

**RETURN TO SCHOOL**

**POLICY**

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| **Responsibility of:** **Date ratified by BOG:****Review Date:**  | Mrs E. Woodin (Principal) September 2020**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  |

**Rationale**

This policy exists as a result of the need to implement a plan for return to school after a period of school closure from 20th March 2020, due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

**Aims**

* To advise Staff, Parents and Pupils on a manageable recovery plan for school return in August 2020.
* To provide guidance relating to the actions that encourage continuity of learning for every child. It provides a common reference point for school Governors, leaders and staff as they prepare for the ‘new normal’.
* To advise on health and safety guidelines for all members of the school community

This policy/ recovery plan has been created in agreement with guidance provided by ***Department of Education Circular 2020/ 05 Guidance for Schools on Supporting Remote Learning to Provide Educational Continuity.***

The policy also takes into account guidance on ***‘Supporting Learning; The Continuity of Learning Project’*** as well as the ***Education Restart Programme***.

To read the ‘**Coronavirus Northern Ireland Re-Opening of School Guidance’** please use the link

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-re-opening-school-guidance-new-school-day>

Please be aware this Policy is stipulating guidelines. Social distancing is a legal requirement and is in contradiction to our inclusive, pastoral ethos. While we aim to ALWAYS put the needs of our child first with a nurturing approach, we ask parents to be patient and understanding for what will be, hopefully, a short period of time. Staff are committed to meeting the needs of the children.

Please read this policy alongside all other existing school policies e.g. Pastoral Care, Safeguarding, SEN and Inclusion which will be available to view on the school website in August/September.

**Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated school leaders, staff and Governors to work in ways which differ greatly from what we know and understand as normal practice. Fundamentally, this has meant implementing a new routine of remote/online learning and teaching and engaging educationally with learners in a wide variety of different ways. Maine Integrated Primary School adapted quickly to the Minister of Education’s decision to close schools in NI as a result of the coronavirus. We made provision for remote learning with the use of a range of paper and online learning materials, whilst also providing supervision for the children of Key Workers and vulnerable children.

Our primary methods of maintaining contact with parents was through the use of the email and the Mathletics and Study-Ladder platform. Our plan for August is that, although most/all children will be back, the P1 -P7 classes will continue to use Seesaw for both communication purposes and some aspects of homework. The P3-7 will continue to use Study-Ladder. Google classroom and/or Microsoft Teams will be introduced to P5/P6/P7

The underpinning principle is that all pupils will have access to high quality learning and teaching opportunities both in school and at home.

**Practical Arrangements (for the ‘new’ school day)**

Government guidelines suggest that children should return to school, with children in class bubbles but keeping distance as far as possible. Children must adhere to 2 metre from adults and adults must adhere to 2 metre distance from other adults.

While NI schools can learn from the wider international community where children have already returned to school, there are still many unknowns and, indeed, we are aware that this could change over the next number of weeks. As a result, we have had to face the huge responsibility of designing and developing a school system that will help reduce potential viral transfer amongst children. Schools are being asked to implement systems and structures that seek to reduce each child’s number of close physical contacts as far as possible. It is widely acknowledged that social distancing in the early years of primary school will be extremely difficult. During the school day children may become upset or need reassurance from staff and this should be given by staff comforting the children.

Our model will be based on Government guidance: class bubbles for children with 2m distancing from adults and between adults, which will help to reduce each child’s close physical contacts to a minimum.

As far as possible, classes will be supported by consistent staffing. Each class will be in their own protective bubble in their own classroom area. Classrooms have been rearranged to support social distancing recommendations and continuity as well as safety. Each class will have their break/ lunch time and playtime allocation and separate play areas unless PHA/government guidance allows for this to change.

In practice we understand that there are times when other staff members may need to provide cover for children from another cohort. However, this should be for limited periods and physical distancing must be maintained between adults. Staff should ensure strict hygiene practices are carried out if they are caring for different groups.

**School Day**

Primary 7 children will attend school full-time from 24th August 2020.

