



**ST. TOLA'S N.S.  
COVID-19 RESPONSE PLAN**

This document has been prepared for all in the school community from guidance issued by the Department of Education and Skills on re-opening schools. To access these guidance documents please visit [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool)

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**1. Introduction:**

We have now lived with restrictions due to COVID-19 for almost a year. Before Christmas none of us would have foreseen that level 5 restrictions would be implemented and that schools would once again have to work remotely. As we prepare to gradually return to school in person we have updated our COVID Response Plan in line with updated guidance from the Department of Education, the HSE and the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)

The Health, Safety and Well-being of all members of our school community is of paramount importance to us all.

Procedures have been put in place in line with HSE and Department of Education and Skills advice and guidance as outlined in the COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools.

All members of the school community, irrespective of circumstance, are expected to adhere fully to the procedures put in place in an attempt to minimize the risk posed by Covid-19. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

Each and every individual must play their part. We all have an obligation to do what we can to ensure the safety of our school community. Breaches of procedure by any individual will not be tolerated. Covid-19 poses a serious risk to us all. We need to work together to minimize the risk to all and to ensure that St. Tola's can reopen and remain open in a safe way.

## **2. Aims:**

Through the implementation of the practices and procedures as outlined in this policy our school community aims to:

- Do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school.
- Reduce the likelihood of the spread of Covid-19, insofar as possible, within our school if introduced.
- Detail for all members of our school community how our school will reopen for students in Juniors-2<sup>nd</sup> class inclusive from the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2021 and what the operation of our school will look like so as to be sustainable in a COVID-19 context.
- Balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning.

## **3. Covid 19 Policy Statement:**

## COVID-19 Policy Statement

St. Tola's NS 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, 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**, Clare Fitzsimons, who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners. The **Deputy Lead Worker Representative** is Tracey Moran

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management by

P.J. Burke Chairperson

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

## 4. Know the 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 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.

#### **4.2 Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**

An RTW form should be completed and returned to the school before returning to work. Staff will be requested (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.

### **5. Minimising the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into our school**

As a school community we must do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student-student, teacher-teacher and teacher-student and must be managed in all settings.

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents and visitors, as far as possible, within the school environment. These control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an on-going basis.

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

### **Infection prevention Control Measure – To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools**

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 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 and parents of pupils are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel**
- **Staff and pupils are advised to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school**

### **Practices and procedures.**

#### **5.1 Promoting awareness:**

- All members of our school community will actively promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms.
- Signage informing members of the school community of the symptoms of Covid-19 and the need for social distancing are displayed at all access points to the school. A large child friendly sign provided by local company Zimmer has been displayed outside the building with smaller classroom signs installed in every classroom.
- All members of the school community will embed in pupils the need for appropriate respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene.

## 5.2 Attendance at school:

- Members of the school community who display symptoms of Covid-19 **MUST NOT ATTEND or VISIT OUR SCHOOL** and should immediately phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
- Members of the school community **MUST NOT ATTEND OR VISIT OUR SCHOOL** if they have been identified by the HSE as a contact for person with COVID-19 and must follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
- Staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school must promptly bring this fact to the attention of the Principal, Deputy Principal, as appropriate.
- Staff and pupils must know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school as detailed in Section 8 of the DES Guidelines.
- Everyone entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitiser provided at each entrance.
- **Visits to the school by all persons other than staff and pupils will be by appointment only.** Appointments must be arranged in advance through the school office, by phone on 061 362894 or by e mail at [office@tolasns.com](mailto:office@tolasns.com). **The only entry to the school for adults is through the main door beside the secretary's office where you must ring the bell for access.**
- Each visitor to the school will be required to complete a Contact Tracing Log irrespective of the duration of the visit.
- Each visitor to the school will be required to wear a face covering irrespective of the duration of the visit.
- The only exceptions to this are:
  - ✓ In the case of pupils with additional educational needs to an extent that the school advises the pupil be accompanied, ONE parent/designated person can accompany pupils in these instances for assembly and dismissal. Parents/designated persons **MUST** practice physical distancing of 2m and wear a face mask.
- Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between staff and all visitors to the school.
- Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between all adults when on school grounds.

### **5.3 Respiratory Hygiene**

All members of our school community **MUST** practice and actively promote good respiratory hygiene at home and at school as this will help protect people around us from viruses such as flu and Covid-19.

#### **Good respiratory hygiene entails:**

- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Disposing of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.
- Pedal bins have been purchased for all rooms/toilets. These bins will be emptied at regular intervals throughout the day.

### **5.4 Hand Hygiene**

All members of our school community **MUST** practice and actively promote effective hand hygiene at home and at school.

