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Safe return to school
March 2021

COVID-19 Policy Statement

St Patrick's Boys N.S. 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 and updated 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, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- 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
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff 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 pupils 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: _____

Lead Worker Representative	Yvonne O'Meara
Deputy Lead Worker Representative	Ciara O'Dwyer

DES Roadmaps

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b264b-roadmap-for-the-full-return-to-school/

https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0bff-reopening-our-primary-and-special-schools/

Relevant Circulars for Staff

https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0049_2020.pdf
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0045_2020.pdf
https://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Active-Circulars/cl0040_2020.pdf
https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2020/08/Information-Note-0008-2020.pdf

1. Drop off and collection times

- In the effort to limit the number of people waiting on the school grounds in the morning, children should not be dropped off until 8.35am, at which time, supervision is provided.
- A two-way system of entering and leaving the school will be clearly marked.
- Due to the detection of the more transmissible variants of the virus, we ask that all adults dropping/collecting children from school **wear an appropriate face covering when** on the school grounds.

Morning:

- School begins at 8.50am as per usual.
- Supervision will be provided from 8.35am on the school yard. School doors will open at approximately 8.45am. Special Education Teachers will open the doors and supervise sanitising on entry.
- Parents are asked to 'drop and go' at either gate anytime between 8.35am and 8.50am. **Junior Infants may be escorted by parents/guardians to their designated waiting area in the morning.**
- Parents/guardians are not to congregate in groups or stand around chatting. Markings will be provided on the yards to facilitate 1m and 2m social distancing.
- Under no circumstances are parents to linger in the yard after the child has been handed over but are to leave immediately.
- There will be a two-way system in operation for parents entering and exiting at the front entrance. Please keep to the right at all times, following the arrows. Do not stand along the pedestrian walkway as this will block others from freely entering/exiting the school. Signage is present to alert parents.

Evening:

- For the forthcoming two weeks, 1st and 2nd classes will finish at 2.25pm.
- Classes will be walked to their designated collection zones at the above time. Children will be released one by one as usual. Parents must leave the school grounds immediately.

Entrance and Exit Points	Number
Front right of school (by 2nd class which is now Junior Infants)	1
Front left of school (by reception)	2
Entrance on Frank Hogan's side	3
Emergency exit entrance from 4th class	4
Entrance near the back gate	5

Teacher	Class	Entrance & Exit Point	Designated waiting (if arriving before 8.35am) and collection area
Mrs O'Meara	Jun Inf (now located inside the normal entry door in the morning by the flag poles (2nd class last year)	1	**Morning and Evening:** Outside the class' window on the Junior Yard by red marked ground.
Miss O'Grady	Sen Inf	5	**Morning and Evening**: The Zone on the yard immediately beside the playground.
Mr Murray	1st Class	5	**Morning and Evening:** Middle of Junior yard. 2nd zone from the front of the school.
Mr Ryan	2nd Class	2 (Morning) 1 (Evening)	**Morning:** Senior yard Do not walk through the car park. **Evening:** By the red marked area close to the flag poles.

2. Parents

- The support and assistance of parents is key to the safe reopening of our school. We would ask that parents:
- Complete the Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form before their child returns to school. This form can be completed online or by paper. Please see Appendix A.
- Wear a mask when on the school grounds
- Wear a mask and follow social distancing when collecting or dropping off your child(ren)
- Encourage your child to follow the school's COVID Control Measures
- Ensure that your child's property is clearly labelled (lunch boxes, drink bottles, clothes, pencils etc)

3. Changes to Classroom and School Layout and to School Routines

- The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.
- The children and their teachers will work in their Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the 'bubble' system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until the children go home at the end of the school day.
- The teachers' tables are fitted with a screen for their added protection. Hazard tape will be used to define his/her zone within the classroom and that of the different pods.

4. Junior Infants to Second Class

- As per Department of Education guidance, this cohort of pupils will return on the 1st of March 2021.
- It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors so there is no requirement for children from Junior Infants to Second Class to maintain a physical distance within their Class Bubble. We will however, do our best to separate them as far as possible.

5. Third Class to Sixth Class

- Third to sixth class pupils will continue to the work and learn remotely with their teachers until further notice.

6. Corridors

- 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.
- We will observe the practice of keeping to the left when on the corridors.
- Signage will be provided on the corridors to ensure the safe movement of class bubbles.