Primary 1 -6 pupils will return on either Thursday or Friday as part of a transition process.

From 1st September, all children will be in every day:

* P2- until 2.00pm and P3-P7 until 3.00pm (P3 on Friday till 2pm)
* P1 children will have a staggered start as usual - the whole P1 class will then be in together to 12.00pm daily until 1st of October. Thereafter, the class will attend until 2.00pm.

Until we have the facilities available, Breakfast Club will not be able to take place. All pupils should come in via the entrance assigned to their class, where their teacher or a classroom assistant will be waiting for them. Parents should not enter the school. Again, for social distancing measures, there should be NO children playing in playground in the morning. Parents are expected to drop off and pick up promptly.

Where parents are dropping off young children and it is not possible to maintain physical distancing between adults, staff and children should wash hands after the child is safely in the classroom.

**Staggered Drop Off and Pickup Times**

There will be a staggered approach to drop off pick up to adhere to social distancing law and ensure these times are not congested and crowded.

Children may be dropped off/picked up at the pre-arranged time for each class. Punctuality is expected for the school day to run smoothly.

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### Provision of meals and snacks

It is important for us to continue to ensure that mealtimes are a relaxed and enjoyable time, when children can socialise, while implementing practical approaches to prevent the spread and control of infection.

Staff will follow usual good hygiene practices when preparing or serving food or assisting children with packed lunches. Children entitled to Free School Meals will be able to receive them. Meals will be served in the classrooms for the first weeks.

Lunchtimes for younger and older pupils will be staggered and children will remain in classrooms to eat. Thorough cleaning will take place before and after to ensure high levels of hygiene. When possible the use of the outdoor environment for dining will be considered.

Movement around school will be reduced so the likelihood of pupils using other areas of school e.g. hall, music room, library will be minimal.

**Other Information**

Each child should bring their own resources to use in school: pencil case labelled and containing pencils, colouring pens, etc. as previously indicated. These items will remain in school.

Initially, children will not require a school bag. They will need their own separate tray/box file to house all their belongings.

It is intended that the only items a child will bring between home and school is a homework/reading book and a lunchbox.

Children will be encouraged to bring their own water drinkers/ bottles from home.

**Uniform**

The usual school uniform policy applies.

A full school uniform is required:

* a school sweatshirt or cardigan, red polo shirt,
* navy trousers or shorts for boys,
* navy skirt/pinafore/trousers/blue summer dress for girls,
* with black shoes.

It is encouraged that clean fresh uniform is worn daily, though this is not essential.

**Homework**

Due to the fact that we are encouraged to limit children bringing from items such as bags into school and taking items from our school at the end of each day, we plan to set the majority of homework on Monday and returned on Friday. Children can take a screen shot of completed work and send it to the teacher

OR work will be set online and sent through Seesaw.

The only exception to this will be P7 children who require preparation for AQE/GL assessment.

While we realise it is sharing materials between home and school, reading will continue to be the same as usual with books sent home as we feel this is the most effective way to develop reading skills in P1-P3. Children in P4-P7 will use EPIC and Bug Club/Accelerated Reader to practise their reading. Children will be listened to on a daily basis by the class teacher.

Normal homework will resume fully when the risk of spreading the virus has eased.

Using Seesaw/Study-Ladder/Google Classrooms/Microsoft 365 is an effective way also for children to continue to build on their digital literacy skills. As with all homework, younger pupils will need support whilst older pupils should be able to learn more independently.

Feedback will be regular and designed to keep pupils motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. Feedback will allow pupils to feel their work is being monitored and families feel communication lines are open. Feedback will be specific to what children did well and what and how they may need to develop further.

**Monitoring & Evaluating/ Assessment**

We are all too aware of the gaps in learning that may exist when pupils return to school. In Maine Integrated Primary School we will endeavour to minimise lockdown learning gaps as soon as possible.

As children have missed the third term of their last school year, we will be considering what monitoring and assessment of pupils’ progress is feasible during Term 1 of the new academic year.

