



Monday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students,

We hope that all our students and their families have enjoyed their mid-term break.

We have received correspondence from the Department of Education regarding our return to school, which we are including *on page 2 and 3* for your attention.

You will note from this correspondence that the Department has informed us that the need for social distancing and for wearing masks no longer applies. **However, if members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so.**

We have heard from many students and staff about how nervous you feel about no longer wearing a mask in school. **Please be assured that we will support anyone who wishes to continue to wear masks and request that everyone is respectful of individual decisions around mask wearing.**

The Department of Education also tells us that continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised. We will be continuing with measures in these areas to protect all in the school community.

One of the key messages from the Department of Education to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. **If infection is not introduced, it cannot be spread.** Our school's COVID team remind you that the requirement remains **to stay at home if you have symptoms.**

In general, for all other illnesses, the advice we have been given is not return to school until 48-hours symptom free.

We are grateful for the cooperation staff, parents/guardians and students have shown for the various measures that we have put in place over the past two years to ensure the safety of our whole school community.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours faithfully,

Kathleen O' Donovan Ryan  
Deputy Principal

**Letter to:** The Managerial Authorities of all recognised Primary, Post Primary and Special Schools  
**From:** Deirdre Shanley Assistant Secretary, Department of Education, 23 February 2022

### **Updated Covid-19 Guidance to Schools following the mid-term break 2022**

This note is to inform schools of the new public health advice from 28th February 2022. It is understood that schools may need time in order to make any adjustments depending on their own circumstances. It

On 21st of January 2022, the Government announced the easing of a number of public health measures. The infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings were to remain in place until 28th February 2022, so that all children of school going age would have the opportunity to avail of the Covid-19 vaccines.

On 17th February 2022, NPHE reviewed the remaining public health measures including the infection prevention control measures and restrictions in school settings.

Having closely considered relevant epidemiological data and other matters as set out in their letter of 17 February 2022, the Government has accepted the recommendations of the NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools. If members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so.

Continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised.

Critical components of the collective response in relation to COVID-19 continue to apply including self-isolation if symptomatic (even if fully vaccinated/boosted) or if having a positive COVID-19 test. In general, schools should now resume normal school routines and normal teaching and learning activities.

### **Staying at home if you have symptoms**

The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains – for students and staff alike. One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread.

### **Hand Hygiene**

Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Funding will continue to issue to schools for the purchase of PPE, including hand sanitiser.

### **Face coverings/mask wearing**

It is no longer a requirement for staff or pupils/students to wear a face covering/mask in school. Staff and student/pupils can continue to wear a face covering/mask if they wish to do so on a personal basis and schools should continue to make masks available on request as they are currently doing. Funding to support the purchase of PPE, including masks, will continue to be made available to schools.

### **School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing**

With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised. All other measures relating to hygiene (including the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning of services) and pre-assigned seating will remain in place subject to further review.

### **Cleaning and Hygiene in schools**

The Department of Education has provided additional funding to schools to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19.

This funding will continue for this academic year and will be reviewed in advance of the start of the next school year.

### **Physical Distancing**

#### **• Post Primary Schools**

The suite of measures set out in the Framework for physical distancing at post primary schools included, reconfiguring class spaces to maximise physical distancing; reviewing timetables, use of live streaming within the school; and accessing available spaces within the local community.

As the general requirement for physical distancing in society no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain these arrangements. Where these arrangements are impacting negatively on teaching and learning such as live streaming or restricting team teaching etc. they should cease immediately. It is not envisaged that timetables would be rearranged mid-year.

Use of changing rooms, PE halls and lockers, staff rooms etc. can resume where there has been limited access in this regard.

### **Visitors to schools/Parent teacher meetings**

There is no longer a requirement to restrict visitors to schools and schools should revert to the normal arrangements for visitors. In this context parent teacher meetings should resume and schools where parent teacher meetings have not taken place should commence these as soon as possible. All schools should ensure that they have a parent teacher meeting for each year group within this academic year (where these have not already taken place).

### **Return to Work Form/ return to schools form**

Schools no longer need to request staff or pupils/students to complete a Return to Work form or a Return to School form after school holidays/breaks.