



Swords Educate Together National School

Roll Number 20145 O

COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable operation of Swords Educate Together National School. 201450

August 2021.

General Information

Name of school:	Swords Educate Together N.S.
Address:	Applewood, Swords, Co. Dublin.
Telephone:	01 8903899
E-mail:	info@swordseducatetogether.ie
Denominational Character:	Equality Based
Patron:	Educate Together

Applewood, Swords, County Dublin.

Phone: (01)-8903899 Fax: (01)-8408752 E-mail: info@swordseducatetogether.ie

Web: www.swordseducatetogether.ie Charity No: 20119416

Principal: Karl Breen

Deputy Principal: Eoghan Beglan

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1) Introduction

In accordance with the Work Safety Protocol Swords ETNS, as a place of learning and a place of work, is required to have a COVID-19 Response Plan.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and helpful guidance for the safe operation through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in primary and special schools. It provides key messages to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of pupils and society as a whole.

This document focuses on the practical steps which have been taken in Swords ETNS to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection into schools while recognising that no interpersonal activity is without risk of transmission of infection at any time. The documentation and templates in this booklet are supported by the public health advice provided by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) for the safe reopening of schools and educational facilities. That report is available [here](#).

One of the key challenges is to balance the need for a practical and sensible level of caution with the need to provide a supportive environment for teaching and learning. This document identifies the steps Swords ETNS has taken to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school and the steps that have been taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school itself.

2) What is a COVID-19 Response Plan?

A COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) of Swords ETNS 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 practices necessary for our school to meet the Government's '*Work Safely Protocol*', to prevent the introduction and spread of Covid-19 in the school environment.

It is important that our school-based teaching and learning and the operation of school facilities complies with the public health advice and guidance documents prepared by the Department. Doing so minimises the risk to our pupils, staff and others. The response plan supports the sustainable operation of schools where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the pupils in the school. The COVID-19 response plan is a living document and will be updated in line with the public health advice as appropriate for our school.

In line with the Work Safely Protocol, the key to maintaining a safe school requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the BOM, staff, pupils and parents.

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

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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.

3) School COVID-19 Policy

A COVID-19 policy outlines the ongoing commitment of the school in implementing the plan and help prevent the introduction and spread of the virus. The revised updated policy will be signed and dated by the chairperson of the BOM and the School Principal. It will be brought to the attention of the staff, pupils, parents and others. See **Appendix 1**.

4) Reviewing the safe operation of schools

Swords ETNS BOM aims to facilitate the continuation of school-based teaching and learning and a safe working environment for staff. The operation of schools must be done safely and in strict adherence to the public health advice and any guidance issued by the Department of Education.

Details for the safe operation of a school facility and the applicable controls are outlined in this document. We have reviewed our current processes to ensure that they include the following:

- Arrangements to keep up to date with public health advice, changes to and Department of Education updates;
- Arrangements to pass on this information in a timely manner to staff, pupils, parents and others as required;
- Ensured that staff have reviewed the training materials provided by the Department of Education;
- Provided staff with access to the Return to Work (RTW) form; **Appendix 2**
- Identified a Lead Worker representative (**details at Section 4.3**);
- Displayed posters and other signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 (**details at Section 4.4**);
- Made the necessary changes to the school or classroom layout if necessary to support the redesign of classrooms to support physical distancing (**details at Section 4.5**);
- Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school, taking into account the importance of having educational materials to create a stimulating learning environment;
- Updated the health and safety risk assessment (**details at Section 4.6**);
- Made necessary arrangements to limit access to the school to necessary visitors and maintain records of contacts to the school (**details at 4.7**);
- Reviewed the school buildings to check the following after any period of closure:
 - Does the water system need flushing at outlets following low usage to prevent Legionella disease;
 - Has school equipment and mechanical ventilation been checked for signs of deterioration or damage before being used again;
 - Have bin collections and other essential services resumed. ———

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There are checklists in place to assist our school on the details of what is needed for these arrangements in the Appendices of this plan.

4.1) Induction Training (to be completed by all staff)

All 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.

Swords ETNS 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 updated with 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 or lead worker representatives, who are supported in this role by the BOM.

4.2) 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 online or from the principal. A copy is attached also at **Appendix 2**.

A RTW form should be completed and returned to the school **3 working days** before returning to work. Schools should request staff to confirm that the details in the Return to Work Form remain unchanged following subsequent periods of closure such as school holidays.

The principal will also provide details of the **Induction Training** for completion by new staff 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.

Details of the working arrangements that apply to the very high-risk school staff, is in accordance with those applying for the public service generally, and is detailed in the relevant Department of Education circulars available on the Department's website.

4.3) Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

LWRs have been appointed by the school and these staff members work in collaboration with the Principal, BOM and staff to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID -19 and monitor adherence to those measures. LWRs are also involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.

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Responsibility for the development, updating and implementation of the COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and school management.