As well as self and peer assessment, on-going teacher assessment will continue, and the emphasis will be on levels of engagement, well-being and formative assessment for learning.

Formative assessment methods include practical tasks, quizzes, polls, self-assessment, asking pupils to record themselves explaining a concept or ideas. These methods will help teachers to better understand how pupils are achieving and to check whether they are ready to move on. The needs of the learner will be central to our approach as teachers. More formal methods of assessment will be considered in October when pupils have resettled into school life.

**Pastoral Care/ Safeguarding/ SEN**

As we prepare for return to school, we realise the need for increased pastoral support. We realise the context may have resulted in changed or challenging family dynamics.

Some children may find it hard to return to school and may require specific support to help them adjust to changes in their school routines and environment. Children returning to school are going to experience a range of emotions. This may include a mixture of excitement, happiness and relief but may also include anxiety, fear and anger. Children with additional needs may find the return to school more challenging than their peers.

*‘Actively involving young people in the planning for their return to school will help to reduce their worries and the emotional impact of the process. Being proactively involved will reignite a sense of belonging and reduce their anxiety. If possible, children should have an opportunity to get involved whilst still at home.’*

We will be considering social and emotional well-being, mental health, heightened anxiety, separation/ attachment issues, bereavement and re-adjustment to school challenges that children may face. While a nurturing approach is central to our whole school ethos, this will be prevalent and at the forefront more than ever. Teachers will encourage the children to complete mindfulness activities. Classical music will be introduced to class while the children are washing their hands.

Assemblies will be held in our own classrooms for the foreseeable future until we learn it is safe to conduct them as a whole school in the hall.

Upon return to school we will use developmentally appropriate language to explain and discuss the new rules for staying safe at school regarding social distancing and hand hygiene and would appreciate parents reinforcing such messages at home.

At this time, reconnecting with the local support services who are part of the school system is vital. This includes educational psychologists, education welfare officers, children’s social services, peripatetic teachers, child mental health teams, and mental health practitioners. These professionals will be delivering services that can support planning for the reopening and respond to requests to develop plans for children’s needs.

Events such as PTA fund raising events, information evenings etc., will be arranged differently to abide by the law and information will be communicated via Facebook and email. As we come to terms with the new way of school life, we will become more adept and creative at finding new ways to do things so that no one misses out!

Schools will already have Acceptable Use Policies in place. It will be important that

any new arrangements should are discussed, agreed and included within the school’s

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**Behaviour**

Sanctions will be in place (up to and including exclusion) for pupils who wilfully refuse to adhere to the arrangement of social distancing and deliberately cough or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk.

**Settling-in**

In September children may require additional time to reintegrate into the new school day. We will ensure our children feel reassured and confident about returning to school. Parents can communicate any worries or anxieties that they or the children have about returning to school via the class teacher or by emailing Mrs Woodin. The school will implement strategies to alleviate such concerns.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Pupils Who Are Clinically Vulnerable**

All schools are asked to follow the latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions or who live with individuals who have health conditions or are pregnant. Current guidance on these categories is published on NI Direct and by PHA.

Clinically vulnerable people are a wider group of people who are distinct from those who are clinically extremely vulnerable (who have rigorously followed shielding measures). People who are clinically vulnerable are those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the social distancing guidance and remain at home where possible. A small minority of children will fall into this category and parents should follow medical advice if their child is in this category.

**Pupils Who Live with Someone Who is Clinically Vulnerable**

 If a child or young person lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable as above), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting.

**Pupils Who Were Previously Shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people)**

The most up-to-date guidance and list of underlying health conditions that necessitated shielding should be checked on the NI Direct website under the shielding section. The latest advice recommends that clinically extremely vulnerable pupils/individuals who are unable to work from home can now return to school subject to risk assessment, if their parents so wish. If a parent chooses not to send their clinically extremely vulnerable child back to school, we will provide distance learning and support needs for the child.

**Pupils Who Are Living with Someone Who was Previously Shielding**

Pupils who have household members who are clinically extremely vulnerable (at high risk of severe illness and requiring 'shielding') may attend school but should continue to stringently adhere to social distancing. Such children should have an individual risk assessment conducted to determine and guide procedures.

