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**Covid Policy Statement**

Divine Word N.S. 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:  Date: 23/08/2021

Chairperson of BOM

**Covid Response Plan**

**Underlying Principles**

* The school has a responsibility to make an effort to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of all members of our school community – children, parents, and staff. This plan has been formulated to better ensure that the school can exercise that duty of care.
* Assuming it is in keeping with public health advice and guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Skills, it is preferable for all children to return to school for all five days of the school week and for a full school day. This plan has been formulated to achieve that aim.
* It is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection. However, with the co-operation of all members of our school community, it is possible to minimise the risk of the virus being introduced to school and the consequent risk of its spread. In this light it is important that parents ***do not send sick*** ***children to school.***
* As well as co-operation, the flexibility and goodwill of all will be required to ensure the plan can be implemented.

**Assumptions**

* All children return to school and classes operate within a bubble system. A class will now be called a Bubble.
* The school, as you are aware, is split into classes. Classes and children will arrive and depart from school according to alphabetical order of surnames.
* Classes (with the exception of junior infants), for the purpose of breaktimes, will play in their own zone in the yard, in their own bubble sharing a supervisor. These breaktimes will be staggered.
* The day will include 1x 10-minute break and 1 x 30-minute break for each bubble.
* Within each class from 3rd to 6th, the children will be further divided into pods, with a minimum distance of 1 metre being maintained between pods (approx. 5/6 in a pod).
* Hand sanitiser will be available at all entry points and in all classrooms and learning support rooms and children will be reminded to wash their hands at regular intervals.

**Entrance & Exit Points for Specific Classes:**

All classes will enter and exit from their individual classroom doors. If necessary, parents can bring their children to the buffer line (Yellow) in the yard. Children only are permitted beyond the yellow line.

**Arrival at school**

Children are requested to arrive at school at the times below. We ask for co-operation with these times as it will mean that the numbers congregating on school grounds at any one time will be minimised.

Children should enter their classroom via their individual outside door (6th classes enter the new building by the main door)

* No adults, other than staff members, should enter the building. Visitors to the school will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal. All visitors will be required to fill in a contract tracing log.
* Messages for teachers can be sent by email or by phoning the school office.
* Children will arrive to school according to alphabetical order of surnames and as follows:

8.50am: Surnames: A to F

9.00am: Surnames: G to M

9.05am: Surnames: N to Z

**End of School Day**

* Adults who are collecting their children from school at the end of the day should wait outside the gate, in the car, or at a 2m distance at the buffer line in the yard.
* Children will exit their classroom doors.
* There will be staggered departure times as follows:

2.20pm: Surnames A to F

2.25pm: Surnames G to M

2.30pm: Surnames N to Z

**Collection of Children during the School Day**

If an adult must collect a child during the school day, the following arrangements will apply

* Please use Aladdin Connect to notify the school your child will be leaving early.
* When the adult arrives at the school, they should either phone the office or use the intercom at the front door of the school to alert the office that they have arrived
* The adult who is collecting will be asked to sign the child out at the front office
* No adult should enter the school building, unless by prior appointment or to collect their child(ren)

# Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following are the procedures will be implemented:

* Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
* The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area via the isolation route by a member of staff. The staff member will wear PPE and remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times. The child may also be isolated in the classroom at a distance of 2m.
* A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms if one is available. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.
* An assessment will be made by the teacher and Principal/Deputy Principal as to whether the child who is displaying symptoms can immediately be brought home by parents and call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home.
* The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and will assist them by calling their GP.
* The child presenting with symptoms should be given a disposable tissue, advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
* If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
* If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
* Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

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.

**Children who should not attend school**

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school –

* Children displaying symptoms of Covid -19.
* Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19.
* Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19.
* Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
* Children who live with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19, and the outcome of the test is pending.
* Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school.
* Children who are generally unwell.
* Children who are advised to quarantine/restrict movement/have a PCR test etc due to travel according to the latest government advice. <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/75d92-covid-19-travel-advice/>

**Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot attend school**

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the learning support teacher, where relevant) will provide suggested activities to support the child’s learning at home and will be shared with parents in line with our Distance Learning Policy.

**Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class**

If the school is notified that a person in your child’s class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19

* Public health advice will be sought and followed

**Personal Equipment**

* In so far as possible, it is requested that children from 1st to 6th Class will bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment.
* It is further requested that all items have the child’s name on them for ease of identification.
* For children in Junior and Senior Infants, the school will provide stationery.

**Shared Equipment**

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including tablets, laptops and the equipment used for structured activities and play in infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

**Yards**

Each bubble of 19 classes will have access to the yards during their allotted break times as follows. The Junior Yard will be divided into three sections, the Senior yard into four sections and the Basketball court into 2 sections. The grass area will also be in use on dry days

Yards will be supervised by class teachers, learning support teachers and SNAs working within those bubbles.

**Learning Support**

In keeping with our Special Education policy, learning support will be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal. The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work within the confines of a bubble.

* Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
* The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different groups attending.

**PPE**

While it is not envisaged that PPE will be worn by staff in general, staff who are attending to particular care needs or who are administering first aid will wear appropriate PPE including gloves and face masks. It may be necessary for staff to wear a face mask/visor if they are unable to maintain a 2m distance from pods within the class. A roster has been drawn up for all our outdoor spaces to maximise their usage when not being used for breaks.

**Teacher Absence and Substitution**

In the event that teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for the class to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

**Uniform:**

During the Covid-19 pandemic the school is operating a flexible uniform policy. Children can wear their school tracksuit on days when their uniform is in the wash and visa versa. Children are advised to wear comfortable shoes as we are hoping to provide as much outdoor activities as possible for the first few weeks. This may be reviewed and changed.

**PE**

Where possible, PE should take place outdoors and use of equipment should be confined to the sets that have been identified by class groupings. If the PE hall is being used by class groupings, common touch points should be cleaned at intervals throughout the school day. However, the PE hall may need to be used as storage for excess classroom furniture.

**Extra-curricular Activities**

The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored. However, it would not be recommended that children from different bubbles would participate in extra-curricular activities at the same time. The staggered finishing times will also make the scheduling of after-school activities problematic. The BOM has therefore decided that for the foreseeable future there will be no pre or post school activities within the school building. This policy will be updated when further DES and HSE guidelines become available.

This response plan will be reviewed and changed in line with public health advice.

Signed:  Amended Date: 16/09/2021

Chairperson of BOM