Strong communication and a shared collaborative approach is key to protecting against the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and looking after the health, safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils. Adherence to the Work Safely Protocol will only be achieved if everyone has a shared responsibility in implementing the measures contained within the Protocol in their place of work.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the COVID-19 Response Plan, control measures or the adherence to such measures by staff, pupils or others he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the principal/BOM.

Role of the Lead Worker Representative

In summary, the role of the LWR is to:

Represent all staff in the workplace regardless of role, and be aware of specific issues that may arise in respect of different staff cohorts;

Work collaboratively with school management to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19;

Keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice;

In conjunction with school management, 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 school management with implementing infection prevention control measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace in line with the Work Safely Protocol and current public health advice;

In conjunction with school management, monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19;

Conduct regular reviews of safety measures;

Report any issues of concern immediately to school management and keep records of such issues and actions taken to rectify them;

Consult with the school management on the school's COVID-19 Response Plan in the event of someone developing COVID-19 while in school including the location of an isolation area and a safe route to that area;

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Following any incident, assess with the school management any follow up action that is required;

Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace;

Make representations to school management on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

Every school will appoint one Lead Worker Representative

In schools with less than 30 staff, a Deputy Lead Worker Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Deputy LWR will be to deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent.

In schools with 30 or more staff and in all Special schools, an Assistant Lead Worker Representative will be appointed in addition to the LWR. The role of the Assistant LWR will be to:

- assist the LWR in their duties as set out above; and
- deputise as LWR where the LWR is absent

<i>Name(s) of lead worker representative:</i>	<i>Contact details:</i>
<i>Fiona McKiernan</i>	<i>01-8903899</i>
<i>Marie McGee</i>	<i>01-8903899</i>

All staff, pupils, parents, 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 infection prevention control measures.

Full details of the arrangements which will apply for the LWR in primary and special schools is set out at **Appendix 3.**

4.4) Signage

Schools are required to display signage outlining the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene. -<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/information-for-schools-preschools-and-third-level-institutions-on-the-coronavirus.html#1>

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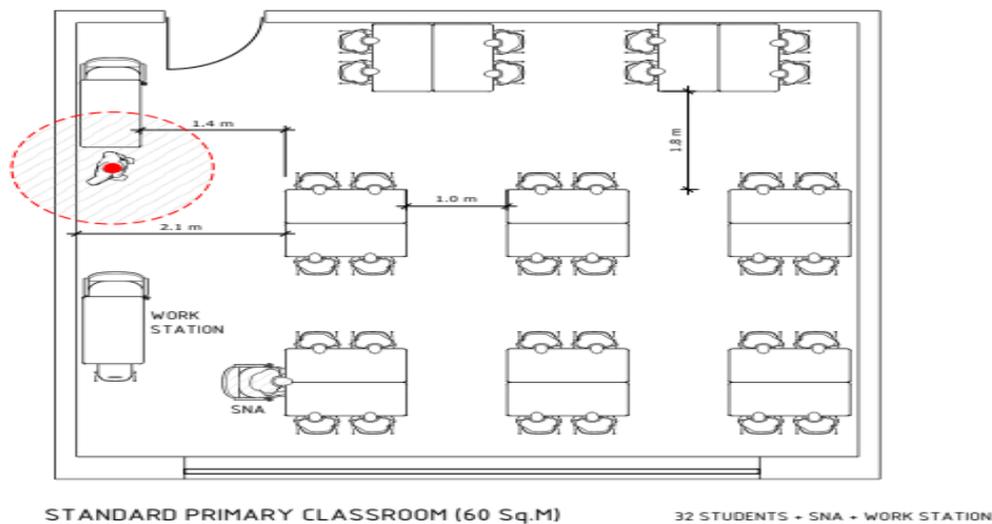
Swords ETNS display's these posters in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

4.5) Making Changes to School Layout

Maintaining physical distancing in the school environment is recommended as one of the key infection prevention control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of COVID-19. Information on how physical distancing can be used in the school environment is found at **Section 5.4** below.

The Department of Education has advised that schools can reconfigure classrooms and other areas as necessary to support physical distancing in line with the guidance. While we acknowledge that physical distancing within the classrooms in primary school is minimal. A suggested classroom structure will be provided to all teachers in advance of the beginning of the year. Interactions within the Pods will be limited where practicable.

