

Please note this is a live document which will be updated and amended over the coming days, weeks and months as the Covid-19 situation evolves. Please note that a visual presentation of the key areas of this document will be shared in advance of our return to school.

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to outline the School Policy on the steps and processes taken by Wicklow Educate Together NS to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the school for our pupils and for our staff. This plan is in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills Covid-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools

http://wicklowetns.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/3.-COVID-19-Response-Plan-for-Primary-and-Special-Schools_.pdf

The school is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and pupils. To ensure this, we have developed the following plan to ensure the safe return to school. All staff, pupils and families are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort is required to help contain the spread of the virus. In line with this, the reopening of Wicklow Educate Together NS goes hand-in-hand with the provision of public health measures to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19.

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.

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 as full a school day as possible. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.

It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to the school and the consequent risk of its spread.

As well as co-operation, the flexibility, honesty and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

Preparing your child for school

- Practise washing hands properly with soap for at least 20 seconds. Make sure your child knows how to dry their hands thoroughly.
- Children should know how to use hand-sanitiser correctly, and that it should not be ingested.
- Teach your child correct coughing etiquette. Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your elbow if you do not have a tissue. Put the tissue into the bin and wash or sanitise your hands.
- Make sure your child can independently open and close their lunchbox and bottle, their coat and their shoes. No shoes with laces for younger children.
- Please ensure all of your child's clothing lunch box and reusable drinks bottle are labelled clearly with your child's name as equipment cannot be shared.

Please note the following terminology and what it means

Bubble

- All children return to school and classes will operate within a bubble system (your child's class is called a bubble) for example Alan's 6th class is one bubble, Laura's 6th class is another bubble.
- We have 19 bubbles in WETNS. Pupils will remain in their class bubble. They will attend support teaching (if applicable) with pupils from their class bubble or support teaching will take place 'in class' (within the bubble). We will ensure there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles during school time.
- Children attending our classes for children with additional needs will be included in a pod in their mainstream class, as well as their own class bubble.

Pod

- Within each class bubble from Junior Infants to 6th class, the children will be further divided into pods (a pod is a group of pupils who will sit together and complete group work together)
- Junior Infants – 2nd class, a distance of 1 metre should be maintained between pods, where possible.
- In 3rd – 6th class, a minimum distance of 1 metre must be maintained between pods.
- Pods will not contain more than six pupils.
- On the yard and in outdoor PE pupils may mix with pupils from other pods within their own bubble.
- In accordance with normal practice the teacher will decide which children sit in each pod.
- Pods will be reviewed at the end of term

The school's physical environment: building and outdoor areas

- Pupils will move along designated routes to arrive and depart their classroom/support room/integration room/yard area. These routes will be clearly explained, visually displayed and reinforced for pupils as they move around the school environs
- All outdoor areas will be utilised to their fullest in order to maximise outdoor spaces as learning environments. For example the school yard play area, the top field (weather dependent), the school garden and the outdoor classroom
- The school yard play area has been 'discretely' divided into zones for bubbles to play in and hop scotch, counting snakes etc have been painted onto the surface
- Each bubble will have a 'bubble bag' of appropriate play equipment and resources to utilise at playtimes
- Aistear will take place, as far as is practicable, outdoors for example the construction site, the garden centre etc
- Pupils will not leave their designated route to deliver messages, visit other classes or go to the office.
- Staff will be required to move along their designated route to visit the staff room, copiers, reception area etc
- Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry / exit points in the building, and in all classrooms, support rooms, offices, copiers and staffroom.
- Four outdoor wash hand basins (temperature correct hot water) have been installed at four areas in the school yard play area for the pupils to wash their hands outdoors as needed
- Each classroom has 2 toilets with wash hand basins for pupil use with lidded pedal bin for used paper towel

- Each room in the school has a bin for recyclable paper and card and a lidded pedal bin for landfill waste
- Each pupil and staff member has their own named chair that is theirs for the entire school year.

Pre-Return to School Form / checklist All pupils and staff will receive with a pre-return to school form and/or checklist, seeking confirmation that they are not awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test, that they are not self-isolating and that they are not displaying any symptoms. All pupils and staff will be required to complete this form/checklist at least three days in advance of return to school. Before returning to the school, they will also have to inform the school of any information which, whilst not included on the form, may be pertinent. The return to school form/checklist will be issued via email to be returned via email.