**Administration for school dinners**

We aim to put the dinner menu on the website. Parents should ensure that they use the cashless system or contact the office to place an order.

**Visitors to School/ Trips**

At present there will be no trips planned, swimming etc. We will keep you informed when these are possible again.

Visitors coming into school will follow current safeguarding guidelines as well as the social distancing measures in place.

Where contractors are required to undertake facilities management/repair tasks in school, they must undertake these works in accordance with the latest regulations. If spaces are to be used in different ways from those originally designed/intended and with less/more overall footfall, consideration will be given to the ongoing management of these spaces.

Procedures will be put in place for deliveries to minimise person-to-person contact. Deliveries should be timed to avoid drop off/pick up times, with methods devised to reduce the frequency of deliveries, e.g. ordering larger quantities less often.

**Music Lessons**

More information will follow on music tuition when available.

**After school Activities**

More information will follow with regards to after school activities. Whenever we have a plan in place for this to operate safely, we will let you know.

**Home to School Transport**

The steps below are taken from the **Guidance published on 13th August 2020.**

The Education Authority is working collaboratively with Translink to maximise capacity across the home to school transport network. Home to school transport services should only be used where there is no alternative available.

For those children who have no alternative but to use the home to school transport service then the EA will make transport available as far as possible from 1st September.

Children showing any symptoms of COVID-19 should not travel to school.

Children using Translink dedicated school transport, are exempt from wearing a face covering.

Good hand hygiene practices must be adhered to at all times and these are detailed on the PHA website.

The number of children entitled to travel on the school bus is such that siblings should sit together and children should sit on alternate seats, thereby keeping at least 1 metre apart.

If a child or young person develops symptoms whilst at school, he/she should be collected by their parents and must not travel on home to school transport.

Parents should ensure their child knows that if they become aware of COVID-19 symptoms while on board a vehicle, they should inform the transport driver and school staff immediately upon arrival at school.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that all children and young people travelling to school clean their hands before they leave their home. Where transport providers have made hand sanitiser available on board a vehicle, all pupils should use it upon entering a vehicle and when arriving at school and again when leaving school, boarding a vehicle and arriving home.

Parents should ensure that their children carry tissues on home to school transport and that their children are aware of the need to follow the PHA’s “Catch it, bin it, kills it” messages.

In order to reduce the potential risks associated with pupils sharing food or drinks on board a school transport vehicle, no pupil should eat or drink on board unless it is for a medical reason.

It is important to maximise the ventilation of fresh air (from outside the vehicle) on dedicated school transport vehicles, particularly through opening windows and ceiling vents. Air recirculation will be avoided where possible.

**Health and Safety**

Our children and staff being happy and well is our top priority.

The information below is taken from ***Guidance to Safe Working in Educational Settings in Northern Ireland*** published by PHA.

**Health and Hygiene**

1. Upon entry into the building, before break, after break, before and after lunch and before leaving school, all visitors, staff and pupils will wash their hands/ use sanitiser. This will be clearly signed.
2. We will encourage children not to touch their faces, use a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins provided for tissue waste. If a child is prone to hay fever or allergies which cause sneezing, parents are required to administer the appropriate dosage of antihistamine before your child comes to school and the teacher alerted via email/Seesaw.
3. Establish a regular routine of handwashing (for 20 seconds) and model to children through stories and songs. This will be clearly signed.
4. Have tissues available to catch coughs and sneezes, and immediately bin the tissue in the designated bins provided.
5. All staff should exercise high levels of hygiene/ cough etiquette and present high levels of hygiene daily. High levels of hygiene will also be expected if preparing food/ snacks.
6. Use hand sanitiser and regularly clean the children’s workstation/ desk and equipment.
7. Throughout the school day there will be increased cleaning daily of surfaces, handles, chairs, tables, keyboards, iPads, light switches, toilet areas, telephones, workstations, desks etc.
8. As far as possible children will be prevented from the sharing of food, drink, utensils, equipment and toys. Unnecessary items in classroom will be removed to create extra space as well as decrease the number of items requiring cleaning.