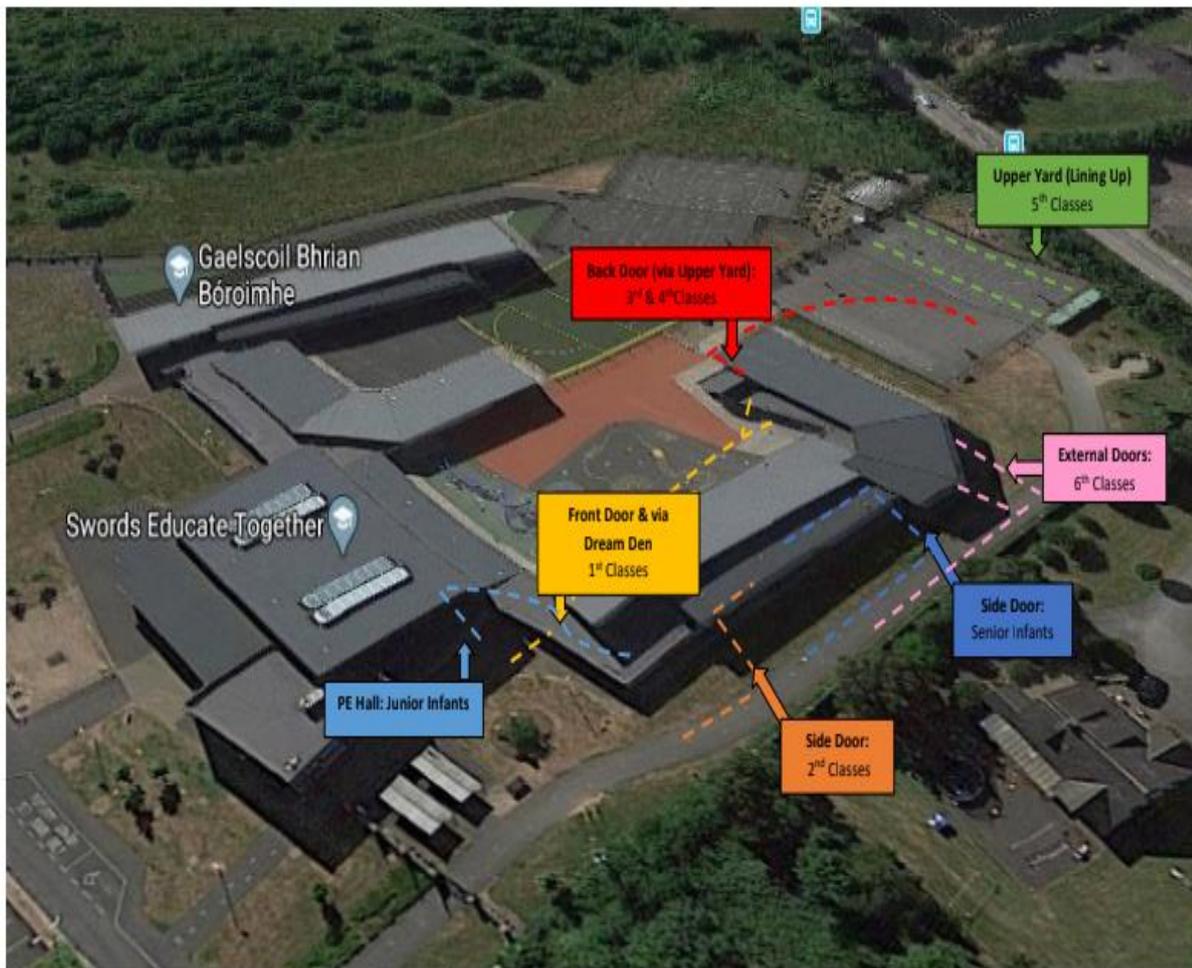
(Figure 1)



In Swords ETNS each class bubble exists separately. This includes separate yard time and space for each class as well as a staggered departure time at the end of the day. Children will arrive and depart through different entry/exit points around the school building.

(Figure 2)

Drop Off and Collection Points for Classes Junior (Junior Infants – 6th Class)



Procedure

- School Gates will open at 8.20a.m and entry points will be overseen by ISM/SEN Teams.
- Class teachers/SNAs will be in their classrooms to welcome the children.
- Children are required to walk to their entry points and straight to their respective classrooms.
- In line with DES and Government guidelines parents/guardians are not permitted into the school building. If parents/guardians have to enter the school grounds then face coverings must be worn and social distancing must be adhered to.
- We encourage parents to allow children to enter the school grounds on their own, at a social distance from other children.

Increased Supervision at reception time

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In order to minimise risk, increased supervision from staff will also be implemented. This will be done at arrival time at 8.20a.m. The following staff are responsible for ensuring the safe arrival of the children.

Morning Supervision 8.20a.m.		
ISM/SEN	Location	Classes
ISM	2nd Class Entrance	2nd Class
ISM	Foyer	1st Class Entrance
ISM	Top Yard	5th Class monitoring
ISM	Ramp on lower yard	3rd/4th Class Entrance
ISM	Hall	Junior Infant Entrance
SEN	Senior Infant Entrance	Senior Infants
SEN	Bottom Yard Playground	1st Class Entrance

4.6) Health and Safety Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A Risk Assessment has been completed by the Board of Management to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in our school setting. **Appendix 4.**

During the first term, Swords ETNS will review their emergency procedures involving, fire safety, first aid, accidents and dangerous occurrences to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's existing emergency procedures will be documented and incorporated into the school's safety statement.

