a country on the RED list must not return to school / work and must self-isolate for the recommended 14 days. ( Note these RED countries can change)

*Staff, in particular, 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.*

The following control measures have been put in place:

## Return to Work Form

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Schools should request staff (verbally or in writing) to confirm that the details in the pre-return to work form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

## Induction Training

All staff 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 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.

## Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations within the school facility and should be available in each classroom.

## Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, lifts, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

All staff will have access to cleaning products 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 pupils 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.).

## Access to the school building /contact log

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

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians with be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

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. In addition, see visitor contact log at Appendix 2.

## Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

**Face Coverings/Masks- Updated August 2021**

Thewearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they may be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

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 coverings 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.

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.

In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

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.

Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face coverings in educational settings was received on the 6th August 2020. This advice is available [here](https://assets.gov.ie/83506/86fba2a7-26da-4c19-bce3-b0d01aaaf59b.pdf).

All staff wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.

Information should be provided on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, schools should have available a stock of additional disposable or multi-use face coverings, or if appropriate face visors, available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed throughout the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

**Medical Grade Masks**

Schools must provide medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and teachers in special schools and special classes and those staff by necessity that need to be in close and continued proximity with pupils with intimate care needs including School Bus Escorts.

PPE will not be required to be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. Each staff member must consider their own health and personal circumstances and adapt their use of PPE accordingly. 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.

Such include roles where:

* Performing intimate care
* Where maintaining safe social distance is not possible
* Where a suspected case of Covid 19 is identified while the school is in operation

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid. This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

## First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in St. Brendan’s PS

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999

Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident.

# Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 School staff should be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public Health for contract tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how St. Brendan’s PS will deal with a suspected case that may arise during the course of work.

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 pupils. (Our area is glass resource room outside Principal office)

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in St. Brendan’s PS the following are the procedures to be implemented:

* If the person with the suspected case is a pupil, 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
* 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.

The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff confidentiality is essential at all times.

# Staff Duties

Staff Duties

• Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:

¬ if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus

¬ If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.

• Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school

• Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

* Inform school management if they have travelled to any country outlined on RED list and if so then self-isolate for 14 days as recommended by NPHET.
* Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play
* Coordinate 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 or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
* If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
* 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 practices
* Keep informed of the updated advice of the publ**ic** health authorities and comply with same.

# Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES.

# Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people’s personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.

# 13 NEW SCHOOL ANTIGEN TESTING PROGRAMME from 29/ 11 / 2021

• Parents are asked to let school know of any positive test result for their child.

• This child name / identify is not identified to any other parents / pupils.

• School identifies children who were in POD with confirmed case.

• Parents of these boys contacted by text /email and invited to get involved in antigen testing programme. Need FREEPHONE number ( do not share) and school roll number.

• All pupils ( except confirmed case) can continue to come to school as long as asymptomatic.

• Parents of rest of class and school staff informed of confirmed case and to carry on with increased vigilance.

This is an update on plans to provide for the use of antigen testing in certain circumstances

in children who are asymptomatic and part of a classroom pod, where there is a confirmed

case of COVID-19. These measures will be in place from Monday 29 November.

The HSE confirms that asymptomatic (well) children are low risk for transmission of

COVID-19.

Offering antigen tests to children who are identified as part of a pod in which there

was a confirmed case of COVID-19, is an additional measure to support parents and

schools. Children who are well and have no COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms can remain

in school while they are doing their antigen tests. Parents and guardians are requested to inform their child’s school principal immediately if

their child has a positive (detected) COVID-19 PCR test result. The school principal should

then contact the parents or guardians of the other children in the relevant pod e.g. table

within that class and advise them how they can request antigen tests for their child should

they wish to. School principals should not share any identifying details of the confirmed

case.

If two or more positive COVID-19 cases arise in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing as above can be offered to the full class. We would ask school principals to

inform parents or guardians of children in the relevant pod by text message (followed by

letter/email), that they are able to request antigen tests for their child. School principals

need to also provide the school roll number, for parents to be able to access the antigen

tests.

Parents will need to provide their name and home address together with the school’s roll

number when they call to organise delivery of the antigen tests. A box of 5 antigen tests will

then be delivered to the address provided by the parents with instructions on how and

when to do the tests. A video has been developed for parents to assist with administering

the test. Parents should carry out one antigen test on the day that they receive the box of

tests, a second test 2 days later, and a third test 2 days after that.

A QR code will be provided to afford parents the opportunity to upload their test result, to

inform the HSE, if they wish.

All children in the pod can continue to attend school as long as they remain

asymptomatic and they do not have a positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test result.

It is important to note that participation in this programme of antigen testing is not

mandatory and well children with no symptoms in the pod of the confirmed COVID-19 case

can continue to attend school regardless of whether or not they have participated in this

antigen-testing programme.

Parents or guardians are not being requested to inform the school of the results of their child’s antigen tests. Children’s normal educational experience should not be impacted in any way by the antigen testing programme.

As an additional precautionary measure for staff working in the classroom, where there is a

confirmed case in a pod, an SNA or teacher working closely with children in the pod may

also avail of the antigen tests and request them in the same way as parents/guardians are

instructed. Where there is an additional case in a second pod within seven days, then the

class teacher and other staff members working in the classroom may request the antigen

tests through the Freephone number. This is an entirely voluntary measure and staff should

continue to attend the workplace unless they develop symptoms or receive a detected

result on the antigen test.

# 14 PUPIL MASK WEARING in classes 3rd to 6th from 1st December 2021

The Department of Education announced yesterday **evening ( 30/11/21)** new requirements in relation to mask wearing indoors for pupils from 3rd to 6th class in primary schools.

Our school will be adopting a pragmatic approach. Pupils are welcome to start wearing masks in these classes from today and indeed most have done so and from next Monday we aim to implement the requirements.

This will give families time to seek medical advice if they feel the need to do so. Please find further information from the Department of Education attached.

Some points that I would feel important to note:

* This applies to boys in 3rd / 4th / 5th and 6th classes.
* The guidance notes and letters come directly from NPHET and DES.
* Pupils will only be required to wear masks INDOORS at school and on bus transport.
* Facemask safety/ storage will be an important element of this. Boys will be supplied with their own ziplock freezerbag tomorrow.
* School will have an emergency supply of disposable masks but cannot guarantee supply each day.
* Parents enquiring about medical / SEN exemption must contact the school and have all documentation sorted by Monday 6th December.
* NOTE- Following on from DES FAQ issued 6th December school will accommodate parents who outline genuine need for exemption. Med certs may not be required in these cases.
* The DES envisage this as a short term measure which will be reviewed in February.