7. Break times

- The DES guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.
- Each class or bubble will not be mixing with any other class in the school yard. They will have their own zone on the yard with increased line markings and signage to prevent a crossover into another class' area.
- Walking to and from the yard will be supervised carefully with each class given a specific time to leave their class to safely enter and exit the playground.

8. Additional Measures to Limit Interactions

- Children will go straight to their classrooms from the yard and will not congregate in the corridors or hallways.
- While we will all be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

9. Signage

- The school has invested in signage and ground markings which will be visible around the school premises, inside and out. The Department of Education are also providing additional signage, reminding the school community about Covid-19 prevention etiquette.

10. Ventilation

- Where practical, all internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common surfaces.
- To ensure that classrooms are well ventilated, windows will be kept open as often as possible, and will be opened while children are taking breaks in the playground.
- The November update from the Department of Education and Skills will be adopted where possible. (Appendix B)

11. Toilets

- Each class bubble will have access to their own toilet.
- Warm water is available in all toilets. Soap will also be available.

12. Lunches

- Parents/Guardians must make sure that children bring their lunches to school to avoid adults having to come to the school during the day. Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children.
- Please do not send food to school that he cannot manage fully himself e.g. peeling an orange, frubes etc. as they will be sent home.

13. Books, Copies, Pencils, etc.

- Children should use their own books, pens, pencils, etc. and should not share with other pupils.
- Parents are asked to cover all school books in plastic so they can be sanitised easily if necessary.
- Parents/ guardians must sanitise the books with disinfectant wipes before placing them in the child's bag on the first day. If and when books go home and back to school, parents/ guardians should sanitise the books before placing them in the child's bag. Where practical, each child must use their own books. Shared books for Graded Reading should be wiped with the disinfectant wipes by the teachers after each session.

14. Labelling of possessions

- It is important that as best we can that you label all of your son's possessions in school, particularly those that could get mixed up or previously would have been open for sharing.
- Mynametags.ie are one of a number of companies that provide very durable tags which could be used for jumpers, pencils, sharpeners/parers etc. and have shown to last.

15. Homework/school work

- The number of copies in use by pupils will be minimised to approximately 2 or 3 for homework. These will be used and corrected in rotation with best practice guidelines.

16. Uniforms/Tracksuits

- We will follow our usual practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn every day, except on P.E. days, or when otherwise requested by teachers. They should be washed regularly.
- As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **only for school related activities.** Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc.
- Please ensure that your child is wearing appropriate footwear that he will be able to manage himself i.e. that he can ties his laces/ use Velcro.

17. Money Collection

- An epayments system has been set up to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled. Parents/Guardians are asked to co-operate in helping to keep school staff safe in this regard. If working online is not possible, please place the required money in an envelope with your child's name and what the payment is for written on the envelope.

18. Parent/ Teacher Meetings

- Parent/Teacher Meetings will take place at an agreed time by telephone/video conference.
- Class Dojo messaging service is used for day-to-day communications with the teacher

- If there are any significant concerns that you may have, please arrange an appointment via Cliona, the school secretary, or via Class Dojo. Please note that the app is not to be used to pass on complaints or express concerns of any nature that would normally be done face to face.

19. Teaching and Learning

- As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since the Christmas Holidays. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning 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 take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning for the remainder of the 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.

20. Supporting the Learning of Children who Cannot Attend School (Juniors -2nd Clases)

- If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher, where relevant) will provide work in line with department guidelines to support the child's learning at home and this will be shared with parents/guardians.
- The majority of parents have already provided an email address at which the school can contact them to support Home Learning. Class Dojo and Google Classroom will also be employed as platforms to facilitate blended learning throughout the school. This will be especially important if the school, or parts of the school have to close due to HSE advice.

21. Teacher or SNA Absence and Substitution

- If a teacher/SNA is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher/SNA for the class/pupil.
- If a substitute teacher/SNA is not available, it is not appropriate for the class/pupil to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. Special Education Teachers will be utilised on these occasions to substitute for the class teacher. In exceptional circumstances, where we do not have sufficient teachers available, it may not be possible for the class/pupil to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

Staff

22. Returning to Work

- As noted staff must complete the updated Appendix 2: Return to Work Form 3 days before returning to work. Where staff have underlying health conditions and are applying for Covid-leave, they must follow the DES circular 49_2020

23. Very High Risk Staff

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. This will be updated in line with public health advice.