### Evacuation procedures

In the event of a fire or any other emergency incident the exit routes remain the same as well as the assembly points. Appropriate physical distancing arrangements will be maintained between individuals/groups as far as is practically possible. During these times it may be that children are upset or need reassurance from staff, and this should be given by staff comforting children.

**Social Distancing**

The steps below are taken from **the Guidance published on 13th August 2020 where strict social distancing requirements between all pupils were relaxed, but remain in place between adults (at 2m) and, as far as is practicable between adults and pupils.**

Social distancing measures fall into two broad categories; increasing separation and decreasing interaction and this applies to staff, children and parents. To that end we will implement the following:

1. Parents should keep their child/children at home if they are displaying any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).
2. Social distancing will be implemented in school with posters in place for reminders. Staff will also model to children using stories and songs, games, visual supports and videos etc.
3. Social distancing will be considered in all area of schools – entrance hall, staff room, classrooms, cloakrooms, dining room etc.
4. While travel in corridors is viewed as low risk, we will encourage a ‘one way’ system to maintain distancing.
5. Where social distancing cannot be applied, children will be kept in a small group (‘Protective Bubble’) to decrease interaction.
6. There will be staggered lunch and break times.
7. Children will remain in their class bubbles in the playground and bubbles will not interact.
8. Limited numbers of children will visit the toilet at any one time.
9. As far as possible, groups of children will be supported by consistent staffing, and groups will remain as consistent as possible. Each class will be in their own protective bubble in their own classrooms. Each class will have their break/ lunch time and playtime separately.
10. When providing one-to-one care for SEN or vulnerable pupils, adult to adult 2 metre social distancing should be maintained at all times. However, where staff consistently remain with a pupil or a class they should likewise be viewed as part of the protective bubble and social distancing between those adults and children can be relaxed.
11. There will be staggered drop off and pick up times.
12. Parents will be discouraged from gathering at school entrances and school gates.\*

**Social distancing within a primary school setting, especially with very young children will be harder to maintain. Staff will implement the above measures as afar as they are able, whilst ensuring our children are safe and well cared for within school. We feel it is important for children to feel secure and receive warmth and physical contact that is appropriate to their needs, in particular when they are receiving personal care, need comforting or reassurance.**

As far as possible, class groups will be supported by consistent staffing. In practice, we understand that there are times when other staff members may need to provide cover for children from another cohort. However, this should be for limited periods and physical distancing must be maintained between adults. Staff should ensure strict hygiene practices are carried out if they are caring for different groups.

\**Please be reminded this policy is stipulating guidelines and is in contradiction to our inclusive, pastoral ethos. We trust this will be short term and ask parents to be patient and understanding. As the situation evolves, requirements may be amended or eased and measures will be eased when it is safe to do so.*

**If a Child Display Symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

If a child displays symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough or fever or loss of taste/smell) or has someone in their household who is displaying symptoms, they should not come into school. We would ask that parents take their child’s/children’s temperature daily to be vigilant about signs of the virus. Updates can be found on Public Health Agency website

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>

The Department of Health has implemented a contact tracing programme called Test, Trace and Protect designed to control the spread of COVID-19. All pupils are expected to follow the requirements of this programme: to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of cases and to obtain a test for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms. All members of their household should follow the appropriate isolation guidance as provided by the Public Health Agency.

