**St.Mary’s NS**

**COVID-19 Response Plan**

1. What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management of St.Mary’s NS in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment.

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practises necessary for St.Mary’s NS to meet the Government’s “*Return to Work Safely Protocol”*, the Department of Education plan for school reopening and to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in St.Mary’s NS.

1. COVID-19 Policy

A copy of the COVID-19 Policy Statement is available on our school website at <http://stmarysnsbagenalstown.ie>

1. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

A review of the Covid 19 plan 2020/2021 has been undertaken, before the return to school, in February, 2021. From the 22nd February, 2021, children and staff in the ASD unit will return to school. There will be at least one other member of the teaching staff present in the school, at all times.

* 1. All staff will have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education and will be available at gov.ie/backtoschool
  2. All staff will have access to complete a *Return to Work* form and will have completed induction training
  3. A “Lead Worker Representative” is in place
  4. Posters and signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 will be displayed
  5. Classroom layouts to support physical distancing where possible will be in made
  6. Unnecessary clutter will be removed to facilitate the ongoing cleaning of the school will be taken into account, while also allowing for educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment
  7. An updated *Health and Safety Risk Assessment* will be completed
  8. A contact tracing logbook will be in place at the school’s reception area for any visitors to the school
  9. Arrangements to limit access to the school by visitors will be made by notifying all stakeholders of the importance to pre-arrange any visits and sign the contact tracing logbook upon arrival
  10. School building checks will be completed

1. Control Measures – To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19

Staff will be made aware that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health & Welfare Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

* Staff and pupils (through communication with their parents/guardians) will be advised that should they experience any symptoms of COVID-19 not to attend school, to phone their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.
* Staff and pupils (through communication with their parents/guardians) will be advised that should they come in contact with an identified person of COVID-19 not to attend school, to phone their doctor and follow HSE public health guidance on self-isolation. (**further details at Section 9)**
* Staff and pupils (through communication with their parents/guardians) will be advised that should they experience any symptoms of COVID-19 while at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly.
* Staff and pupils (through communication with their parents/guardians) will be advised not to return to school if they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff and children are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel
* While every child is welcomed back to St.Mary’s NS, any child displaying colds, coughs or flu like illness should not come to school, as children who display these symptoms will be isolated and their parents will be required to collect them.
* A designated isolation area has been identified within the school building. (**details for managing a suspected case at Section 8)**
* Dispensers with hand sanitiser has been mounted at various entry points throughout the school building along with every classroom. Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene using a hand sanitiser.
* Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible
* Ventilation: Windows will be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use e.g. break/ lunch time and at the end of the school day and will be partially open when in use (this is taking into consideration that it does not cause discomfort, especially during cold weather)

4.1 Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff should perform hand hygiene:

* On arrival at school
* Before eating or drinking
* After using the toilet
* After playing outdoors
* When their hands are physically dirty
* When they cough or sneeze
* Before leaving school
* When using shared items in pods
* When entering and exiting vehicles

1. Physical Distancing

In primary and special schools a distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore achieving this recommendation from Junior Infants – 2nd class is not a pre-requisite to reopening St.Mary’s NS.

5.1 What can students expect when they arrive at school?

**School Drop Off**Congregation of people at the front entrance to the school is discouraged. Students are asked to enter the school in the following manner.

* Pupils in Junior and Senior Infants will enter the school through the main entrance where they will go directly to their classroom, for supervision and free play.
* Pupils from 1st- 2nd class will enter the PE Hall at the fire escape to the front of the school building where they will be supervised by a teacher.
* Pupils from 3rd- 6th class will enter the school through the side gate leading them directly into the yard where they will be immediately separated into their class bubbles. 3rd-4th class will congregate and play in the smaller yard with picnic tables and 5th-6th class will congregate and play in the basketball court.
* On wet days pupils from 1st – 2nd class will enter the PE Hall fire escape door as usual.
* On wet days pupils from 3rd-6th class will go directly to their classrooms via the fire escape doors at the side of the building leading them directly into their classrooms where their teacher will greet and supervise them.
* Students attending Ms. Martin’s classroom will enter the school building in the usual way, through the main entrance to the school and go directly to their classroom where their teacher will greet and supervise them.

