

School Covid-19 Response Plan



Esker Educate Together National School 2021/22

Introduction

This *Covid-19 Response Plan* is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Esker ETNS, Lucan, Co. Dublin. This policy was reviewed and ratified by the BOM on 25th August 2021.

The Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Government's '*Return to Work Safely Protocol*', the Department of Education and Skills Plan for School Re-opening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. The plan incorporates current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

It is important that any proposals and recommendations in relation to the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol and to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHE continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan will support the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of management, staff, pupils and parents.

This document aims to provide details of:

- 1. COVID-19 School Policy**
- 2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
- 3. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
- 4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
- 5. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
- 6. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
- 7. Control Measures**
- 8. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**
- 9. Staff Duties**
- 10. Covid-19 related absence management**
- 11. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme**

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

Note: The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie;

1. Esker ETNS COVID-19 Policy

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

COVID 19 Policy Statement

Esker ETNS 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 in relation to summer provision
- 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 and Skills
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills
- 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 and Skills 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(s) Paula Murphy and Aishling Gallagher.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

Details for the reopening of the school facility and the applicable restrictions and controls are outlined in this document.

Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 1**.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide: details of the Induction Training for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

3. Return to work safely and 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.

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.

Name(s):	Contact details
Gemma Curry	01 6241462
Catherine Hare	
Paula Murphy	
Aishling Gallagher	

The role of the Lead Worker Representative(s) 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.

4. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

A Covid-19 risk assessment has been carried out within the school.

5. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

Staff and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. Esker ETNS will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

The most common respiratory symptoms of Covid-19 infection include; a high temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

Any staff member displaying these symptoms should immediately inform the Principal teacher. They will not be permitted to attend work if they have any of the symptoms listed below:

- ✓ High temperature
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
- ✓ Any other unusual symptoms

Or if they have been advised by the HSE to restrict her movements.

Staff must inform the Principal of this situation as soon as possible. The following advice is provided to inform school staff and pupils **how to reduce the chance of getting infected by the coronavirus:**

Wash your hands frequently

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser in line with the health guidance, especially after touching another person or their personal items, after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser kills viruses that may be on your hands.

Maintain social distancing

Classes Junior Infants – 2nd class will not be advised to social distance. Children will be sitting in pods. Each pod will be made up of four to six children. Each pod will be separated by 1 metre. The DES recommended seating arrangement is being followed in these classes. The SNA will sit at the pod closest to the child that they are supporting. The SNA will wear a surgical mask at all times. Each pod will be at least 1 metre from the teacher's table.

Classes 3rd – 6th class will be adhering to social distancing of 1 metre apart. Children will be sitting at a table of two children, spaced by 1 metre apart. Each table will be spaced by 1 metre. Tables will be at least 1 metre from the teacher's table. SNA will sit nearest the table to the child that they are supporting.

Class bubbles will not mix. Staggered lunch breaks will be in place to ensure that class bubbles do not mix. Children will play with the children from their own class.

There are seven access points to the school. Children will not line up in the yard in the morning. Instead, they will come directly to their classroom using the allocated access point. Teachers / SNA's will monitor that children are distancing on entry and exit to the school.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Do Not

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

You should wash your hands:

- After coughing or sneezing
- Before and after eating
- Before and after preparing food
- If you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- Before and after being on public transport
- Before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- When you arrive and leave buildings
- If your hands are dirty
- After toilet use

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:
<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

6. People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups, which include people who:

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the leave arrangements that will apply will be updated by the Department of Education and Skills.

7. If the Board/Principal is unsure whether or not staff fall into the very high-risk category, advice will be sought from the Occupational Health Service.
8. Any staff member who is in the very high-risk category is advised not to volunteer for Summer Provision or In Person supplementary programme 2021

Control Measures

A range of essential control measures have been implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school .

These control measures are outlined in this document.

The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

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

Staff, in particular, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work 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.

The following control measures have been put in place:

i. 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 (see section 2 above). 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.

ii. New Staff Induction Training

All new 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

New staff will be made aware of the Covid-19 policy and procedures for Esker ETNS by a member of the Covid Response Team.

All 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 will be made aware of 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.

iii. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility. Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations within the school facility including offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilet areas. Such are intended to inform but also remind everyone about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

Handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitizers are available at multiple locations within the school facility and should be available in each classroom.

iv. Cleaning

Arrangements for more regular and thorough cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school will be made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted, in particular, toilets, lifts, door handles and kitchens. Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

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.

There will be regular collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

Shower facilities shall not be available for use by staff or pupils due to the increased risk associated with communal shower facilities and areas. This shall be reviewed in line with government guidance.

Staff must use and clean their own equipment and utensils (cup, cutlery, plate etc.).

v. Access to the school building /contact log

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts. In addition see visitor contact log at Appendix 2.

vi. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Full PPE will not be required to be worn within the school facility according to current occupational and public health guidance. However, masks must be worn by any adult who enters the building. Additional PPE will be available to any staff member if required for a role such as:

- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of Covid- 19 is identified while the school is in operation

This will be updated in line with advice from the HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre)

vii. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Esker ETNS.