24. First Aid

- This will be administered as normal but if staff are wearing gloves a fresh pair must be put on first. Visor must be worn. Gloves must be changed afterwards as per normal procedures. First Aid boxes will be available at Senior Corridor and Junior Corridor for use by teachers on supervision.

25. Yard Supervision

- A rota will be organised based on Class Bubbles and the SETs allocated to those classes.
- Class teachers - Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First and Second and SETs allocated to those classes to work together
- Class teachers - Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Classes and SETs allocated to those classes to work together.

26. Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants

- Special Education Teachers (SET) will continue to work from home, where they are working solely with pupils from 3rd, 4th, 5th & 6th classes.
- Staff members (particularly Special Education Teachers and SNAs) can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimized where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.
- The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble.
- 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.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different pupils or small groups attending.

27. Assemblies

- These will be held in classes on zoom or on the playground for the time being.

28. Photocopying.

- Any staff member who uses the photocopier should clean it down after use with the wipes provided and sanitise their hands before and after.

29. ICT

- A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common ICTs. Devices should be cleaned after use and before they are returned to the charging trolley.

30. Visiting Teachers/Coaches

- These will be facilitated for outside activities only. However, it is not recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time, for example, during Speech and Drama lessons, Cumann na mBunscol etc.

31. Substitute Teachers and SNAs

- A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/SNA. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online induction training.

32. Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

- Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Yards will be timetabled for use.
- Staff members and pupils may take additional breaks outside during the school day.
- Swimming will be postponed until further notice.

33. Staffroom/staff meetings

- All staff members should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres when they are not engaged in teaching e.g. when they are using the staff room and arriving to work. If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, face coverings should be worn.
- Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school
- As our staffroom is small in size, the stage and upper end of the hall will be designated as a supplementary staff room at break times. Individual tables and chair will be provided and all staff members will be asked to disinfect their area before leaving.
- Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups.

34. COVID-19 Related Absence Management

- COVID-19 related absences will be managed in line with circular 49_2020 from the Department of Education.
- Staff are 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.

35. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

- 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 staff 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'.
- A free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staff members are encouraged to make use of the service when the need arises.

The Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

36. Staff Use of PPE

- Staff members will be required to wear face coverings. In certain circumstances a visor may also be appropriate). For a limited number of staff, PPE will also be necessary due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. This might include roles such as:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- 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 on the list of those categorised as people in very high-risk groups or may be living with those who are in the very high-risk category.
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with learning needs.

- 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 will apply standard precautions as per usual.

Masks

- The children are not required to wear masks or face coverings.
- Staff are asked to wear a mask at all times.
- Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face coverings in educational settings is available here.

Gloves

- There is no need for the children to wear disposable gloves. They are considered inappropriate under the guidelines.
- Staff members do not wear disposable gloves unless they are looking after a pupil's intimate care needs or administering First Aid.
- There will be an emphasis on hand hygiene rather than on the wearing of disposable gloves.

General

37. 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

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 and flu.

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

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home).

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

38. When to come to school

- Staff and pupils that have symptoms are advised not to attend school, to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Staff and pupils are advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test
- Staff and pupils are advised not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
  - 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.

39. Temperature checks

- Parents are asked to check their child's temperatures before school each day and do not send children if children have a high temperature. Three Infrared thermometers have been purchased by the school. Staff, if it is needed, can check temperatures.

40. Hand Hygiene

- All members of the school community must watch this video on hand washing.
- 20 sanitiser dispensers are available throughout the school e.g. at each entrance, in each classroom.
- Warm water and soap is available in all pupil toilets, staff toilets and staff room.
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.
- 4 automatic dispensers are available at the 4 entrances. Each teacher also has a hand sanitiser on their desks.
- Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:
  - on arrival at school
  - before eating or drinking
  - after using the toilet
  - after playing outdoors
  - when their hands are physically dirty
  - when they cough or sneeze
- Any staff member moving between rooms or between children must sanitise between each transition.

41. Respiratory Hygiene

- All members of the school community will practise 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.

42. Children's personal hygiene

- To promote good personal hygiene and personal responsibility, children will be asked to bring in the following in a small bag:
    - Small bottle of sanitiser
    - Wipes
    - Tissues which they can use during the day.
    - A clean face cloth in a zip lock bag.
- These will greatly help to reduce the need for movement if for example a child sneezes or before eating and will provide for a better use of resources within the school.