Public Awareness Messages/Videos

The HSE/DES will issue awareness videos for families to watch to prepare for phase 2 of the reopening of our school buildings. These are available via <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/> and this will be sent to parents in advance of our partial reopening on Monday, 1 March 2021 and any subsequent reopenings.

Arriving at and departing from school

Arrival at school:

There are 3 points of entry to the school, by pedestrians at Rocky/Hawkstown Road junction gate, pedestrians at the main gate (left hand pedestrian gate) and vehicular (set down only) at the main gate. These areas can be accessed by pupils from 8.40-9.00. Morning arrival access to the school grounds is for staff and pupils only. Those arriving as pedestrians, by bicycle etc use the 2 pedestrian gates, those arriving by vehicle (bus and car) access the set down area via the main vehicular gate.

Departing from school

To comply with the requirement to reduce congregations of households as much as possible, a temporary staggered collection procedure will operate over the next two weeks, at the end of which it will be reviewed. There will be 2 collection times at the end of the school day as follows

2.00pm Children with surname beginning with letters L-Z depart

2.20pm Children with surname beginning with letters A-K depart

- Parents will be asked to promptly leave the grounds after their child is collected at the collection time.
- Arrival and departures will be supervised by school staff at all entry/exit points and at intervals on routes and at set down. At pupil departure times the campus can be accessed by parents/guardians subject to the expectations set out below

The following expectations arise

- Pupils do not congregate in any area, they move along their route
- There will be no line up on yard for any class
- The class teachers will be in the classroom ready to supervise the pupils from 8.40
- Class will begin at 9.00 -In the period from 8.40-9.00 the pupils will engage in independent, structured activities such as reading, colouring or puzzles/jigsaws. No formal teaching will take place in this 20 minute period.

- Each pupil must sanitise their hands before entering the building.
- We ask for co-operation in ensuring pupils are not dropped to the school prior to 8.40 or after 9.00. Prior to 8.40 pupils will not be permitted to enter the school grounds.
- We ask that families please depart the school grounds promptly at collection times, and to maintain 2m social distance at all times. Face coverings must be worn by all persons entering the school campus at all times. Only one person should come to collect a child from the school.

Yard Arrangements Each class will continue to have two outdoor recreation breaks per day. 40 minutes will be timetabled to these breaks to include time for entry to and exit from the building, and initially both breaks will be of 20 minute duration each. Each class will remain within its bubble for the duration of the yard break for all classes. The space allocated to each class will be much larger to facilitate more social distancing whilst also allowing the children more room to move and play freely in their different ways. In addition, “Bubble Bags” of equipment will be brought to the yard for each class to use under supervision. This equipment will be specific to each class and will not swap over. To attempt to prevent any major crowding or crossing over between bubbles at entry and exit points, yard times will be staggered. Children will be supervised on the yard as normal and usual yard rules, rewards and sanctions will apply. In line with other procedures, this will be reviewed for successes and areas needing improvement regularly and the plan for yard adjusted accordingly.

Ventilation

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.

Access to parents/guardians Parents/guardians are only permitted onto the school grounds at collection times. No parent/guardian should enter the school building, unless invited to do so.

Visitors to the school There are no toilet facilities at the school for other adults or children, these are designated for the pupils and staff of the school. All visitors entering the building will be temperature tested and will have to complete contact tracing information.

Collecting a child from school during the school day For urgent situations only, for example, a medical or professional appointment, a critical family reason. Please email info@wicklowetns.com outlining who will collect and exact times of collection and return times (if applicable)

The child will be brought from their class to the adult at the front reception by a member of staff. Office staff will record the collection and return time (if applicable)

Dropping off items during the school day We ask parents/guardians and pupils to be vigilant this year in ensuring all required items are brought to school in the morning –lunches, drinks, and coats. If an essential item must be dropped to school during the school day please email info@wicklowetns.com or telephone the office 0404 62786 detailing what needs to be dropped off. Please advise the member of staff you are speaking to via the phone what item you are leaving and

the child it is for. Once the office is aware of the forgotten item, please deposit the forgotten item/s in the box under the post box outside front reception.

Communication Procedure

- All correspondence will be sent to parents by text/app message or email.
- Messages for teachers can be sent by phoning/emailing the school office
- If a parent/guardian needs to speak with a teacher or vice-versa, best practice is to do this by an arranged phone call.
- Appointments in the school building will be kept to an absolute minimum and will only take place by prior arrangement with the school principal.
- Phone calls and meetings with your child's teacher can also be arranged by email or phone call to the office.
- If information needs to be given to the teacher during the school day please contact the school office by phone or by email.