We will also review our existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the current risk assessments will also be documented and incorporated into the school safety statement.

First Aid/Emergency Procedure

The standard First Aid/emergency procedure shall continue to apply in our school. In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, we will call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112/999 giving details of location and type of medical incident.

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4.7) Access to School and Contact Log

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

Arrangements for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. The Department of Education Inspectorate may also need to visit schools and centres for education to support them as appropriate in the implementation of public health advice relating to creating a safe learning and working environment for all.

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 shall be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and pupil contacts. See **Appendix 5**.

The Data Protection Commission has provided guidance on the data protection implications of the return to work protocols. This advice can be found here:

<https://www.dataprotection.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2020-07/Data%20Protection%20implications%20of%20the%20Return%20to%20Work%20Safely%20Protocol.pdf>

Schools are reminded that all school records and data must be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Acts. The responsibility for compliance with the legislation rests with each school (or ETB) in their role as data controller.

5) Infection Prevention Control Measures - To prevent Introduction and Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

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. The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; pupil-pupil, teacher-teacher and teacher- pupil and must be managed in all settings.

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 and visitors as far as possible within our school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

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

The best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene, follow respiratory etiquette and increase ventilation.

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Staff 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.

How to Minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Schools:

Promote awareness of COVID-19 symptoms (**details at Section 5.1**);

- Advise staff and pupils who have symptoms of Covid-19 not to attend school, to phone their doctor / HSE for advice regarding testing/ self-isolation
- Advise staff and pupils, to follow the HSE advice if they are a close contact of a suspected/ confirmed case of Covid-19.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff and pupils are advised to consult and follow latest Government advices in relation to foreign travel.
- Advise staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school to bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Ensure that staff and pupils know the protocol for managing a suspected case of COVID-19 in school (**details at Section 8**);
- Advise staff and pupils to cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;
- Everyone entering the school building needs to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser;
- Visitors to the school during the day should be by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point;
- Physical distancing (of 2m) should be maintained between staff and visitors where possible.

5.1) Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

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In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

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

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.

Common symptoms of coronavirus include:

- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above).
- a new cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry.
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties.
- loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your GP/HSE straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test.

Getting an early diagnosis means, you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

For the complete list of symptoms, please refer to the HSE Website. If you **do not** have symptoms, you can get a free COVID-19 (coronavirus) test at a COVID-19 walk-in test centre.

COVID-19 Tracker App

COVID Tracker app is a free and easy-to-use mobile phone app that will:

- alert you if you have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 (coronavirus)
- keep other app users safe by alerting them if you test positive for COVID-19
- give you advice on what to do if you have symptoms

You can download the free app from Apple's AppStore or the GooglePlay store

Employers and workers must keep themselves up to date on Public Health information as this can be updated on a regular basis. Public Health information on close contacts, casual contacts and testing is available from the HSE website. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

5.2) Respiratory Hygiene

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Swords ETNS promotes 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 and safely into a nearby bin.

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

5.3) Hand Hygiene

Staff and pupils should understand why hand hygiene is important as well as when and how to wash their hands.

Swords ETNS shall promote good hygiene and display posters throughout the schools on how to wash your hands. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

Use of hand hygiene facilities including wash hand basins needs to be managed so as to avoid congregation of pupils and staff waiting to use wash hand basins and hand sanitisers.

There is a requirement for access to hand washing facilities after activities that are likely to soil hands, for example playing outside or certain sporting activities as hand sanitiser does not work on dirty hands.

Hand sanitiser dispensers have been deployed throughout the school, at exit and entry points of schools and within classrooms. Care should be taken to clean up any hand sanitiser spills to prevent risks of falls.

Warm water is preferable to hot or cold water for hand washing but if the plumbing system only supplies cold water, a soap that emulsifies easily in cold water will be used.

Wash hand basins, running water, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets, kitchens and any food preparation areas.

Hand washing facilities should be maintained in good condition and supplies of soap and towels will be topped up regularly to encourage everyone to use them.

Posters displaying hand washing techniques and promoting hand washing are placed on walls adjacent to washing facilities.

Hand sanitiser is suitable for use for hand hygiene when hands are not visibly soiled (look clean).

Evidence of effectiveness is best for alcohol-based hand rubs but non-alcohol based hand rubs can be used too.

When hand rubs/gels are being used in our school care is taken to ensure that pupils do not ingest them as they are flammable and toxic.

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Young children should not have independent use of containers of alcohol gel.

