

AVETNS Covid Response Plan - August 2021

Underlying Principles

- The school has a responsibility to make every effort to ensure the safety, health and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care and the Government is continuing to provide us with additional resources to implement the necessary control measures particularly around hygiene and cleaning and with updated advice.
- We aim to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning.
- Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
- It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the cooperation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to our school and the consequent risk of its spread. We recognise that the vaccination programme has improved the outlook and provides an added layer of protection but are also conscious of the ongoing risks posed by variants of the virus. Public Health has stated that the current new variants of the disease do not change the infection prevention and control measures required in schools.
- As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

Teaching and Learning

As a staff, we are very mindful that the children have experienced extended school closures over the last 18 months and had to quickly adapt to many new challenges. We appreciate the time and effort that went into both home learning and in-school learning in the context of a global pandemic, and we recognise the challenges that this presented for all families. Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will continue to take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2021/2022 school year. The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school this September.

Wellbeing of the School Community

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
- A sense of hope

Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on what is known as the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

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Assumptions

- All children return to school Monday to Friday and classes operate within a bubble - classes stay apart from other classes as much as possible.
- Starting times and finishing times will be as normal.
- There will be two breaks each day of 10 minutes and 30 minutes respectively. Each class band will have their own designated play area on the yard. This is a change to last year when each class group was separated on the yard - this change takes account of the lower risk of infection associated with outdoor play so both Junior Infant classes can play together when outside, both senior infant classes will be together etc.
- Within each mainstream class, the children will be further divided into pods, smaller groups of children, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods in the classroom.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all class and support rooms.
- Classrooms will be reconfigured to maximise physical distancing. The Department of Education has recently issued revised guidelines which allow for a more learner-friendly layout in middle to senior classes. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and stages of learning.

Hygiene and Cleaning

Additional sanitiser dispensers are installed throughout the school e.g. at entry and exit points, in each classroom and in strategically located places. Warm water and soap is available in all the toilet facilities. Hand hygiene (sanitising or washing) will be promoted and encouraged throughout the day, in line with DES guidance. Parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message. In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities. Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.

Key to Entrances & Exits

Entrance and Exit Points	Number
Front door, Main Entrance	1
Double doors from yard opposite mosaic	2
Back door, access to infant corridor	3
Fire exit door, access to 5th classes	4
Double doors from yard, opposite gym	5
Fire exit door, access to 2nd classes (now upstairs)	6
Coiscéim reception	7
Coiscéim exit to garden	8
Fire exit door near polytunnel, exit only	9

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Entrance & Exit Points for Specific Classes

Teacher	Class	Entrance & Exit Point
Maria	Jun Inf A	3, 3
Paula	Jun Inf B	3, 3
Sandra T	Sen Inf A	2, 1
Sandra W	Sen Inf B	2, 1
Eliza	1 st Class A	5, 5
Tasha	1 st Class B	5, 5
Naomi	2 nd Class A	6, 6
Sinéad	2 nd Class B	6, 6
Alicia	3 rd Class A	2, 9
Mark	3 rd Class B	2, 9
Sophie	4 th Class A	4, 4
Rachel	4 th Class B	4, 4
Anna	5 th Class A	5, 4
Pádraig	5 th Class B	5, 4
James	6 th Class A	2, 9
Bronagh	6 th Class B	2, 9
Clare/Grace	Coiscéim	7, 7
Rose	Coiscéim	7, 7
Gearóid	Coiscéim	7, 7
Eileen	Coiscéim	7, 7
Órla Q.	Coiscéim	7, 7

Arrival at school

- Each mainstream class should line up at their designated point with social distancing observed - each class has its own line of coloured spots, with 1.3m between lines and 1m between spots.
- School starts at 8:50am - children should be standing on a spot in their line at 8:50 ready for collection by the teacher.
- There will be no free play before school - children must wait in their lines.
- The class teacher will invite the children to enter the building via their designated entrance point at the appropriate time.
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry and exit points and in all classrooms - children must sanitise their hands before entry.

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- No adults, other than staff members, should enter the building - parents must **drop and go**. We encourage children to walk or cycle to school where possible.
- The Staff car park will be for staff only. The turning circle and bus stop will be for drop-off only - **no parking**. Parents walking students to the front door should park in the village centre at Aston Green and walk to the school, following an in-out route on the school grounds. Messages for teachers can be sent by email, or by phoning the school office. Gates will be closed at 9am.
- On very wet days, children will be admitted directly to their classrooms without lining up - it will not be feasible to assemble in the gym and maintain physical distancing. They will be required to sit in their assigned seat under the supervision of staff until teaching commences at 8:50am.

