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**Covid 19 Response Plan**

**August 2020**

**Revised February 2021**

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8. **Introduction**

As a school community we have successfully made our way through what has been the most challenging time in the history of modern Irish education. As we look forward in excitement to reopening our school on 31st of August we need to be aware that there will be challenges ahead.

Our school will operate under new norms. As a school community we will have to adapt quickly to new and revised practices and procedures many of which are detailed in this policy. We have tried to make this policy workable and practical.

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 advice and guidance and are subject to change as new advice or the changing needs of our school dictate. All members of the school community (staff, pupils, parents and visitors) are expected to adhere fully to the procedures put in place in an attempt to minimize the risk posed by Covid-19.

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.

1. **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 all students from the 31st of August 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.

1. **Covid-19 Policy Statement**

Glencastle National School 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 from all members of the school community will help contain the spread of the virus.

In Glencastle National School 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, Roseleen Ruddy and Deputy Lead Worker Representatives William Sullivan and Lisa Carolan who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: Tom Mc Andrew Date: 31.07.20

Signed : Tom Mc Andrew Date: 16.02.21

1. **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

**5.Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**

The Safety Statement of Glencastle NS has been updated and a risk assessment carried out. These informed us of the control measures to be implemented in our school.

1. **Control Measures/Practices and Procedures**

Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility. The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building.

The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

* Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
* Covid-19 symptoms
* What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school
* Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the Covid-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal.

Promoting awareness:

All members of our school community will actively promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms.

All members of the school community will embed in pupils the need for appropriate respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene.

Parents, pupils and staff are encouraged to adhere to all procedures.

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

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.

If pupils are sick, they must not present for school

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, by phone on 097/82283 or by

email at gleannachaisil@gmail.com

Each visitor entering the school will be required to complete a Contract Tracing Log irrespective of the duration of the visit.

Physical distancing of 2m should be maintained between all adults at the school except in the area of intimate care.

Respiratory Hygiene

All members of our school community MUST practise 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 Covis-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.

• Bins will be emptied at regular intervals.

Hand Hygiene

All members of our school community MUST practise 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, in each classroom and at appropriate locations throughout the school.

Alcohol-based sanitiser will not be stored or used near heat or naked flame

Posters are displayed at each hand washing station throughout the school showing effective hand washing technique.

All persons entering the school building must perform hand hygiene using hand sanitiser provided. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff MUST perform hand hygiene:

* When entering and exiting vehicles

• 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.

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 class settings, 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. Staff will wear suitable face coverings while at work.

All adult visitors to the school, as scheduled by appointment, MUST maintain a 2m distance from school staff and wear suitable face coverings.

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 Covid19 to our school.

1. Increasing Separation

Unnecessary furniture removed from the classrooms

Classroom layouts changed to facilitate 1 metre physical distancing in the senior room

1. Decreasing Interaction (BUBBLE)

Each classroom will be called a **bubble.**

Interaction between bubbles must be extremely limited.

Pods

Each bubble will be divided into pods (groups). The distance between pods will be at least 1m.

The children in each pod will be sitting closer to each other (1m if possible).

The children in each pod will work together in group work and share resources on a limited basis.

When outside, the pods within each bubble can play and interact freely with each other.

Every effort has been made to limit the sharing of resources by purchasing additional resources however that may not always be possible eg football when playing a game etc).

If there is a case of Covid-19, the parents of the other children in the pod will be notified by HSE through contact tracing.

Breaks/Lunch

Junior Bubble / Middle Bubble/ ASD Bubble

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Morning Break | 10:45-11am |
| Lunch Break | 12.15-12.45 |

Senior Bubble/ Early Intervention Bubble/Multiple Class Bubble

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Morning Break | 11am-11.15 am |
| Lunch Break | 12.45- 1.45 pm |

Each (Class) bubble is assigned a different area to play in the yard.

SET

The SETs will continue to work 1:1 with children, practicing social distancing and cleaning and sanitising their area and resources between sessions.

In-class support will be in the form of parallel teaching (SET works with one half, class teacher works with the other half, both teachers working on the same theme or area of that subject eg fraction in maths). This will minimise the number of teachers the children are working with and vice versa.

Cleaning/Hygiene

All cleaning will be undertaken in line with DES and public health guidance.

Cleaning

A daily cleaning schedule is devised and records will be kept.

Toilet facilities are cleaned regularly.

Equipment sharing is minimised. Staff are encouraged not to share equipment .

There is regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and that staff are provided with essential cleaning materials to keep their own work areas clean.