Choosing a Hand Sanitiser

Hand sanitising gels are biocides and fall under the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) –Regulation (EU) 528/2012. The Pesticide Registration and Control Division (PRCD) of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is the competent authority for biocides in Ireland. Only biocidal products listed on the DAFM biocide product register are legal to market and use in Ireland. Schools should ensure that all sanitisers and disinfectants they have carry a PCS 9xxxx, PCS 1xxxxx, IE/BPA 7xxxx or an EU-000xxx-xx registration number on the label. Each product registered by DAFM will carry a unique registration number specific to that particular product. If the product label does not contain any of these number formats, Schools should not purchase or use the product. To confirm the biocide can be used on the Irish market, Schools can check the registers of products online at [Biocidal Product Registers](#). Further information from DAFM on Sanitisers and Disinfectants is available by contacting them at biocide-enforcement@agriculture.gov.ie or at the [Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine](#) website.

Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol. Non-alcohol based hand sanitiser may also be used. However, in choosing a hand sanitiser, it is important to ensure that it is effective against Coronavirus.

Frequency of Hand Hygiene

Pupils and staff will 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.

A drawdown framework which was established for the 2020/21 school year will continue to remain in place for the 2021/22 school year to enable schools to purchase necessary supplies of hand-sanitisers and PPE requirements. The Department will provide funding for the costs associated with hand sanitising and PPE requirements in schools.

5.4) Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is applied in our school setting allowing for some flexibility when needed. It must be applied in a practical way to recognise that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. Physical distancing will look different across the various ages and

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stages of learning. Care should be taken to avoid generating tension or potential conflict and some flexibility in the implementation of measures may be required at times.

It is also recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from pupils and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the pupil i.e. if a child sustains an injury and requires first aid.

However, where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1m distance and where possible 2m. They should also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

Physical distancing falls into two categories:

- Increasing separation
- Decreasing interaction

Increasing separation

The guidance documents provided by the Department of Education on optimal school layout and referenced at **Section 4.5** above are used by our school to increase separation to the greatest degree possible

To maintain physical distancing in the classroom, primary schools and special schools should:

- 1. Reconfigure class spaces to maximise physical distancing***
- 2. Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the school in order to maximise physical distancing***

To support primary schools and special schools in the implementation of physical distancing in the classroom, the Department has developed a suite of illustrative classroom layouts of potential options (including arrangements for special classes) which are in accordance with the public health advice, and assumes. Please see **Figure 1 (Section 4.5)** for our recommended Classroom layout (Junior Infants- 6th Class).

The teacher's desk should be at least 1m and where possible 2m away from pupil desks.

Decreasing interaction

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in a primary or special school will depend on the school setting and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between pupils.

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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 in the first four years of primary or special schools, is not a pre-requisite to reopening a primary or special school for all pupils.

Where possible work stations should be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces which are shared.

The risk of infection is reduced by structuring pupils and their teachers into Class Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible) and discrete groups or “Pods” within those class bubbles, to the extent that this is practical. **See Figure 2 (Section 4.5)**

If the class is divided into Pods, there should be at least (1m distance) between individual Pods within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible. Generally speaking the objective is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles as much as possible, rather than to avoid all contact between Pods, as the latter will not always be possible.

The aim of the system within the school is that class grouping mix only with their own class from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day.

To the greatest extent possible, pupils and teaching staff should consistently be in the same Class Bubbles although this will not be possible at all times.

Different Class Bubbles should where possible have separate breaks and meal times or separate areas at break or meal times (or this could be different class years i.e. 2nd class, 3rd class etc.)

Figure 3: Provisional Yard Rota (Covid-19)

Small Break	Zone 1 Lower Yard	Zone 2 Upper Yard	Zone 3 Side Path	Zone 4 Hall/Front Area
10:00-10:10	Class 1	Class 5	Class 9	Class 13
10:15-10:25	Class 2	Class 6	Class 10	Class 14
10:30-10:40	Class 3	Class 7	Class 11	Class 15
10:45-10:55	Class 4	Class 8	Class 12	Class 16
Big Break: <i>Can be used for P.E</i>	Zone 1 Lower Yard	Zone 2 Upper Yard	Zone 3 Side Path	Zone 4 Hall/Front Area
11.25-11.45	Class 1	Class 5	Class 9	Class 13
11.50-12.15	Class 2	Class 6	Class 10	Class 14
12.20-12.40	Class 3	Class 7	Class 11	Class 15
12.45-1.10	Class 4	Class 8	Class 12	Class 16

Children are encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after outdoor activities.

Additional measures to decrease interaction include:

Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas. (Figure 2)

Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.

Where pupils need to move about within the classroom to perform activities (access to a shared resource) it should be organized to the greatest degree possible to minimize congregation at the shared resource.

Staff and pupils should avoid sharing of personal items.

Encourage pupils to avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact (putting pens/pencils in the mouth).

Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.