- Staff and pupils must understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.
- Hand sanitisers are installed, with appropriate signage, at each entry point, at the entrance to each classroom and at appropriate locations throughout the school.
- Posters are displayed at each hand washing station throughout the school showing effective hand washing technique.
- HSE guidelines on handwashing are available at:

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

- All persons entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitisers provided.
- All mainstream classrooms have a hot water temperature controlled tap installed to make it easier for pupils to wash their hands.

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Hand washing is advised after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities (e.g, playing football on the astro turf) as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands

### **Frequency of Hand Hygiene**

Pupils and staff **MUST** 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.
- On entry or return to any classroom

### **5.5 Physical Distancing**

- Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is one of the key control measures to minimize the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- Physical distancing will be usefully applied in our school allowing for some flexibility when needed. It will be applied in a practical way that recognises that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing in our school will look different across the various ages and stages of learning.
- It is recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.
- However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.
- **All adult visitors to the school, as scheduled by appointment, MUST maintain a 2m distance from school staff.**
- Our school community is committed to the two principles of physical distancing, namely, increasing separation and decreasing interaction, as a means of minimising the risk of the introduction of Covid-19 to our school.

## 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 the 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 day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly in cold weather.

In every classroom/shared spaces at least two windows will be partially open during class times with teachers opening all windows fully during breaktimes to allow for full exchange of air.

Teachers will open all windows on arrival at school in the morning for 15 mins.

Teachers will open all windows at home time for 15 mins to allow for full exchange of air.

## 5.6 Increasing Separation

In order to minimise contact between pupils, insofar as possible, the school will operate the following procedures for arrival, dismissal, movement through the school and break times.

**Arrival:** pupils will enter the school grounds as much as is practicable themselves and go straight to their classrooms via the following doors: NOTE: Pupils will not assemble in the hall in the morning for the duration of COVID-19 restrictions

6<sup>th</sup> - enter and exit via door in 6<sup>th</sup> class room

5<sup>th</sup> - enter and exit via door in 5<sup>th</sup> class room

4<sup>th</sup> - enter and exit via door in 4<sup>th</sup> class lobby

3<sup>rd</sup> (Ms Connolly) - enter and exit via playschool door and enter building via infant lobby

3<sup>rd</sup> (Ms Fleming) - enter and exit via back gate and door into 1<sup>st</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> lobby

2<sup>nd</sup> - enter and exit via door beside Senior Infant classroom. Progress to 2<sup>nd</sup> room via Senior Infant room along marked walkways

1<sup>st</sup> - enter and exit via back gate and enter via 3<sup>rd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> lobby

Senior Infants - enter and exit via door beside room Walk around the path on the side of 6<sup>th</sup>

Junior Infants - enter and exit via side gate at Junior Infant classroom

**Please note that pupils are asked not to arrive on school grounds before 8.45a.m. as the school will NOT be open until 8.45a.m.**

MORNING SUPERVISION

A roster of staff will be organised for each morning (3 per morning) to supervise classes. Principal will be on every morning. Teachers and SNAs go straight to their classrooms in the morning.

All classes from 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> will finish at 2.40p.m. Pupils will exit via the door they entered as detailed above. Parents /guardians may collect their child outside these doors maintaining social distancing and depart the school grounds promptly.

**Please do not delay at this busy time for traffic in the morning/ evening, drop/collect your child and depart promptly**

#### **Parental responsibilities on arrival and collection:**

- **Parents must arrive on time for dropping off and collecting their child.**
- Only parents or carers who are well and have no symptoms of COVID-19 or who have served the required quarantine time of 14 days where advised are allowed to drop off and collect children.
- Any parent who is in a high risk category should not drop off or collect children in order to protect themselves. (This of course is at the discretion of the individual parent/carer/grandparent)
- Parents must not congregate in groups or stand around chatting.
- Parents must ensure their child remains at their side at all times and that their child does not interact with other children.
- Under no circumstances are parents to linger outside after the child has been handed over but are to leave immediately.
- The junior and senior infants will go home at the normal time exiting through different doors
- At arrival and departure times of children, social distancing is to be maintained by children and parents.
- Under no circumstances are parents and carers to gather in groups while waiting for the bell to sound
- We request that ALL parents/guardians wear a face covering in the school grounds when dropping and collecting pupils.

## **6.0 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 Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the 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.

### **Junior Infants to Second Class**

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. However, we have still divided these classes into smaller groups for added protection (Pods)

### **Third Class to Sixth Class**

Children from Third Class to Sixth Class will be arranged in Pods within their Class Bubbles, with no more than 6 pupils per Pod. Each Pod will be at least 1 metre distance from the next Pod. All unnecessary furniture has been removed from these classrooms to create as much space as possible.