**School Collection**

* When infant children are being collected at 2pm they will exit the school building in the usual way through the main entrance/exit to the school. Parents are requested to maintain a physical distance from each-other and to wear face coverings at the entrance and to promptly return to the vehicles once your child has been collected.
* At 3pm students in 3rd-6th class will exit the school via the fire escape doors in their classrooms. They will be asked to go directly to their buses, or parent’s cars. Congregation at the bus stops will not be encouraged.
* At 3pm students in 1st/2nd class will exit the school via the PE Hall fire escape door and will be asked to go directly to their buses or parent’s cars.

5.2 What to expect within the classroom?

Each classroom and/or class grouping will now be known as an individual “bubble”. Within each “bubble” students will be placed into smaller groups known as “pods”.

Social distancing within Junior Infants – 2nd class students is not a pre-requisite for reopening St.Mary’s NS. In so far as possible students in these classes will be placed in pods of 6 children. These pods will be 1m apart from another pod, where possible.

Within 3rd-6th class students will be individually separated by 1m distance where possible and in small pods of 4-6 if 1m distance is not possible due to space constraints in the older classrooms.

While in their classrooms, students will interact, learn, and play within their pods. When on yard, students will play within their class bubbles and not be encouraged to interact with students of other classrooms. Segregated play areas on the yard will be assigned to each class along with staggered break times.

* Each classroom will have a wall mounted dispenser and hand sanitiser. Every pupil will be asked to practise hand hygiene practises as they enter the classroom and leave the classroom. Students will be asked to practice hand hygiene practices throughout the school day as outlined above. (**see Section 4.1)**
* Pupils and staff within the room will be allocated a seat and work area that will be consistent to them.
* Toys/Electronics within classrooms will be cleaned before and after use if shared between pods or on a weekly basis, providing only the children in the pod play with them for the week. Pupils will be assigned toys/electronics for individual use within their play pods.
* Musical instruments will not be shared during lessons and will be cleaned thoroughly before and after use.
* Library books will be assigned to students on rotation by their teacher and will have wipeable covers to ensure books can be wiped clean between uses. Pupils will be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any library books.
* Sports equipment will be cleaned before and after use and sharing of equipment will be minimised where possible. The use of sports equipment will be restricted to PE lessons on the supervision of teachers.
* All pupils **must** have their own pencils, rulers, erasers, pencil cases, colouring pencils, scissors, glue sticks, pens (if in 5th/6th class) and arrive to school prepared with the correct books and copies, as sharing of materials will not be permitted
* Should teachers hand out concrete materials as a learning aid to pupils, these will have been cleaned and disinfected, bagged for your child’s individual use. On completion of the lesson these materials will be collected, cleaned, and disinfected before re-use.
* One-way systems will be in place in each classroom.
* Teachers and SNA’s will wear face coverings and shields when close contact at face to face level is necessary; comforting, reassuring your child if they are injured, unwell, needing assistance.
* Students will be encouraged to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth)

5.3 What to expect around the school building?

* Each class will remain in their “class bubbles” throughout the school day. (Class bubble refer to all the children in that class and/or classroom and teachers/ SNAs who work with them).
* Students will not be sent on messages
* One-way systems will be in place throughout the school building – arrows along the hallways will indicate the direction to follow
* Students will not be permitted to enter Catherine’s office for any reason

5.4 Cleaning in the classroom

* Students will be encouraged to take responsibility for ensuring their workstation is cleaned at the beginning of the school day.
* Students will be encouraged to clean with wipes their desks and chairs at the beginning of the school day and if needed throughout the school day.
* School books and copies will have covers on them. Students will be encouraged to wipe clean their books and copies before and after use and for each child to perform hand hygiene after using books and copy books.

1. Breaks/Lunch Time and playing on the Yard

It is not possible to maintain physical distancing when pupils in Primary or special schools play together outdoors, but in so far as practical the following measures will take place to keep consistent groups.   
  
Staggered break times will be implemented to limit interaction as follows:

* Junior Infants – 2nd class will eat their lunch within the classrooms and have their little break at the usual time of 11am – 11:10 am & lunch break at an earlier 12:45 pm – 13:05 pm.
* 3rd- 6th class will eat their lunch within the classrooms and have their little break at the later time of 11:20 am– 11:30 am & lunch break at the usual 13:10 pm – 13:30 pm.
* When on yard Junior & Senior Infants will play on the small yard with grass area, 1st/2nd class will play in the basketball court or larger field area on fine weather days.
* When on yard 3rd-4th class will play on the small yard with grass area, 5th/6th class will play in the basketball court or the larger field area on fine weather days.
* Play equipment will be limited in the main yard at break times and not permitted on the yard in the mornings. **ALL** play equipment must be cleaned and disinfected between uses and ready for the next person’s safe usage.
* Staff breaks will be staggered, there is a perspex screen in the staff room. No more than two staff members should eat lunch together in the staff room and must sit at opposite sides of the perspex screen.

