



St. Anne's School

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St. Anne's School Plan for temporary, reduced capacity return to school

In line with DES recommendations Special schools have been facilitated to open with reduced attendance by pupils from 11th February 2021 and until further notice, attendance on alternate days are proposed. With 50% occupancy now recommended this plan has been drawn up taking into account all directives and guidelines issued.

The plan sets out guidelines to be followed by all staff, parents, as well as pupils (as appropriate to their ability) in so far as is reasonably practicable. Drawn up in accordance with COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Primary and Special Schools issued on Wednesday, the 3rd of February, 2021, students have been divided into two groups and will attend school only on the alternate days specified in the plan. The plan will be implemented in conjunction with an updated whole school COVID-19 Plan.

Rationale for temporary, 50% reduced occupancy

Reducing capacity offers the opportunity to decrease interaction

The risk of infection may be reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers and SNAs into Bubbles (i.e. a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or "Pods" within those bubbles, to the extent that this is practical. Pod sizes should be kept as small as is likely to be reasonably practical in the specific classroom context. Original bubbles have now been broken into two further pods to facilitate the reduced capacity reopening.

The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own Bubble from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day.

Pupils, teaching staff and SNAs should consistently be in the same Bubbles.

Physical distancing can be usefully applied in primary and special school settings 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.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout should be used by schools to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, primary schools and special schools should:

1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing
2. Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing

Reducing capacity on school transport facilitates physical distancing prior to entering the school building

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection

Arrangements for dropping off/collecting pupils have been arranged to encourage physical distancing of 2m where possible.

Parents/guardians and staff are reminded to maintain a distance of 2m.

The aim of these arrangements is to avoid congregation of people in the school grounds where physical distancing may not be respected.

Staggered drop off/pick up times have been organised where practical and feasible.

Additional access points have been assigned to class bubbles in order to reduce congestion.

Due consideration must be given to where pupils congregate as they arrive at school, they should be assisted / directed straight to their small group designated learning space/classroom.

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

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 pupils 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 minimize congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and pupils have been advised to avoid sharing of personal items.

Staff will encourage pupils to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).

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

Reducing the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the Educational Setting

The aim of temporarily reducing attendance to 50% is to minimise the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the Educational Setting

Reducing the risk of spread of COVID-19 in the Educational Setting If the virus is introduced into an educational setting, the highest risk of spread is related to close contact with an infectious person or their immediate surroundings. Therefore the most important measures to reduce the risk of spread are doing all that is practical to limit the degree to which different groups of people within the education setting mix and interact with other groups. This is especially the case indoors.

Strict adherence to the above guidelines on increasing separation, decreasing interaction and reducing the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the Educational Setting will not only ensure a safer school environment for all but will also ensure that, should it be necessary to undertake the Contact Tracing process, information regarding class and bus groupings will be easily accessible and clearly laid out in the plan.

School staff as well as pupils (as appropriate to their ability), **must not attend school or training if they have symptoms or signs that may suggest COVID-19** until they have taken appropriate medical advice and testing if appropriate. They **should not attend school if they have been told they are close contacts of a person with COVID-19.**

School staff as well as pupils (as appropriate to their ability), their parents, guardians and families should follow general HSE advice with regard to Covid 19 when outside of the educational setting to lower the risk that they become infected with COVID-19.

We will be limiting the number of people entering the educational setting to those essential to provide the service which will help reduce the risk of introduction of the virus.

Communication

Information will be made available to Parents/ Guardians via the school website. Parents/ Guardians will also receive an individual email from their child's class teacher with a form containing specific information pertaining to their return on Monday, 8th February, 2021.

The relevant information has also been communicated to personnel responsible for the organisation of bus companies, drivers and escorts.