Physical Distancing outside of the classroom and within the school

School drop off/collection Arrangements:

Swords ETNS have implemented a staggered departure in order to maximise physical distancing between Class Bubbles. This also alleviates footfall outside the school building and minimises the risk of infection. Departure points will be the same as entry points as identified in **Figure 2 (Section 4.5)**

<i>Class Level</i>	<i>Departure Time</i>
<i>1st Class</i>	<i>2.00p.m</i>
<i>2nd Class</i>	<i>2.05p.m</i>
<i>3rd Class</i>	<i>2.00p.m</i>
<i>4th Class</i>	<i>2.05p.m</i>
<i>5th Class</i>	<i>2.10p.m</i>
<i>6th Class</i>	<i>2.00p.m</i>

Staff

A distance of 2m is recommended for physical distancing by staff. This is particularly relevant to distancing between adults when they are not engaged in teaching such as the staff room and arriving to work.

If 2m cannot be maintained in staff groups, as much as distance as is possible and updated guidance on face covering should be observed.

Physical distancing will be observed between staff members within the staff room through the use of staggered breaks.

Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.

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There will be no hand shaking and staff are encouraged not to congregate before or after school and must vacate their classrooms before **2.45p.m.** each day to facilitate cleaning requirements associated with this plan.

Corridors and Stairwells

Briefly passing someone in a hall is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions.

Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between users by different people.

Ventilation

The Department of Education has published guidance setting out the practical steps for good ventilation in accordance with public health advice '*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*' The guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort, particularly during cold weather. The Department has also published guidance regarding on how these practical steps measures can be supplemented and enhanced by the use of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) monitors. Links to all aforementioned guidance can be accessed [here](#).

5.5) Use of PPE in Schools

The Department has published "[Guidance to Primary and Special Schools on PPE consumables and equipment](#)" on www.gov.ie/backtoschool

This provides schools with the information needed on the appropriate quantities of PPE consumables and equipment to support the safe and sustainable operations of schools.

The updated advice from the HPSC to the Department of Education has recommended that **face coverings should be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils.** The Department has accepted this recommendation. (Please see note re medical grade masks on page 23) In certain situations the use of clear visors should be considered, for example staff interacting with pupils with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties.

Staff should be trained in the proper use, donning/doffing, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE. The HPSC has produced posters and videos on the correct donning and doffing of PPE available on the HPSC and HSA websites https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/covid-19_business_supports/business_supports/hse-hpsc_posters_and_videos/

PPE will also need to be used at certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:

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- Performing intimate care
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not in the list of those categorised as people in very high risk groups, or may be living with people who are in a very high risk category
- Administering first aid

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

Reception Areas

Consideration should be given to the use of Perspex in reception areas where it is not possible for staff to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or pupils. Minor works funding grant can be used for this purpose.

Face Coverings/Masks

The wearing of face coverings or masks in general is not a substitute for other measures outlined below (physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, adequate ventilation, minimising contacts) but they may be used in addition to these protective measures, especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult.

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 coverings 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.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Primary school children
- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

In childcare and educational settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers and staff caring for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face-coverings.

Further advice from the HPSC on the use of face coverings in educational settings was received on the 6th August 2020. This advice is available [here](#).

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All staff wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.

Information should be provided on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6ZqdpLfSqw>

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Schools should consider having additional disposable face coverings available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Whilst staff may wish to utilise their own face covering on a day-to-day basis, Swords ETNS will provide additional disposable or multi-use face coverings, or if appropriate face visors, available for staff in case a back-up face covering is needed throughout the day or where required on an ongoing basis.

Medical Grade Masks

Swords ETNS provides medical grade masks in the EN14683 category to all SNAs and teachers. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate but may be necessary for cleaning, intimate care settings and when administering first aid. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Aprons

Aprons may also be appropriate in certain circumstances including for intimate care needs or for staff assigned to cleaning an area where a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 was present.

6) Impact of COVID-19 on certain school activities

Choir/Music Performance

Choir practices/performance and music practices/performance involving wind instruments may pose a higher level of risk and special consideration should be given to how they are held ensuring that the room is well-ventilated and the distance between performers is maintained.

Sport Activities

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Swords ETNS will refer to the HPSC guidance on Return to Sport. Link to return to sport protocols is found here.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/07253-return-to-sport-protocols/>

Shared Equipment

Toys

All toys will be cleaned on a regular basis for example weekly. This will remove dust and dirt that can harbour germs. Toys that are visibly dirty or contaminated with blood or bodily fluids will be taken out of use immediately for cleaning or disposal. If cloth or soft toys are used they should be machine washable.

Jigsaws, puzzles and toys that young pupils to those with special educational needs may be inclined to put into their mouths should be capable of being washed and disinfected. All play equipment should be checked for signs of damage for example breaks or cracks. If they cannot be repaired or cleaned they should be discarded.

Clean toys and equipment should be stored in a clean container or clean cupboard. The manufacturer's instructions should always be followed.

At this time soft modelling materials and play dough where used should be for individual use only.