**Pods:** Class teachers will assign the pupils to the particular Pods. Class teachers will share this information with the principal and any changes are flagged.

### **Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants**

Staff members (particularly Support Teachers and SNAs) can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimized where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

In keeping with our Special Education policy, 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 as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble (class)

- 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.

**Corridors** Adults briefly passing each other in a hall are 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. Floor markings and floor signage will remind everyone to keep to their designated side of the corridor and observe social distancing when moving through these spaces.
- No pupil is allowed in the corridors of the building unless accompanied by a teacher or SNA.

**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.

**Signage:** Social distancing signs have been erected in the grounds and at the entrances to the building. We have also put social distancing signs on the corridors and outside both offices and staffroom

**Packages delivered to school:** Only school related orders /packages will be allowed to be delivered to the school.

**Lunches**

- Parents 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 note that items containing peanuts or peanut traces are not allowed.
- Please make sure your child is self-sufficient ie. they can open/peel any lunch/drink you pack for them. Please pay particular attention to any drinks that require a straw.
- Please make sure they have enough drinks to last them throughout the day as we will not be in a position to refill drinks bottles.
- Children will eat their lunches at their desks. No food will be allowed onto the yard.

**Break times:**

- In order to avoid overcrowding on the yard break times will be staggered. There will be a time gap between breaks to allow for Group A to return to class before Group B are on the corridors/yard.
- The classes will be divided into Group A (Juniors, 2<sup>nd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes) and Group B (Seniors, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> ( A &B) 6<sup>th</sup>)

- Break Times:
  - ✓ Group A break times: Sos 10.30 – 10.40      Lón 12.00 – 12.30
  - ✓ Group B break times: Sos 10.50 – 11.00      Lón 12.40 – 1.10
- Yards:
  - ✓ Juniors and Seniors will use infant yard. They will be scheduled on different breaks so only one class in that yard at any break time
  - ✓ We have greatly extended our yard space at the front of the school. One class will use the yard beside the building, one class in the astro turf and one in the yard space beside the car park. The astro turf will be rotated throughout the week so all classes get a chance to play on it.
- No footballs/basketballs/hurleys etc are allowed to be brought into school from home
- When bell goes after break pupils will line up in their pods in their designated area. They will then enter their classroom whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Please ensure that your child has a coat as we will be going outside at breaktimes as much as possible unless the weather is very bad. Pupils will hang their coats on their chairs to minimise contact with other pupils' coats
- **Toilets during break:** teachers must ensure the pupils go to the toilet before break time and before they go out onto the yard. If a pupil needs to go to the toilet during break or lunch they use their OWN classroom toilet or designated toilet area which will be cleaned before the next class use it.

#### **Books, Copies, Pencils, Hand sanitisers etc.**

- Children should use their own books, pens, pencils, etc. and must not be shared with other pupils.
- Pupils should have a separate pencil case for use at home that won't be brought into school and another one for school that won't be brought home.
- Pupils may bring in their own hand sanitiser if they so wish.
- Pupils can bring their schoolbags. as there is no guidance to say otherwise. Please ensure you clean the outside of your child's bag regularly.

#### **Uniforms/Tracksuits**

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is not practical for most families. However, children's uniforms must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols. If your child's uniform needs to be washed they can wear the school tracksuit even if it is not a designated tracksuit day.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms **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.

### **Office**

- We request that parents use epayments as much as possible 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 by arranging for contactless payments through the school office.
- All visitors to the school must fill in a Contact Tracing Log
- Pupils must not be sent to Tracey's office to deliver messages or to other classes.
- As far as possible, staff members should minimise their entry to the office area

### **Photocopying.**

Any staff member who uses the photocopier must use hand sanitiser before use.

### **ICT**

A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common devices. Pupil will sanitise before and after using ICT equipment e.g. laptops

### **Visiting Teachers/Coaches**

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities such as dancing, homework club, etc. or Sports coaches will eventually be explored. However, it is not recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time. For the foreseeable future all of these activities are suspended.

### **Substitute Teachers and SNAs**

The sequence for covering all teacher absences will be in accordance with DES circulars. 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.

Classes will not be split in the event of a teacher absence. In the event that a substitute teacher is not available. SET teachers and the principal will cover if required. If cover cannot be provided either through a substitute teacher or from SET teacher/principal a class may have to remain at home. Every effort will be made to avoid this occurrence.

### **Physical Education and P.E. Equipment**

Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows. Teachers will organise lessons that require very little if any equipment. Staff members and pupils will be encouraged to take additional breaks outside during the school day. While these breaks are taking place all windows in the classroom should be opened to allow for ventilation. All PE equipment if used must be sanitised after use.