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999

Contact the principal or nearest first aider giving details of location and type of medical incident.

7. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Esker ETNS the following are the procedures to be implemented:

These procedures should be carried out in a manner designed to avoid alarming the child.

Designated isolation areas have been identified within the school building. These are .

1. The Servery (in the hall) – first room to be used.
2. Catherine’s room (downstairs)
3. Tania’s room (upstairs)
4. Gemma’s office (downstairs)

None of these rooms can be used again until thoroughly cleaned, if they have been used by a person with a suspected case of Covid-19.

The following items are available in each of the isolation rooms.

- Tissues
- Hand sanitiser
- Disinfectant/wipes
- Gloves/Mask
- Medical grade mask (for teacher)
- Waste bin with bag
- Thermometer

If a pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

1. The support teacher assigned to the class level will escort the child to the isolation area, using the shortest route possible. If the support teacher is unavailable, the class teacher will accompany the child. Provide a mask (regular, disposable) for the symptomatic child.
2. As far as possible, the teacher should avoid contact with other people en route to the isolation area. The accompanying teacher will maintain a 2m distance from the child, and will ensure that any other person encountered en route to the isolation area will also maintain 2m distance. The staff member caring for the symptomatic pupil should wear the medical grade mask (in the Covid Supplies box, in the isolation room)
3. Gemma Linda or SET teacher will contact the parents/guardians of the child immediately, and will request the parent/guardian comes to the school to bring the child home. The person collecting the child will wait outside the school building and the child will be brought out to them.
4. Advise the child to cover their mouth and nose with disposable tissues when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided; advise them to avoid touching people, surfaces or objects.
5. Advise the parent or guardian to inform their general practitioner **by phone** of their child’s symptoms. Remind them that public transport of any kind should not be used.
6. If the child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform the responders that the sick person is displaying symptoms of Covid-19;
7. Inform staff members that the area where the child is waiting/has waited to be collected is out of bounds.
8. Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery;

9. Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and other areas of the school involved by contract cleaners– (*see policy on deep cleaning*)

10. 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.

If a staff member displays symptoms of Covid-19

1. Provide the staff member with a mask.
2. Ascertain if he or she feels well enough to travel home.
3. If the staff member feels well enough to travel home, facilitate them to leave the school building promptly, maintaining a minimum of 2m distance between themselves and any other person.
4. If the staff member does not feel well enough to travel home, accompany them to the isolation area and phone 999 or 112. Inform the emergency services that the sick person is displaying symptoms of Covid 19.
5. Follow respiratory hygiene procedures outlined above.

INCLUDE GUIDANCE ON PROTOCOL

If the principal is informed of a positive Covid-19 case from a pupil or staff member, she will contact the HSE immediately. She will provide all adequate details to the HSE, so that the matter can be escalated to Public Health and a Risk assessment can be carried out to identify close contacts. If Public Health have not carried out a Risk assessment prior to the return of children/staff the following day, the principal will close the class until the assessment is carried out and Public Health advice can be followed.

With this in mind – it is agreed that the following HSE guidance shall be noted: A child who is Asymptomatic is contagious 24 hours prior to test, a child who is displaying symptoms is contagious 48 hours prior to test.

The HSE or Principal 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.

8. 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. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- i. Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. 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
- ii. Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained
- iii. Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- iv. Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid-19
- v. Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- vi. If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- vii. Complete the RTW form before they return to work following an unexpected school closure
- viii. Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace
- ix. Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- x. Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- xi. Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

9. Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES.

10. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.

Appendix 1

Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19 – Esker ETNS

Pre-Return to Work Questionnaire COVID-19

This questionnaire must be completed by staff at least 3 days in advance of returning to work.

If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice before returning to work.

Name: _____

Name of School: _____

Name of Principal: _____

Date: _____

	Questions	YES	NO
1.	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness or flu like symptoms now or in the past 14 days?		
2.	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3.	Have you been advised by the HSE that you are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?		
4.	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
5.	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?		
6.	Have you been advised by your doctor that you are in the very high risk group? If yes, please liaise with your doctor and Principal re return to work.		

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test. Please note: The organisation is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and will be held securely in line with our retention policy.

Signed: _____

Appendix 2

School Contact Tracing Log for Visitors

Name of School: Esker ETNS
 Address of School: The Glebe, Esker Lane, Lucan, Co. Dublin
 Contact Person in School for queries: Gemma
 Contact Phone Number/email address for queries: . Gemma@eskeretns.ie ph 01 6241462

Name of Visitor	Time of Entry to school	Time of Exit from school	Reason for Visit (Contractor, Parent, Other)	If contractor name of company and address	Contact details of visitor	Date of Visit	Who the visitor met (separate line required for each person the visitor met)	Length of time spent with each person in the school