Cleaning Procedure for Toys

- Wash the toy in warm soapy water, using a brush to get into crevices.
- Rinse the toy in clean water.
- Thoroughly dry the toy.
- Some hard plastic toys may be suitable for cleaning in the dishwasher.
- Toys that cannot be immersed in water that is electronic or wind up should be wiped with a damp cloth and dried.
- In some situations toys/equipment may need to be disinfected following cleaning for example: toys/equipment that pupils place in their mouths. Toys/equipment that have been soiled with blood or body fluids or toys where a case of COVID-19 has been identified.
- If disinfection is required: A chlorine releasing disinfectant should be used diluted to a concentration of 1,000ppm available chlorine. The item should be rinsed and dried thoroughly.

Art – Where possible pupils should be encouraged to have their own individual art and equipment supplies.

Electronics – Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use and consideration could be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronics to facilitate cleaning.

Musical Equipment/Instruments – To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between pupils and if sharing is required, the instruments should be cleaned between uses.

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Library Policy – Where practical pupils should have their own books. Swords ETNS Book Rental System ensures that all children have their own textbooks and are required to look after them accordingly. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene after using any shared item.

Shared Sports Equipment – Minimise equipment sharing and clean shared equipment between uses by different people.

7) Hygiene and Cleaning 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.

The specific advice in relation to school cleaning is set out in the HPSC advice and is covered in the induction training. This advice sets out the cleaning regime required to support schools to prevent COVID-19 infections and the enhanced cleaning required in the event of a suspected cases of COVID-19. Schools are asked to carefully read and understand the cleaning advice and to apply that to all areas of the school as appropriate.

Schools are reminded to take particular care of the hygiene arrangements for hand washing and toilet facilities.

In summary, Swords ETNS is cleaned at **least once per day**. Additional cleaning is focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

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.). **Staff are asked to place their own utensils, plate, cup etc into the dishwasher after use.**

Cleaning/Disinfecting rooms where a pupil/staff member with suspected COVID-19 was present

The room should be cleaned as soon as practicably possible.

Once the room is vacated the room should not be reused until the room has been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry.

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Disinfection only works on things that are clean. When disinfection is required it is always as well as cleaning.

Person assigned to cleaning should avoid touching their face while they are cleaning and should wear household gloves and a plastic apron.

Clean the environment and furniture using disposable cleaning cloths and a household detergent followed by disinfection with a chlorine based product (household bleach).

Pay special attention to frequently touched surfaces, the back of chairs, couches, door handles and any surfaces that are visibly soiled with body fluids.

Once the room has been cleaned and disinfected and all surfaces are dry, the room can be reused.

If a pupil or staff diagnosed with COVID-19 spent time in a communal area for example, staffroom, play area or if they used the toilet or bathroom facilities, then the areas should be cleaned with household detergent followed by a disinfectant (as outlined in the HPSC interim health advice) as soon as is practically possible.

8) Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Staff or pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. The following outlines how Swords Educate Together National School will deal with a suspected case that may arise.

Designated isolation areas have been identified within the school building.

- **Isolation Area 1 is located in the PTA Kitchen (adjacent to the P.E Hall)**
- **Isolation Area 2 is located on ground floor stairwell under 2nd Class Room 9.**
- **Isolation Area 3 is located in the Principal's office.**

**Isolation Area 2 should only be used in the case where Isolation Area 1 is in use.*

** Isolation Area 3 should only be used when Isolation Area 1 & 2 are in use.*

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Swords Educate Together National School, the following are the procedures to be implemented:

Suspected Case (Child)

If a child displays symptoms of Covid-19 please call the Office/The Principal using your mobile phone in the classroom. **(Mobile Phone Policy still applies except to make this call)**

- The Principal to attend and remove child from the classroom and bring to isolation point.
- If The Principal is not available, please contact your SEN person who will come and remove the child from the classroom and bring to Isolation Room.
- Always use Isolation Room 1 in the first instance.
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms if one is available.
- Remind child not to touch anything during the transition to Isolation Room.
- The Principal/SEN Teacher should wear appropriate PPE and remain at least 2 metres from the child.
- The School Secretary to be informed to call parent/guardian while the Principal/SEN Teacher remains with the child.
- Facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go home.

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- The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the child 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.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Parents/guardians should pick up the child as soon as possible and child should be received by them through the nearest emergency exit (Hall/2nd Class Stairwell/Principal's office)
- At this point the classroom where the child came from should be isolated and HSE to be called for advice and recommendations.
- No further exit or entry to the classroom where the suspected outbreak has occurred should be permitted. Phone communication only via teacher and The Principal/Office.
- Isolation Room to be fully disinfected by Cleaner.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery

Suspected Case (Teacher/Staff Member)

- If a staff member begins to display symptoms then they should remove themselves from the classroom as quickly as possible, put on a mask and proceed to their car in the car park.
- Call the Principal
- The Principal to inform SEN Teacher/Deputy Principal to monitor the class.
- Principal to liaise with staff member and advise them to call their GP immediately. The Principal to liaise with staff member outside and at 2m physical distance.
- If they are too unwell to go home or seek advice, Principal will contact 999 or 112 and inform that the patient is a suspected Covid-19 case.
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.