**Where an individual has had a negative result, it is important to still apply caution. If everyone with symptoms who was tested in their household receives a negative result, they can return to school providing they are well enough and have not had a temperature for 48 hours.**

**Where the result is positive, they should follow PHA isolation guidance which currently requires that everyone in your house must stay at home:**

* if you develop symptoms of coronavirus you should arrange to have a test as soon as possible, you will need to stay at home for at least 10 days from the onset of your symptoms;
* if you live with someone who has symptoms or has a positive test, you are a close contact and you will need to stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms, it is important that the full 14 days are completed;
* if you develop symptoms during this 14-day period, you will need to arrange to have a test and if your test is positive you must stay at home for 10 days from the onset of your symptoms (regardless of what day you are on in the original 14-day period);
* 10 days after your symptoms started, if your condition has improved and you have not had a temperature during the previous 48 hours, you can complete your period of self-isolation. If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal. You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 10 days, as a cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone;
* if you have symptoms and live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else they can stay for the 14-day isolation period;
* it is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days if you are a close contact or 10 days if you have the infection will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

It is essential that all staff and pupils follow this guidance. By doing so staff and pupils will not only protect themselves but they will also limit the spread of the virus to educational settings and the wider population.

Staff or pupils who have been part of the same ‘protective bubble’ as someone who has/develops symptoms and/or who tests positive for COVID-19, must follow PHA isolation guidance under the Test and Trace and Protect programme. All other contacts in the same ‘protective bubble’ as a person with symptoms or who tests positive will have to self-isolate for the required 14-day isolation period. They can return to school when they have completed the necessary period of isolation as advised by the Test, Trace and Protect service. This will help contain any potential transmission to those staff/pupils in the bubble and will also assist in protecting the wider community. A ‘protective bubble’ is effectively an extension of a household. ‘NHS COVID-19: Information for the public’.

Enhanced cleaning should be carried out within any classroom in which an individual who has developed COVID-19 has been to prevent the spread of the virus and this should be clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils to provide assurance that the environment is safe.

If a child shows symptoms during the school day, the parent will be phoned and advised to follow the guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection. We will keep a full record of actions taken and request that parents sign their acknowledgement of these actions. While awaiting collection, the pupil should be moved to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. A window should be open for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate them, they will be moved to an area which is 2m away from others. Depending on the age of the child, appropriate adult supervision may be required. The room should be cleaned in accordance to guidance after this.

**IT IS VITAL THAT WE HAVE UP TO DATE DATA INFORMATION AND THAT THERE ARE THREE EMERGENCY PERSONS/CONTACT NUMBERS GIVEN.**

If the child needs to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom. The bathroom will be cleaned and disinfected before being used by anyone else.

PPE will be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if direct personal care is needed and a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained (e.g. for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

If the child is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk, we will call 999. We will not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If a member of staff (who was wearing the appropriate PPE and adhering to the social distancing guidelines) has helped someone who was unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature or loss of taste/smell, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. Cleaning the affected area with available cleaning products, followed by disinfection after someone with symptoms has left will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

If a staff member becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms, they should go home as soon as possible. Cleaning the affected area with available cleaning products, followed by disinfection after someone with symptoms has left, will reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

**Testing**

Access to testing is available to all essential workers. This includes anyone involved in education or childcare, including both public and voluntary sector workers.

If a staff member exhibits any symptoms associated with COVID-19 they should not attend school. The Department of Health has implemented a contact tracing programme called Test, Trace and Protect designed to control the spread of COVID19. All staff and pupils are expected to follow the requirements of this programme: to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of cases and to obtain a test for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms.

It is essential that all staff and pupils follow the guidance. By doing so staff and pupils will not only protect themselves but they will also limit the spread of the virus to educational settings and the wider population.

Where staff or pupils, in a cohort that is operating as a ‘protective bubble’ have developed symptoms or tested positive all staff and pupils within this cohort who have been in direct contact with the individual must self-isolate and follow PHA guidance. They can return to school when they have completed the necessary period of isolation as advised by the Test, Trace and Protect system.

Enhanced cleaning should be carried out within any classroom in which an individual who has developed COVID-19 has been to prevent the spread of the virus and this should be clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils to provide assurance that the environment is safe.

**PPE**

The scientific advice indicates that educational staff do not require protective equipment. However, we will give staff the option of wearing PPE if they feel they wish to do so.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. These droplets can infect others if there is close contact or indirectly through contaminated surfaces. The advice for schools is to follow the steps on social distancing, handwashing and other hygiene measure and cleaning of surfaces.

