



1. Introduction

In line with DES guidelines, Sandymount Park Educate Together Secondary School has developed and published our school's updated Covid-19 Response Plan. This document is available on request and published on our website [here](#). The response plan details the policies and practices necessary for our school to meet the government's Return to Work Protocol and to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 in the school environment.

Life as we know it has changed considerably since we first closed our doors on March 12th 2020 and again in January 2021. We have missed living and learning together and are looking forward to re-connecting in a safe and appropriate way in what has become known as the 'new normal'. We are planning for a full reopening of Sandymount Park on April 12th 2021 and outline below the specific plans and actions we will need to take in the context of Covid-19 infection being still present in our community. These are interim measures and will be reviewed regularly. We will amend our measures as appropriate in response to these reviews and to any changes in health advice that may occur.

We ask all students, staff and parents to follow government and public health advice in relation to:

- Restrictions
- Hygiene and cough etiquette
- Mask wearing
- Physical distancing and
- To know the symptoms of Covid-19 infection

DES advice states that any students or staff who have symptoms must not attend school, should phone the doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation. An awareness by students, staff and parents is required so that they know how to protect themselves and others, and how to recognise and report symptoms of covid-19 infection. Please read the updated guidance for parents/guardians, students and families [here](#).

In order to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school, it is critical that students, parents, staff and visitors are aware of, and adhere to all control measures and fully co-operate with all health and safety requirements. Control measures will be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is important that students and parents have a clear understanding of the benefits of education and also the risks of social interaction in the current situation. It is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented in



any setting – school, home, sporting, leisure – where people interact. One of the key challenges for us is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for students and where teachers feel able to engage with students in a way that supports their learning and development.

2. Wellbeing

We are living through exceptional times and this impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times. People have been naturally worried about the risk to their physical health and that of their loved ones and have been challenged to varying degrees by the public health measures that were put in place to control the spread of the virus, such as staying at home and school closures.

People have an inbuilt capacity to adapt. This is what is at the heart of resilience. Most people are weathering this storm and will emerge stronger and with new skills. As we prepare for the reopening of our school we know that most pupils, and indeed their families and school staff will be looking forward to going back, reconnecting with school, reconnecting with friends and colleagues and settling back into school work.

This is a time of change, with new rules and routines to establish and learn, in order to keep everyone safe. Some students may feel anxious about the return to school. In times of change some worry or anxiety is a normal response. Most will settle and re-engage with learning after an initial settling in period. Students will have had different experiences of the extended period of school closure. Some may have benefitted from the unprecedented change in their lives which may have provided opportunities for spending more time with family, having a slower pace of life, experiencing a greater sense of community, accessing more outdoor exercise and being exposed to different learning experiences at home. Others, however, will have experienced significant stressors in their lives during this time, such as bereavement and feeling lonely or isolated.

Time away from school also means that students have experienced different learning opportunities over the past few months. In some cases, gaps in knowledge may have widened. Some students will require more targeted intervention and planning to help them reconnect with the school community and re-engage with learning.

Facilitating a happy and safe return to school and progressing learning for all students is at the heart of all decisions that are being made by Sandymount Park in preparation for reopening. Particular attention will be paid to supporting our students' wellbeing and planning learning



experiences that take account of the effect the school closure has had on their progress and engagement with learning.

Pastoral supports will continue to actively support students in their return to school through tutor support and time each morning, monitoring and mentoring by progress leaders, SPHE, the guidance counsellor and building positive relationships amongst students and with staff.

3. Day-to- day interim arrangements

Masks

All students and staff are required to wear masks. This means students are required to wear masks on arrival, in the corridor, at the lockers and in all classes.

Hygiene

All students and staff are required to sanitise their hands:

- On arrival to the school
- Before and after eating
- After touching mouth/nose/eyes/face
- After coughing or sneezing
- Before using the bathroom
- Wash and sanitise after using the bathroom

There are hand sanitising stations at each entrance, classroom, toilets and along the corridors. **We also ask all students to bring their own personal bottle of hand sanitiser each day and to keep it in their school bag.**

Arrival at school

The building will open to students at 8:15am. Students must proceed to the designated area for their year group, maintain social distancing whilst waiting and avoid interacting across classes and year groups.

We encourage students to walk, cycle, scoot where possible and have increased our cycle parking.

Students travelling to school by private bus or public transport must wear a mask in line with government guidelines.

It is very important that students arrive to school on time and are ready for tutor time at 8:30am.

Any student arriving after 8:30am must report to their Progress Leader in their designated area.

Any student arriving after 8:45am must wait at reception and report to the Principal/Deputy Principal.



Zoned areas for year groups

In order to increase separation and decrease interaction, each year group has a designated entrance/exit, toilets, locker area, yard area and classroom. Students will only enter other areas of the school when under the instruction of a staff member (for eg to go to a practical class such as Science or Home Economics)

Lockers

There are designated locker areas for each class. Students can only access their locker once before school starts in the morning and once when school ends. **Students must maintain social distancing whilst using their locker and whilst waiting to use their locker.** Students can spend no longer than 3 minutes using their locker and in the locker area. Coats and phones must be placed in the locker. **Students arriving late will not be permitted to access their locker and must proceed directly to class.**

Students who fail to follow these guidelines around safe locker use may lose the privilege of accessing their locker.