All school equipment is washed and sanitised regularly.

Using a disposable cloth, first clean hard surfaces with warm soapy water. Then disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products you normally use. Pay particular attention to frequently touched areas and surfaces, such as toilets and door handles.

It is recommended cleaning an area with normal household disinfectant after a suspected coronavirus (Covid-19) case.

If an area has been heavily contaminated, such as with visible bodily fluids, from a person with coronavirus (Covid-19) protection for the eyes, mouth and nose, as well as wearing gloves and apron will be used

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time, such as corridors, but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids can be cleaned as normal

All surfaces that the symptomatic person has come into contact with must be cleaned and disinfected, including objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids

For cleaning purposes, wear a face mask, disposable or washing up gloves. These should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours and then put with the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) –

The necessary PPE is available to staff.

Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after removing gloves, aprons and other protection used while cleaning

Bins

Bins are provided for disposal of waste materials (tissues, paper towels, wipes, etc.) and that adequate waste collection arrangements to be put in place to ensure they do not overflow (emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day).

Waste materials from a suspected Covid-19 case will be double-bagged and stored in a secure location for 72 hours before being placed into the landfill bin

Staff use gloves when removing rubbish bags or handling and disposing of any rubbish and they wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds afterwards

Hygiene Signage

Appropriate signage in line with public health guidelines will be displayed throughout the school.

Dropping Off/Picking Up of Students

* Mainstream pupils.

Please note the changed times for acceptance of pupils onto school grounds: 9:05-9:20 am.

Pupils from the Senior Room will access their classroom by walking through the sensory garden to their external door.

Pupils from the Middle Room will access their classroom by walking along the concrete path to their external door.

Parents of pupils from the Junior classroom may accompany their child/children along the outer perimeter of the tarmacadam surface area to their classroom’s external door.

* Special Classes.

Run 1: ( Mc Grath’s  Transport) Projected drop- off time 9:20 am.

Run 2: (Barrett Transport) Projected drop-off time 9:25 am.

 Run 3: (Gaughan Transport) Projected  drop- off time 9:30 am

Collection Plan

* 2 o’clock Dismissal Time. Junior Infants & Senior Infants

All pupils in the Junior Room to be collected at 2p.m. Please observe the same access route as stated above ( the After School Club will not be run this school year).

* 2 o’clock Dismissal Time Special Classes:

School Transport will collect the junior pupils at 2pm. They will be accompanied onto their buses by school staff/escort.

Senior Pupils Dismissal Time (1st-6th Class)

Run 1 (Barrett Transport) Projected collection time: 2:55p.m.

Run 2 ( Gaughan Transport ) Projected collection time: 3:00p.m.

Mainstream Pupils

Children from 2ndClass & 3rd Class Collection time 3:00p.m. Children observe the same access route as stated above.

Children from 4th Class, 5th Class & 6th Class : Collection time 3:03p.m. Children observe the same access route as stated above.

 All the above measures are being put in place to safeguard children’s health and wellbeing. We ask you to give your full cooperation so that all these measures will be effective.

Visitors to the School

Visits to the school will be severely restricted and visitors will be asked to:

* Make a prior appointment before visiting the school
* Remain at home if they have any Covid-19 symptoms
* Follow the agreed Covid-19 protocols for the school and adhere to social distancing requirements
* Sanitise before entering the premises
* Fill in a contact tracing log
* Wear PPE if instructed
* Not to loiter – complete their business and leave premises.
* Not enter past all doors without prior permission – deliveries and items for children must be left at the designated points outside each bubble.

Homework

Junior Room

* Homework for the week will be assigned on the first day of the week.

*Each child will be provided with a homework folder to bring home on the first day of the* week.

Your child should bring the homework folder to school on Friday as it it will be physically corrected at the end of the week.

The books and homework folder can be wiped clean at home once the homework is completed.

Middle Room & Senior Classes

* For the month of September, homework will consist of consolidation of previously taught skills and concepts (phonics, reading, spellings, number work and tables) and may be completed in school. Hence, the books your children bring home will be kept to a minimum. Homework will be assigned on a daily basis. The children will complete all written work in one home work copy other than a maths copy. Every other week they will alternate homework copies for correction purposes.

Face Coverings

Staff members will wear face coverings when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

There is no requirement for pupils to wear face coverings.

All adult visitors to school grounds MUST WEAR suitable face coverings.

Home/School Communication

This year communication between home and school will take place electronically using phone, e-mail and text-a-parent.