Staff may need to increase their level of protection if working with child who is unable to follow social distancing guidelines or require personal care support. Staff need to minimise close contact (where appropriate), clean frequently touched surfaces and carry out more frequent handwashing. PPE is only needed if working with a child whose care routine already involves the use of PPE due to their intimate care needs.

All staff should wear gloves when giving children medication.

**Reference to PPE in the following situations means:**

**• fluid-resistant surgical face masks • disposable gloves • disposable plastic aprons • eye protection (for example a face visor or goggles).**

**Where PPE is recommended, this means that:**

* A facemask should be worn if a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained from someone with symptoms of COVID-19. (Symptomatic children should not be in school).
* If contact is necessary, gloves, an apron and a facemask should be worn.
	+ If a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of fluids entering the eye (e.g. from coughing, spitting or vomiting), eye protection should also be worn.

When PPE is used, it is essential that it is used properly. This includes scrupulous hand hygiene and following guidance on donning (putting on) and doffing (taking off) PPE safely to reduce the risk of contamination.

**Face masks:**

* + MUST cover both nose and mouth.
	+ MUST be changed when they become moist or damaged.
	+ MUST be worn once and then discarded - hands must be cleaned after disposal.
	+ MUST NOT be allowed to dangle around the neck.
	+ MUST NOT be touched once put on, except when carefully removed before disposal.

**Children should not wear PPE**

**How should PPE and face coverings be disposed of?**

PPE should be removed in a specific order that minimises the potential for cross contamination.

The order of removal of PPE should be:

1. Peel off gloves and dispose of in clinical waste.

2. Perform hand hygiene, by handwashing with soap and water.

3. Remove apron by folding in on itself and place in a clinical waste bin.

4. Remove goggles or visor only by the headband or sides.

5. Remove fluid repellent surgical face mask from behind and dispose in clinical waste.

6. Perform hand hygiene.

Used PPE and any disposable face coverings should be placed in a refuse bag and double bagged. It can be disposed of as normal domestic waste unless the wearer has symptoms of COVID. Further guidance is available at:[**https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-nonhealthcare-settings**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-nonhealthcare-settings)

**HAND HYGIENE IS ESSENTIAL IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING REMOVAL OR TOUCHING OF THE MASK OR FACECOVERING TO REDUCE CROSS-CONTAMINATION. CORONAVIRUSES CAN BE KILLED BY ALCOHOL HAND GEL AND MOST DISINFECTANTS.**

**Recognition of an Outbreak**

It is important that potential clusters of cases are identified early so that immediate steps can be taken to prevent spread. If two or more children and/or staff test positive for COVID-19 within a 14-day period, the Principal or person in charge of the school must contact the Public Health Agency (PHA). A clinical risk assessment will be undertaken by the PHA duty officer. The PHA duty room officer will advise you of what further action to take.

**Safeguarding Children**

The previous “lockdown” measures and ongoing need for social distancing and self-isolation have reduced the visibility of children and young people and has limited many of the social support structures for children and families. This means that neglect, abuse and escalating needs and challenges may have gone undetected and children and families may not be receiving the support they need. It is important to understand that existing safeguarding and child protection arrangements continue to apply and if you are concerned that a child is at risk of harm, contact children’s social care Gateway Team at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/gateway-service-teams-contact-details>.

DE Circular 2017/04 “Safeguarding and Child Protection – A Guide for Schools” can be found at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201704-safeguarding-andchild-protection-schools-guide-schools>

If necessary, schools should seek advice from the Education Authority’s Child Protection Support Service on 02895 985590.

**Staff Training**

All staff will watch the video on social distancing and hand washing.

The Northern Ireland Social Care Council has published a free resource on its learning zone on infection control, hand hygiene and using PPE. Available at: <https://learningzone.niscc.info/learning-resources/96/supporting-good-infectioncontrol>

Teaching staff will find teaching learner’s resources for Key 1, 2 and 3 on Hand Hygiene, Respiratory Hygiene and Coronavirus at <https://www.e-bug.eu/>