Classrooms

- Base rooms - To limit the movement of students around the building, each tutor class has a designated classroom and teachers will move from class to class. Students will only move from this class for practical subjects under the direction of the teacher.
- Distancing -Classrooms have been set up to ensure at least 1m distance between students. Doors and windows will be opened to ensure ventilation of the classroom. Teachers will keep 2m where possible and at least 1m from students at all times.
- Pods - If students are mixed for option subjects, they must sit in pods with students from their own class – as directed by the teacher.
- Hygiene - Shared equipment in Science/Home Ec/Art/PE/Music will be sanitised before and after use. Students must clean and sanitise their desk before and after lunch and at the end of the day, materials will be provided for this.

Personal Belongings

Students are asked to limit the number of personal items they bring to school. All personal items must be kept in their bag or locker and there must be no sharing of belongings.



Break/Lunch/Outdoor time

Students will have break and lunch in their base classroom. Each group will get to spend time outdoors at break and lunch, weather permitting. Efforts will be made to provide time outdoors each day for each class group for fresh air, exercise and where possible to allow students to 2m distance to take a break from wearing their mask.

School Activities/Extra-Curricular/Non-Essential Trips

At this stage all school activities and non-essential travel and trips will be postponed. Once we have settled into the new routines, we will explore ways to restart our extra-curricular schedule safely.

Departure from the school

Students will have a ten-minute window in which to access their locker at the end of the day. Students must leave the school and grounds promptly whilst maintaining social distancing and reducing interaction across classes and year groups. **Students and parents are asked not to congregate and to follow public health guidelines on the way home from school.**

4. General Protocols

Induction for students and staff

The measures that we are putting in place as part of our Covid-19 Response Plan, along with the latest government guidelines and protocols will be shared with staff and students as part of our return to school protocols.

Sanitisation and Hand Hygiene

There are sanitising units at entrances, classrooms, toilets and along the corridors. Posters highlighting good hand washing techniques will be displayed. We ask that parents practice these [techniques](#) with students at home before returning to school.

Respiratory Hygiene

All students and staff should be aware of and follow proper cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene. Posters highlighting correct respiratory hygiene will be on display throughout the school. We ask that parents emphasise these [techniques](#) with students at home before returning to school.

Signage

Signage is being installed throughout the school to raise awareness and serve as reminders to the whole school community for adherence to good hygiene, physical distancing, Covid-19 symptoms and agreed protocols.



Face Coverings

All students and staff are required to wear a face covering. Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

- All students must bring their own clean mask to school each day. **There should be no inappropriate slogans or images on the face mask.**
- Student and staff face masks must adequately cover the mouth and nose and be specifically designed for use as a face mask to minimise risk of Covid-19 transmission. **Therefore, other items of clothing cannot be used in place of a specific face mask.**
- Students should store their face mask in a clean space/bag when not being worn eg a labelled zip lock bag.
- Cloth face masks should be washed after every day of use and/or if visibly soiled. Face masks should not be worn if they are wet as wet cloth may make it difficult to breathe.

School Office

Non-essential visitors to the school should be minimised, therefore parents/guardians should make an appointment prior to visiting the school. We request that dropping up forgotten equipment/lunches be minimised as much as possible. In exceptional circumstances, if an essential item needs to be dropped, please email the office in advance and leave the item clearly labelled on the table at reception.

Access to School

As an interim measure, access to the school will be by appointment only. Please wear a face mask when entering the building. **There will be no non-essential visitors to the school for the foreseeable future.** A log of visitors to the school will be maintained.

Isolation Area

There is a designated isolation area in the event that a suspected case of Covid-19 occurs in the school.



Responding to a Suspected Case of Covid 19

This is outlined in full in the Covid Response Plan

- Students and staff will be made aware of the procedure to follow if they suspect that they or another member of the school community has Covid-19.
- That person will be brought to the designated isolation room in the entrance area. The Principal/Deputy Principal will be informed.
- Procedures as per the Response Plan will be followed.
- A cleaning protocol as per the Response Plan will be followed.

Hygiene and Cleaning in the School

A deep clean of the entire school will take place prior to reopening. We will have six hours of cleaning per day and weekly fogging to combat common germs and viruses on surfaces. Cleaning schedules will be maintained for review. The cleaning schedule will be reviewed after two weeks and revised where necessary.

All classrooms will have disposable tissue, sanitiser spray and rubbish bins. Students will be taught the correct procedure for wiping down their tables/work areas and are required to support our whole school effort in creating and maintaining a safe and clean learning environment.

Travel Overseas

Any students or staff who have travelled abroad must follow current government advice.

Student Responsibility and Accountability

It is important for parents, students and staff to accept that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection. Generally speaking, the closer the physical contact, the more likely infection is to spread from one person to another.

Students will be informed of all Covid-19 related matters through taught programs and posters.

Students are expected to behave responsibly at all times. They should not put themselves or another member of the school community at risk.

It will be considered a serious behavioural issue if any student acts in a manner which puts themselves or another member of the



school community at risk or who does not adhere to the Covid-19 measures and protocols.

Students who have symptoms of Covid-19 should not attend school. See the symptoms [here](#).

Parental Support

- Parents should be familiar with this document. They should adhere to the control measures outlined and fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.
- Parents/Guardians should speak to their children and remind them of the importance of adhering to all the interim measures that the school has put in place and to follow all public health advice whether inside or outside the school.
- If your child is unwell/has [symptoms](#) of Covid-19, please do not send them to school.
- If you are contacted by the school because your child has symptoms of Covid-19 please collect them immediately.

Role of Staff

The Response Plan outlines the role of staff as per DES guidelines. Staff will engage with students in relation to supporting them with these interim measures and protocols and ensuring the whole school community works together in order to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school.

Code of Behaviour

It is imperative that every member of our school community works together to minimise risk and to keep each other safe. Students must never act in a way that could endanger the health and safety of others. **Students must always adhere to public health advice and follow requests and direction given by members of staff.**