1. Use of PPE in St.Mary’s NS

Staff will be provided with medical grade face masks and are required to wear them where a distance of 2m cannot be maintained from children and from other staff members. Where possible, staff should avoid close contact, on face to face level with children, such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/ crouching down beside a child.

Extra precautions should be taken when:

* Assisting with intimate care needs
* Administering first aid
* Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
* Where any staff member are vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with those who are in the very high risk category.
* Face Coverings are not recommended for children under the age of 13, however should a child present as a possible COVID-19 case, a face covering will be given to your child to wear as they are supervised in the designated isolation area (**see Section 8).**
* The DES states: *“It is not recommended that children attending primary school or preschool/childcare settings wear face-coverings.”* Should a parent/guardian wish for their child to wear a face covering/shield while attending St.Mary’s NS, they should speak to the Principal and class teacher to make this known. We will expect any child wearing a face covering/shield to know how to wear one responsibly and for it to be disposed of, or cleaned in accordance with current HSE public health advice.

1. Designated Isolation Area

St. Mary’s NS has identified that a designated isolation area should a staff member or student present with symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day. In this room there is a functioning toilet and wash hand basin.

Should more than one person display symptoms of COVID-19 while at school a second designated isolation area has been identified for use.

If a pupil is a suspected case of COVID-19, the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. Parents/guardians will be asked to wait in the lobby of the school until the child is handed over to the parent/guardian. Entry to the school will not be permitted. The pupil will be given a face covering to wear. Parents/guardians will be advised to self-isolate and follow HSE Public health advice. Should the pupil be too unwell to travel home, a call to 999 or 112 will be made telling them that the sick person is a COVID-19 suspect.

Should a person display symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, they will be supervised by a member of staff. This member of staff will wear a face covering, a face shield, a disposable apron and disposable gloves.

The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided

Should a person require use of the designated isolation area, immediately after its use the room will be disinfected.

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 confidentiality is essential at all times.

The room/ area in which the staff member/ child with suspected covid symptoms should be thoroughly cleaned, as soon as practically possible, in line with school’s covid 19 cleaning procedures and all other children should be removed from the room/ area while cleaning is being undertaken.

1. Lead Worker Representative

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership. The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

The role of the worker representative) is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

* Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
* Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
* Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
* Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
* Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
* Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

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| Name of Lead Worker representative: | Contact details |
| Ms. Elizabeth Meade | St.Mary’s NS – 0599721021 (School Phone Number) |

All staff, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors have a responsibility both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

1. Response Plan for if a positive COVID-19 case arises in the school

Should a person report to the Principal that they have tested positive for COVID-19, they will be asked to remain at home, self-isolate and follow HSE public health advice.

The school will seek advice from the HSE, on further actions to be taken, in relation to close contacts.

(School staff will 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)

1. Visiting teachers/coaches to St.Mary’s NS

St.Mary’s NS will welcome GAA coaching for 1st/2nd class only provided all coaching takes place outdoors with single use equipment for all students, maintaining a no-contact rule.

We will welcome cricket coaching for 3rd- 6th class students only provided all coaching takes place outdoors with single use equipment for all students, maintaining a no-contact rule.

Our visiting teacher to provide an essential RSE talk to our 5th & 6th class students will take place. The hired visitor to the school will comply with all Covid19 regulations within the school, signing the contact tracing logbook, wearing of a face mask, adhering to public health advise at all times by maintaining 2m distance from pupils and other staff members. This visitor will be invited to use our staff room at lunch time, and will be made aware that only 2 members of staff are permitted entry to the staffroom at any one time.

Students on work experience will not be accepted for this school year.

Students on teaching placement will be considered on a case by case situation.

1. Well-being

Staff will do their best to focus on the well-being of the children, through a number of measures such as programmes such as “Weaving Wellbeing”, mindfulness activities, physical education and increased outdoor time.

Staff will also be encouraged to look after their own well-being and will be made aware of supports available to them such as: services provided by the PDST and CSL, the HSE’s Health Promotion Team, Spectrum.