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.**

Contact with Confirmed Cases

If a confirmed case is identified in the school, staff who have had close contact should follow current HSE advice regarding close contacts.

If the person develops new symptoms or their existing symptoms worsen within their 14-day observation period, they should call their doctor for reassessment.

Personnel who have been in close contact with a confirmed case include:

- Any individual who has had greater than 15 minutes face-to-face (<2 meters distance) contact with a confirmed case, in any setting.
- House-hold/family contacts.

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- Passengers on an aircraft sitting within two seats (in any direction) of a confirmed case, travel companions or persons providing care, and crew members serving in the section of the aircraft where the index case was seated

For those contacts who have shared a space with a confirmed case for more than 2 hours, a risk assessment will be undertaken by Public Health Authority taking into consideration the size of the room, ventilation and the distance from the case. This may include office and training settings and any sort of large conveyance

9) Special Educational Needs

Additional considerations for those with Special Educational Needs.

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances will not be practical or appropriate to implement. The focus should therefore be on emphasising that parents/guardians should have a heightened awareness of signs, symptoms or changes in baseline which suggests illness/COVID-19 infection and where symptoms are present children should not attend school.

Similarly, staff should be aware of their responsibility not to attend work if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

Hand hygiene

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using soap and water or a hand sanitiser (if their hands are visibly clean) as outlined previously.

Equipment

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which requires the use of aids and appliances and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where cleaning of aids and appliances is carried out in the school it is recommended that a cleaning schedule is provided, detailing when and how the equipment is cleaned and the cleaning products to be used in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions.

The following points can guide the development of such cleaning schedule:

- Equipment used to deliver care should be visibly clean;
- Care equipment should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Cleaning is generally achieved using a general purpose detergent and warm water.
- Equipment that is used on different children must be cleaned and, if required, disinfected immediately after use and before use by another child e.g. toileting aids;
- If equipment is soiled with body fluids:
 - First clean thoroughly with detergent and water;
 - Then disinfect by wiping with a freshly prepared solution of disinfectant;
 - Rinse with water and dry.

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10) 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. 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. In this regard and in order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adhere to the School COVID-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined.
- Complete the RTW form before they return to work.
- Must inform the principal if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace.
- New staff must complete COVID-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school.
- Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices.
- Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained.
- Make themselves aware of the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
- Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Not return to or attend school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 under any circumstances.
- Follow the HSE guidance if they are identified as a close contact.
- If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- If they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above.
- Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.
- Cooperate with any public health personnel and their school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their school
- Undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health

11) COVID-19 related Absence Management

The management of a COVID-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

12) Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Swords ETNS recognises the need for school staff wellbeing and collective self-care. Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team. An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for

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individual staff members in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention. The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum Life under the logo of '*Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile*'.

The EAS is a self-referral service where employees have access to a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc. The service is also available via SMS, WhatsApp, e-mail, live chat and call back request. All points of contact for the service are qualified, accredited and experienced mental health professionals.

Where required, short-term counselling is available to employees and their families (over the age of 18 years and living at home).

The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.

A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available which offers access to podcasts, blogs, live chats and videos on topics around wellbeing and mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. E-Learning programmes across mental health, sleep and a range of wellbeing topics are also available. In addition online cognitive behavioural therapy is provided. As part of the services provided by Spectrum.Life a Mental Health Promotion Manager is available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives to reduce stigma and improve mental health literacy and to increase engagement with the service. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.

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Swords ETNS COVID 19 Policy Statement

Swords 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 and updated 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
- 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
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- 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 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), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed:  Chairperson

Date: **24/08/2021**

Signed:  Principal

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BOM Ratification

This **COVID-19 Response Plan** for the safe and sustainable operation of Swords ETNS was presented to the Board of Management on;

24th August 2021.

Signed



Chairperson Board of Management

Signed



Principal

Glossary of Terms

- **COVID-19 Response Plan:** plan designed to support the staff and BOM/ ETB in putting infection prevention control measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the school environment. The plan details the policies and practices necessary for a school to meet the Work Safely Protocol, Department of Education and public health guidance to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in the school environment. COVID-19 Response Plans for Primary and Special Schools are available on the Department's website.
- **Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF):** the forum for high level dialogue between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives on matters of strategic national importance - involves the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Government & Employers.
- **Work Safely Protocol:** national protocol designed to support employers and workers to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- **Safety Representative:** Section 25 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 sets out the selection and role of the Safety Representative in the workplace. The rights of the Safety Representative are set out in legislation. (Note: A Safety Representative has rights and not duties under the 2005 Act). This role is separate to the LWR under COVID-19.

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