End of School Day

- Children using bus services will be dismissed first, followed by children walking and cycling home and finally children being collected by parents.
- Adults who are collecting children from school at the end of the day, should enter by the silver gate on Dunlin St. and wait in the designated waiting area at socially distant intervals along the back wall of the school campus.
- When the school day for that class is over the following arrangements will apply –
 - Jun Infants – 2nd Class - the class teacher will bring the children to their designated entrance/exit point and will release the children into the care of the adult who is there to collect them
 - 3rd – 6th Class – the class teacher will allow each pod to leave the classroom separately in order to minimise contact
- Children will come out their assigned exit doors and be brought to meet their parents at the meeting zone.

Collection of Children during the School Day

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the school day, the following arrangements will apply

- When the adult arrives at the school, they should phone the office to alert the office that they have arrived
- The child will be brought from their class to the adult by a member of staff
- The adult who is collecting will be asked to sign the child out
- No adult should enter the school building past reception, unless invited to do so

Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area (the Den, or outside weather permitting) via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.
- A mask will be provided for the child 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.

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- An assessment will be made as to whether the child who is displaying symptoms can immediately be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home.
- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind, including the school bus, cannot be used.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will arrange for any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case to be informed via the contact tracing process. The HSE will arrange for contact to be made to all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed.

Children who should not attend school

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school –

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad should follow the latest Government guidance in relation to foreign travel. As of August 2021, Children of any age, travelling with accompanying vaccinated or recovered adults will not be required to self-quarantine post arrival. However, where one accompanying adult needs to self-quarantine, then all children must also self-quarantine.
- Children who are generally unwell including coughing or with a high temperature

The same categories apply to staff.

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school

If, on medical advice, a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the support teacher or other assigned teacher, where relevant) will suggest activities to support the child's learning at home - these will be shared with parents via Seesaw.

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Impact of a Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a confirmed case of Covid-19

- The parents of all children in the class will be notified
- Public health advice will be sought and followed
- Any decision to close a pod, bubble or the school will be made on public health advice.

Personal Equipment

- Each child will be assigned their own stationery pack including; pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, ruler, glue stick, scissors etc. These will be kept in a plastic wallet on their desks to avoid the sharing of equipment. This stationery pack will remain in school at all times. This is part of the book rental scheme for this year.
- It is further requested that all personal items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.

Shared Equipment

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals, to minimise the risk of the spread of infection. Alternatively, items may be left untouched for an appropriate period of time before being used. The risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low - where equipment is used for outside play it shall be assigned to class bubbles.

Yards

Each class band will be assigned their own yard space, clearly marked out with cones. Children will be led to and from their designated area by their teacher. Children will not be allowed to play outside of their class band.

Special Educational Needs

For children with special educational needs or complex needs, maintaining physical distancing in many instances may not be practical, or appropriate to implement. Parents should therefore have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in their child which suggests illness / Covid-19 infection. Where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

Learning Support

In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble and work with the fewest possible bubbles.

- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- Where children from 3rd to 6th Class receive support in one of the SET rooms, social distancing of 1 metre will be maintained between each child in the group.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending

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PPE

Staff will continue to wear face coverings indoors in line with public health guidance for schools. Staff who are attending to particular care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves and face masks. Children will not be required to wear face masks in school, although no one will be requested to remove a face covering in school. Adult visitors to the school will be required to wear face coverings.

Teacher Absence and Substitution

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

PE

Where possible, PE should take place outdoors and use of equipment should be confined to the sets that have been distributed to class groupings. If the PE hall is being used by class groupings, common touch points should be cleaned at intervals throughout the school day and the windows will be opened to ensure good ventilation.

Extra-curricular Activities

For the moment the in-school breakfast club and after-school activities cannot take place but we will explore the possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities when public health guidelines allow. Currently, it is not recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extracurricular activities at the same time.

Other safety arrangements

- A Lead Worker Representative (LWR) and Assistant Lead Worker Representative (ALWR) have been appointed to liaise regarding Covid-19 concerns.
- Staff fill in a Return to Work form at intervals designated by the Department of Education.
- Bus escorts / school staff implement the relevant public health guidance when travelling on buses.
- Supplies of PPE and other safety materials are kept topped up and stored in designated locations.
- Staff maintain the maximal distance from students to effectively carry out their duties.
- Capacity restrictions are in place in staff rooms, which allows for social distancing.
- Classroom doors and windows to be kept open to the greatest extent possible for ventilation, and to be left open during all break times and times out of the classroom, as well as for a period of time at the end of the school day. Classrooms have access to air quality monitors to assist in ensuring appropriate levels of ventilation.
- Visitors are discouraged during school hours, must complete contact tracing logs, must follow public health guidelines and are typically by appointment only.
- Families may be required to fill out relevant forms before attending school.
- Staff proactively monitor attendance patterns to minimise the possibility of the virus being introduced into the building.
- Use of the Seesaw online learning platform will minimise items coming to and from school.