DEALING WITH A SUSPECTED CASE OF COVID-19

NB: Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The symptoms of Covid -19 are: (taken from DES Covid -19 response plan for Primary and Special Schools Section 5.1 Page 15)

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

Parents/guardians are asked to err on the side of caution and if their child/ren are in any way ill, not to send them to school in the first place. Schools will also err on the side of caution with regard to illness.

If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians of that child will be contacted immediately—it is the parents' responsibility to ensure we have up to date contact details for you on Aladdin Connect. In addition to parent/guardians contact details, we should also have contact details for 1-2 Emergency Contacts who live locally and will be in a position to collect your child if you cannot. You can enter these on your Aladdin Connect Profile.
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area 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.
- An assessment will be made as to whether the child who is displaying symptoms can immediately be brought home by parents who will then 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.

- 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 will not 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 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.

Designated Isolation Area : The School has allocated designated isolation areas in the event a pupil or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at School. This space is easily accessible, well ventilated, and has the ability to isolate behind a closed door (with full visibility of the occupant)

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—if your child falls into this category please contact the school to inform us of this so arrangement can be made.
- Children who are generally unwell
- Children who are in self-isolation due to travel to a country that the government has listed as an 'at risk' location
- Families are requested to contact the school prior to sending children back to school following an illness of any type.

The HPSC guidelines provided will help to inform all in making decisions. These can be found here: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/>

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time (very high-risk pupil), the class teacher (and/or support teacher, where relevant) will share suggested activities to support the child's learning at home with parents.

Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19. The school will follow the protocols and instructions given by the HSE at all times and communicate information to parents as instructed by the HSE.

Travel outside of Ireland Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. Full details of Government guidance on travel can be found here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e40d7-travelling-outside-of-ireland/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e4ea6-travelling-abroad-from-ireland/>

Clothing and footwear Pupils will wear comfortable clothes to school, suitable for outdoor play and physical activity. Pupils will bring a water proof jacket with a hood and wear appropriate footwear for outdoor/physical activity. All items named

Personal Protective Equipment All staff will wear masks at work at all times inside and outside the building except when eating. Staff will also wear aprons/gloves, as appropriate, for intimate care situations and administering some first aid.

Pupils are not expected, under current guidelines, to wear a face covering to school. If, however a family chooses for their child to do so please adhere to the following guidance

- Please ensure that your child understands that they would wear the covering for a lengthy period
- They will need to remove, and safely store it at eating times
- Please consider the implications when your child is at play, during physical activities
- Please provide a named Ziploc bag to store them in during eating times etc
- Pupil face coverings must be brought in and out of school each day
- Please note that school staff do not have a responsibility to monitor/ensure a child is wearing a face covering

Personal Equipment and Stationery

- All pupil personal stationery for school is prepared and ready for use in a zip locked mesh pencil case this is stored in school at all times, pupils will not be able to share pencils, pens, erasers, coloured pencils etc.
- All children will need a 'home' pencil case for completing assignments and homework at home from October
- All books and copies are covered in plastic and are stored in school ready for your child to use
- All of the items stored in school are named
- All pupils should bring a small packet of tissues to school each day for personal use.
- Lunches Please include in each child's healthy lunchbox a paper napkin or piece of kitchen paper towel to school each day to place on their desk for lunchtime. When they are finished eating, the pupils can then wrap up all their crumbs etc. and replace all waste in their lunch bag/box.
- Please ensure your child has enough water for the day
- Lunchboxes and water bottles must be washed thoroughly at home each day.

All that pupils will need to bring to school each day is a small bag containing their lunch bag and reusable water bottle, as well as a waterproof hooded jacket. We ask that pupils do not bring other items to school. This measure will have the additional bonus of lightening the schoolbags.

Shared Equipment By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops, library books/class readers 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. In line with HPSC guidelines, children will clean or sanitise their hands before and after using any shared equipment.

Pupil Mobile Phones Pupils must have a mobile phone licence in order to have a mobile phone in school. These must be kept in a named Ziploc bag and stored under class teacher supervision whilst in school

Support Teaching In keeping with our SEN policy <http://wicklowetns.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/WETNS-SEN-Policy-July-2016.pdf> 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 class level of 2 bubbles only for example Junior Infants only, 3rd classes only etc. 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.

Other school activities Please note that, for the moment, there will be no swimming, forest school, external trips or any after school activities