43. Cleaning

- 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.
- Toys and resources used in classrooms will be washed regularly. Brill Blue, anti-viral disinfectant spray will be available to staff. Once sprayed on a touched surface, it does not need to be wiped down and it is safe to be touched by others for up to 3 hours.
- The caretaker is employed for one additional hour each day for additional cleaning duties.

44. Visitors

- Any visits to the school facility during the day should be by prior arrangement and visitors will be received at the front office. The contact tracing log will only be filled out for those entering into the building.
- In relation to drop off of forgotten items (change of clothes, lunch boxes, etc.), outside the front door will be designated as the drop off point and will not require interaction with staff. Please try not to forget things!

45. 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.
- We are informed by research in this area and have drawn on many resources to help us deal with all personal situations as best we can.

    - http://www.ippn.ie/index.php?option=com_mtree&task=att_download&link_id=6264&cf_id=24
    - https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52642-supporting-the-wellbeing-of-school-communities-as-schools-reopen-guidance-for-schools/
    - www.staysafe.ie
    - www.asiam.ie
    - Friends for Life

- How Does My Engine Run
- Walk Tall
- RSE

46. Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

- We love to see all of our children at school every day. However, under the current circumstances, parents/guardians must keep children at home if they display any Covid-19 Symptoms. https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html
- Staff must not attend school if they display any symptoms.
- A designated isolation area is located by Mr Liddane's office. In the event of there being second case, the rear prefab will be used.
- The following will be available in the isolation area(s).
    - Tissues
    - Hand sanitiser
    - Disinfectant/wipes
    - Gloves/Masks
    - Waste bags
    - Bins
- If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:
    - The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation area. A distance of 2 meters will be maintained. If this is not possible, the person accompanying the child must wear a face covering.
    - If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone. To help us in this regard, Parents/Guardians are asked to make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times and that at least one adult is contactable each day.
- Staff members who are symptomatic should immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and go to the isolation area.
- A face covering will be provided to the staff member/child who is symptomatic.
- The staff member or child who is symptomatic should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
- If the staff member/child is well enough to go home, arrangements will be made for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible.
- Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used to travel home.
- If the staff member/child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- The isolation area and classroom that the person was located will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.
- The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.
- It is important to remember than any of us can get sick or unwell, and if we do, we need understanding and support from those around us. It is essential that anyone who feels unwell makes that known to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

Appendix A

Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form

Child's Name:	**Manager's Name:**
Parents/Guardian's Name:	
Name of Setting:	
This form is to be used when children are returning to the setting after any absence.	
Declaration: I have no reason to believe that my child has infectious disease and I have followed all medical and public health guidance with respect to exclusion of my child from educational facilities. Signed_____ Date:_____	

Appendix B

Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools V2

30 November 2020

The implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan by a school is the means through which schools can best prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 and demonstrate that they are operating in accordance with the requirements of the Roadmap for the Full Return to School, the Public Health advice from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and the Return to Work Safely Protocol developed by the Health & Safety Authority. These documents are available at www.gov.ie/backtoschool.

The public health guidance for reopening schools and educational facilities includes some important recommendations about ventilation practices in schools:

- Consider if room ventilation especially in classrooms can be improved without causing discomfort.
- Where possible the opening of doors and windows should be encouraged to increase natural ventilation.
- Increase air flow and ventilation weather permitting.

The following practical measures for the deployment of good ventilation practices in schools should be considered by schools in the implementation of their COVID-19 Response Plans:

1. In summary, the overall approach for schools should be to have windows 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. It is worth noting that windows do not need to be open as wide in windy/colder weather in order to achieve the same level of airflow into the classroom. This will assist in managing comfort levels in classrooms during periods of colder weather.

2. Most schools rely on the opening of windows i.e. natural ventilation and the refore it is important that windows and air vents can be accessed and opened.

3. Rooms should be well ventilated before occupancy each day. This can be achieved by ensuring that at the end of the school day each evening, the windows in each room should be opened (as wide as practical and safe while also considering security issues) for at least 15 minutes to ventilate the room fully.

4. Windows should also be open at break times and at lunchtimes for at least 15 minutes where possible.

5. Classrooms for the first class on the following school day (where the above end of day ventilating has occurred) can consider maintaining partially opened windows as per guidance below to keep the room fresh and prevent stuffiness and condensations etc.

6. Achieving fresh air via a number of windows partially opened as required rather than one window fully open can help to maximise the use of window driven natural ventilation distribution across the room without causing discomfort.

