

Good afternoon,

Happy New Year to you all and I hope you had a peaceful Christmas. As you will be aware at this stage, the Department of Education has decided that all schools should reopen on tomorrow Thursday 6th January 2022.

We have received communication from Dr. John Cuddihy, Acting HSE National Clinical Director of Health Protection which we have been asked to share with our school community

“As schools reopen in 2022, it is important that we continue and renew our focus on the public health measures that will help your school communities to stay as safe as possible during the coming year. COVID-19 vaccination uptake in adults, in Ireland is one of the highest globally. This high uptake helps protect those most vulnerable and also very significantly reduces the harm associated with Covid-19 infection for those who are fully vaccinated and boosted.

However, we still need to work together to ensure we continue with all measures to best control Covid-19 in schools and that we minimise the onward spread of Covid-19 within schools, and our communities.

The infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in place in schools have helped to prevent and control Covid-19 in schools. These measures have been reviewed and updated in light of the emergence of the omicron variant.

Infection prevention and Control Measures:

1) Before attending school: Symptoms – Please make sure all staff and families are aware not to attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid-19 infection. Symptom profiles are available from www.hse.ie and we advise parents to take a precautionary approach, particularly for children less able to articulate their symptoms, that if a child appears unwell, observe them at home and contact their GP as appropriate.

Close contacts - Please remind all staff and children that if they have been told by the HSE services that they are a close contact of a case of Covid-19, they need to adhere to the advice on the HSE website in relation to restricted movements and testing. Children under 13 years who are household close contacts must restrict their movements for 14 days and they are offered PCR testing at day 0 and day 10. On receipt of a day 10 not-detected PCR test result, they may exit restricted movements. It is important that anyone who has been identified as a close contact, is very aware of COVID-19 symptoms, and isolate and undergo testing should they develop any symptoms.

2) Re-enforcing general public health messages In addition to ensuring that staff and children do not attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid-19 infection, please ensure all staff and children are reminded of the importance of abiding by the national public health measures currently in place at all times e.g. vaccination (including boosters), social distancing, use of face masks, hand hygiene, ventilation and minimising social contacts.”

I am also sharing here the current advice as per the guidelines issued to us today by the Department of Education

Students and COVID-19 (Post Primary Schools)

If a post primary student has tested positive for COVID-19:

- *They will be contact traced by the National Contact Tracing Team.*

- *The National Contact Tracing Team will contact them and ask them to identify their close contacts.*
- *The student who tested positive will have to isolate for 10 days from the day their symptoms started or for 10 days from the day they had the positive PCR test. The student can return to school after this isolation period, provided they do not have a fever/temperature during the last 5 days of their isolation period.*

Students who have symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home, isolate and arrange to have a COVID-19 test.

There are 2 types of COVID-19 test available from the HSE: antigen tests (home test kits) and PCR tests (done at a test centre and sent to a lab).

Students (or anyone between 4 to 39 years of age) who has symptoms of COVID-19 are offered antigen tests firstly and they do not book a PCR test unless they get a positive antigen test result.

Note – If a student is identified as a CLOSE CONTACT of a case in their HOUSEHOLD they will have to restrict their movement as per national guidelines for household close contact and get a COVID-19 test as soon as possible.

Further information is available at www.hse.ie

Students and COVID-19 (Special Classes)

Where a positive case occurs in a special educational setting (special classes), Public Health will undertake a public health risk assessment. The purpose of this public risk assessment is to identify the appropriate next steps in the best interests of all of the students in these settings. This is in recognition that within these settings there is a higher probability that there are students with medical vulnerabilities and students who may have greater difficulties with infection prevention and control measures.

There is no doubt but that the next few weeks will be challenging but by adhering to the measures outlined above we will be doing the right thing and protecting each other.

We look forward to welcoming everyone back into the school building tomorrow.

Kind regards

Niall Murphy

Principal

5th January 2022