Face to face meetings will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Lunches

Please remind your children not to share their food or drinks with other children.

Please make sure your child is self-sufficient ie. they can open/peel any lunch/drink you pack for them.

School lunch pack, provided by D & D Lunches, will be wiped down with sterilising wipes before being distributed by the teacher

Children will eat their lunches at their desks. No food will be allowed onto the yard.

Banking

We request that parents use electronic funds transfer, if possible, to minimise the amount of cash that needs to be handled.

Through your banking online facility **Glencastle National School** can be registered as a payee on your account.

IBAN : **IE98 BOFI 9052 9930 0898 94**

BIC**: BOFIIE2D**

Physical Education, PE Equipment, External Breaks

Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows.

All PE equipment if used must be sanitised after use.

Teachers will organise lessons that require very little if any equipment.

Bubbles will be encouraged to take additional breaks outside during the school day and to conduct lessons outside if feasible.

While the classroom is empty windows in the classroom will be opened to allow for ventilation.

Returning from abroad

Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List must not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period which commences on the date of return to Ireland.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

The sequence for covering all teacher absences will be in accordance with DES circular 0045/2020. A copy of the Covid-19 Return to School Policy 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.

Teaching and Learning

As a school, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 2020. We appreciate the time and effort that went into distance learning, and we recognise the challenges it presented for families.

Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning when we return in September 2020, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for teaching and learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

Teachers will always bear in mind and be conscious of where each class was in the curriculum when schools closed in March and will endeavour to pick up where we left off especially in English and Maths. We understand the confidence of some children may have dipped during the break so we will take all factors into consideration with our teaching and learning to re-instil confidence levels.

The Department of Education and Skills has published curriculum guidelines for schools, as we work with all the children during the return to school. Initially there will be a focus on Language, Numeracy, SPHE and PE. As advised by the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) we will need to “Slow down to catch up”.

Uniforms

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.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms only for school related activities. They should not be worn in after-school activities, shops etc.

Ventilation

In order to deploy good ventilation practices, we will implement the following practices:

In the mainstream classrooms, ASD classroom and Early Intervention classroom, windows and external doors will remain fully open during break times, before and after school times and at any other period where the classes have vacated their classrooms.

During class time, we will achieve fresh air via a number of windows partially opened as required rather than one window fully open will help to maximise the use of window driven natural ventilation distribution across the room without causing discomfort.

In the multi disability classroom, windows and doors will be opened prior to the children entering the classroom in the morning, during break times and once all children have left the building. Due to the many health complications of the pupils in this class, it is not possible to leave windows open all day, therefore ventilation breaks will take place at various times throughout the school day at the discretion of the class teacher.

All permanent ventilation openings within in the school buildings, will remain open at all times and free from any obstructions.

Visiting Teachers/Coaches/External Activities

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities 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.

Distance Learning

Unfortunately, with the nature of Covid-19, we must also plan for the unfortunate situation that schools may once again have to close, be that at an individual, local, regional or national level.

From March-June 2020, the staff of Glencastle NS chose the Seesaw platform, pre-recorded mini-lessons and Zoom catch up calls.

If Glencastle NS is in the unfortunate position of having to returning to distance learning, a similar approach will be taken but with more frequent Zoom sessions. Please see our AUP and Blended Learning Policy.

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 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 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.

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’.* COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of primary and special schools

Under the EAS, employees have 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. 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 which offers access to podcasts and blogs on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition is 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. They will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote staff wellbeing in schools as schools reopen and during the upcoming school year

**7.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, if children are sick, they must not be sent to school.

• Parents/guardians must keep children at home if they display any Covid-19 Symptoms. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

•Staff 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.

* School staff should be 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.

* Staff and pupils are not permitted 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.
* Staff and pupils are advised to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school.

*Dealing with a suspected case during the school day:*

• We have a designated isolation area for each bubble

• If a pupil/staff member displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:

The staff member or child who is symptomatic will be accompanied to the isolation area. A distance of 2 metres will be maintained. The person accompanying the staff member or child who is symptomatic must wear a face covering. A face covering will also be provided to the patient who is symptomatic.

If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone. Parents must 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.

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.

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 work areas will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.

The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.

Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

Disinfection only works on things that are clean. Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine-based product (household bleach).

Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.

If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area like a canteen, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the [HSPC health advice for schools](https://assets.gov.ie/78748/8796d60e-790e-4007-add1-de18e509a3c1.pdf) ) as soon as is practically possible.

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/pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.