7. In colder weather any local chilling effect can be offset by partially opening the windows nearest and above the radiators.

8. Make sure that air movement is not blocked by furniture or window blinds and curtains.

9. Consideration should be given to local circumstances that may require to have additional windows open such as after break time activities

10. Rooms with adequate fresh air should not be stuffy or have condensation on the window glass.

11. Schools should also ensure that all permanent ventilation openings in rooms are fully open and not blocked by wall hangings etc. These normally are either a circular or rectangle ventilation grill on the external classroom wall or linear slot type ventilators built into the window frames. All of these should be opened all the time, if they have been taped and sealed for decorating purposes then the tape/sealing should be removed. If a room does not have permanent background ventilation, provision of same should be considered based on professional construction advice and current Building Regulations.

12. All mechanical ventilation systems and any air conditioning systems should be set to 100% fresh air, any air conditioning units that cannot operate on 100% fresh air (check with unit suppliers if in doubt) should be left off unless it is complemented by an adequate outside air supply such as openable windows, as this can help to provide outside air to occupants and maintain thermal comfort.

13. If the corridors and staircases have no identifiable ventilation systems and rely on air infiltration from adjoining spaces as many transient spaces do, consideration should be given to ventilating these areas before and after break times by opening doors etc., this needs to be considered taking into account the fire strategy of the building. Where stairwells have opening windows, consideration should be given to their utilisation.

14. Keeping open the internal doors into classrooms for periods of time may assist with increasing air movement and ventilation rate. It is important to note that fire doors should not be kept open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire.

15. Schools should ensure there is appropriate ventilation of staffrooms, offices and other areas used primarily by staff, and in the context that some of these areas are used by different groups of staff at different times. This is in addition to the use of face coverings and adequate cleaning.

16. Schools should ensure there is appropriate ventilation of areas such as sanitary facilities, gyms, multi-purpose rooms and libraries etc. which are used by different groups of pupils and promote proactive use of open windows and any extractor fans when these spaces are in use.

The Department considers the above practical steps are sufficient to ensure good ventilation practices in school while at the same time ensuring an appropriate balance between ventilation and comfort.

The Department's Planning and Building Unit has reviewed the HPSC guidance that consideration be given to installing an indoor air quality monitor in classrooms.

The HPSC guidance is based on general guidance published by the Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations (REHVA). The purpose of a monitor is to assist in determining when windows should be opened. Such monitors are already included in the Department's Technical Design Guidance, published in February 2018 (TGD 033). The rationale for the inclusion of guidance on the installation of monitors within the Department's TGD at that time was driven by the increased levels of insulation and air-tightness in new classrooms built since 2018 and the objective to increase awareness about ventilation, with associated guidance on when to open windows in these very airtight school buildings. The REHVA-guidance recommends that windows should be opened when the monitor indicates that CO2 levels exceed 800 parts per million (ppm). Given that this threshold is at 800 ppm compared to the standard setting of 1,500 ppm the Department considers that the use of monitors will result in an outcome similar to the approach taken in the above practical steps which recommend that windows are open as much as possible while recognising the importance of also managing comfort levels (windows to be partially open when classroom is in use and fully open when not in use).

It is also worth noting that the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) which provides scientific and technical advice to support its government decision makers during emergencies notes with low confidence that continuous monitoring of CO_2 may be possible to use as a transmission risk indicator but further research is necessary to evaluate the potential application of the approach for different spaces and to compare modelled results and actual infection rates.

Given the above, it is the Department's view that in the main windows are likely to be required to be open at a frequency and level set out above to ensure appropriate levels of ventilation in the classroom irrespective of whether the opening of windows is prompted through the indoor air quality monitor (re-active approach) or through the pro-active approach outlined in the above guidance. While this matter (and supporting data) will be kept under review, the Department does not consider it necessary for schools to install such monitors in classrooms, where the practical steps outlined above are applied. However, it is a matter for individual schools to consider whether they wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for this purpose or alternatively schools may wish to use some of their minor works grant funding for provision of permanent background ventilation, where required, as referenced in above practical steps.

As part of managing comfort levels in classrooms, schools should check that their boilers operation temperatures are set at the recommended manufacturers' guidance levels to maximise the available heat to the school. In addition, heating should operate for extended periods during colder weather to counteract, as best as possible, the impact of windows being open (partially when classrooms in use and fully when not in use) in order to maintain an appropriate balance between ventilation and comfort levels.