**Wet Days:** teachers must provide activities for pupils to engage in during break times

**Desks:** All desks must be left free of any books/ belongings/materials every evening to enable the cleaner to carry out a thorough cleaning.

### **Staffroom**

- All staff members must 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.
- Staff meetings for the most part will be held remotely or in small groups if deemed necessary
- Staff members should bring their own cups, bottles, cutlery, etc. to school and avoid sharing utensils in the staffroom as far as possible.
- Due to staggered break times a max of 4 people at any time will be in the staffroom

### **Teaching and Learning**

- As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since December. 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 2020/2021 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.

**Homework:** Teachers will assign limited homework as we settle back into school routines. If homework is assigned pupils will have two homework copies. All work will go into one copy on week 1. This will be collected on Fri and quarantined for the weekend. Teachers will then correct the work from week 1 at the start of week 2. On week 2 the homework will go into the second homework copy. Teachers may also assign some online learning to prepare pupils in case schools are closed again at some point during the year.

### **Other Parental Responsibilities:**

- Parents must ensure that all of the child's equipment/books/copies/pencils are labelled with the child's name as equipment/books cannot and will not be shared.
- Parents are to ensure that their child knows and uses the protocols around coughing/sneezing/use of tissues/hand sanitisers prior to returning to school.
- Parents must ensure that all **books/writing equipment/lunch boxes/water bottles** are sanitised using alcohol wipes before being placed in the child's schoolbag.
- Water bottles are to be filled at home every morning.
- Pencils to be pared at home and copies ruled.

- Lunches. Make sure your child can open /close their lunch box/drinks bottles. Regarding food please make sure they can open or peel any food that you send in. Please pay particular attention to yogurt cartons, oranges, drinks that needs straws etc. Teachers will not be able to assist anymore in any of these activities. As we will not be in a position to refill water bottles please ensure your child has enough drinks for the day.
- Regarding clothing, please ensure your child can or teach your child to open/close their own coat and tie their own shoes.

### **Supporting the Learning of Children who Cannot Attend School**

If a child has been advised by a Consultant not to attend school due to being in a high risk category for an extended period of time it is vital that the parents contact the school via phone or email to let the principal know.

### **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.

### **The Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Hygiene and Cleaning**

- Sanitiser dispensers have been installed throughout the school e.g. at each entrance, at the entrance to each classroom and support room, at the entrances to both offices and staffroom
- Emulsifying soap is available in all the toilets.
- A hot water tap has been installed in each classroom along with soap, paper towel dispenser and bin to allow additional handwashing.
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and 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. We have doubled our contract cleaning hours in order to enable this. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.
- 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. Teachers will ensure that all classroom tables have been cleaned at the end of the day.

- Waste will be collected regularly from offices and other areas within the school.
- Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.)
- All staff will be wearing a face covering as per Department guidelines if they cannot maintain a distance of 2m from pupils.
- All staff (SNAs or teachers) involved in intimate care need to wear PPE. This includes medical grade facemask, visor where necessary, gloves, apron This is provided in the universal access bathrooms.
- The school will provide medical grade masks in the EN 16483 category to all SNAs and SETs and to any other staff who request same.

## **7.0 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>
- Pupils must not attend if they are unwell due to any other cause e.g. tummy upset, vomiting, diarrhoea, etc
- Staff must not attend school if they display any symptoms.
- A designated isolation area has been created in a cordoned area outside 5<sup>th</sup> class
- 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. The person accompanying the child must wear a face covering. In most cases this will be a staff member familiar to the child.
  - ✓ If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone. To help us in this regard, parents are asked to make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times.
  - ✓ 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.
- ✓ After the event the isolation area and work areas 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 that 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.
- ✓ School staff will be encouraged to download the HSE COVID-19 tracker app to assist Public health for contact tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.

## **8.0 Wellness:**

### **COVID-19 Related Absence Management**

COVID-19 related absences will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

### **Pupil Wellness:**

The Stay Safe programme will be taught in all classes at the start of the school year. Increased emphasis will be placed in all classes on SPHE / PE and outdoor activities.

### **Usual Pupil Absence:**

If your child is absent please phone the school office on 061 362894 or email the office on [office@tolasns.com](mailto:office@tolasns.com) to let the school know your child will not attend on that day(s) or fill in absence forms via Aladdin Connect.

### **Staff duties**

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

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, 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.
- 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 to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Not to return to or attend school in the event of the following:
  - if they are identified 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.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- 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

### **Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The Department recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. 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'*.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experienced mental health professionals.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. A series of weekly webinars and live talks to promote staff wellbeing in schools is current available on the wellbeing portal.

**Please Note:** This plan will be amended if the Board of Management feels it necessary in order to ensure the continued Health and Safety of all the school community.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management by

P.J. Burke  Chairperson

Date:25<sup>th</sup> February 2021