

Covid 19 Policy

Introduction

The reopening of St Mary's after the COVID-19 closure presents us with unique and unprecedented challenges. Arrangements for reopening must centre on the health and well-being of all members of our school community. The following policy highlights the main challenges that face us as we reopen. It has been drawn up using current guidelines. The policy is subject to change as dictated by updates from Education Authority, Department of Education or the Public Health Authority.

Basics of the new school day

- The new school term will begin on 24th August 2020 for Primary 7 children and vulnerable children. P1 children will begin in small groups of 5 or 6 during the week beginning 24th August.
- We will employ a 'protective bubble' strategy; each class unit will constitute its own protective bubble. This is in addition to implementing social distancing of 1m between pupils and 2m between adults and pupils
- We will maximise full use of the school building. This will allow initially for whole class attendance 80% of the week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday) and 20% blended learning at home (Wednesday). This will be reviewed in September taking into account current medical and scientific guidance available at the time with a firm view to returning to full time attendance in October 2020 with homework being delivered by remote learning to maintain pupil, parent and teacher skill levels in the event of a second wave.
- Social distancing and increased hygiene measures will be implemented throughout the school.
- We will use staggered arrival times and marked drop-off areas asking parents to remain on or outside the school grounds.

- St Mary's prohibits, for the time being, children from bringing anything from home (other than disposable packed lunches). Nor will they take books or resources home. The one exception is in regards to reading books and library books, which we will allow to go home on a Monday to be returned to a quarantine box where they will remain untouched for 72 Hours before being placed on shelves or lent out again. Pupils who receive class reading books on a Friday must return them on the following Thursday to allow appropriate time for quarantine before redistribution.

Key Principles

- There will be increased separation for all children and adults.
- There will be decreased interaction between all children and adults.
- There will be 1 metre social distancing between all children.
- There will be 2 metre social distancing between adults/adults & adults/children.
- Floor/ground markers where possible defining 1 metre distance.

Attendance

Pupil Attendance

- St Mary's will follow the latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions, who live with people with health conditions or with those who are pregnant.
- Pupils who are clinically vulnerable or those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the social distancing guidelines should learn from home where possible. A small minority of pupils will fall into this category.
- Pupils who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting.
- Pupils who are shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people) will have serious underlying health conditions. These pupils should follow shielding measures and should not attend school in person. We will consider the distance learning and support needs of pupils who are shielding.
- Pupils living with someone who is shielding should only attend the education setting if they are able to stringently adhere to social distancing. Such pupils should have an individual risk assessment conducted before the most appropriate place of learning is determined.

*Refer to PHA guidance for most recent advice

Workforce Attendance

- Staff who are clinically vulnerable should be supported to work from home where possible, by asking them to support remote education. If they do not wish to work from home they should be offered the safest available on-site roles in line with social distancing.
- Staff who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) can attend their education or childcare setting.
- Staff who are shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people) will have received written confirmation from their GP. These staff should not attend school in person. Staff living with someone who is shielding should only attend the education setting if they are able to stringently adhere to social distancing. Such staff should have an individual work assessment.

*Refer to most recent PHA guidance

SEN Return to Educational Setting

- Our aim is to support a phased and safe transition back to full-time educational provision for all children.
- Children from Stage 2- 5 of CoP or SCU will be invited to school, before the opening date, to become familiar with the new school procedures.
- Children will be admitted in smaller groups week commencing 24th August for a phased return. A timetable will be published and issued to parents.
- A risk assessment will be carried out for any child with a Statement or attending SCU.
- Children from Stage 2- 5 of CoP or SCU will meet their teacher (before school opening) to become familiar and ease transition back to school.
- Children from Stage 2 -5 of CoP and SCU will be provided with Social Stories focussing on social distancing, hygiene and photographs of new educational setting.
- Video of new school setting will be added to the school website.
- Visuals will be provided around school to remind pupils of Covid hygiene and social distancing.

Test, Trace and Protect

- Staff and students who exhibit any symptoms associated with COVID-19 should not attend educational settings. The Department of Health has implemented a contact tracing programme called Test, Trace and Protect designed to control the spread of COVID-19. 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. All members of their household should follow isolation guidance as provided by the Test, Track and Trace service in 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 work 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:

Please refer to the most recent PHA Guidance for

Test, Trace and Protect

- 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 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. [COVID-19: Information for the public](#) In the event of a teacher and protective bubble self isolating every effort will be made to provide remote learning, though it cannot be guaranteed.

- Enhanced cleaning will 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.

***Social Distance**

- Adults will stay 2m apart in line with PHA guidelines but children and young people will aim to maintain 1m where a protective bubble strategy is in place.
- Social distancing will be considered in all relevant areas of schools, including classrooms, indoor and outdoor spaces and those not used for learning and teaching, e.g. pupils' cloakrooms, entrance halls, staff rooms, resource areas, kitchens and caretaker areas.
- Parents and carers will be discouraged from congregating at school gates with staggered start and end times.
- To maintain social distancing, classes will use different access points to enter and leave the schools.
- To minimise movement around the school, Staff and pupils will walk on the left side of corridors.
- Procedures will be in place for pupils who wilfully refuse to adhere to arrangements of social distancing and deliberately cough or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk.
- To provide capacity to accommodate social distancing approaches, a flexible approach to the use of all existing spaces within the usual setting will be taken. For example, breakout space, dining space, libraries and indoor sports spaces may be utilised as learning and teaching areas.

- To adhere to social distancing break and lunch will be eaten in the classrooms.
- Classes will have specific sections of the playground for break and lunch times, which will be supervised to maintain social distancing.
- Evacuation points will be considered to ensure appropriate social distancing arrangements are maintained between individuals/groups as far as practically possible.
- A revised fire drill will be carried out on return to school.
- Clear signage and colour coding on walls and floors inside and outside will be implemented to help with wayfinding.

Space Utilisation

- Desks are laid out in each classroom to allow for 1 metre distancing between each child.
- Resource areas will be used for Primary 4 and Primary 5 classes for approximately 8 children. This will be done on a rotational basis so that the same children will not be outside the classroom all of the time.
- The canteen/Hall will be used for the largest class in the school (Primary 7) to allow for whole class teaching with social distancing.
- Carpets and soft furnishings have been removed from each classroom to allow for maximum desk space and to minimise materials which cannot be easily sterilised.(With exception of SCU where carpet tiles are glued to floor)
- Foundation Stage/SCU resource area has been set up with 6 stations which can be easily cleaned/disinfected. These will be used on a rotational basis with resources being carried out by each individual class, used only by children in their 'bubble' and quarantined for 72 hours before being available to any other 'bubble'.
- The 'fenced in' play area at the back of the school will be used on a rotational basis and with rotational use of toys by P1, P2 and SCU.
- We have the opportunity to use McKenna Hall to accommodate teaching of larger numbers allowing for social distancing if or when a need arises.
- The paths leading to the school are marked at 1 metre intervals and colour coded arrows indicating socially distanced routes into and out of the school building.

- Colour coded arrows are in place leading to outdoor sinks (handwashing before entering school) and corresponding entry/exit points for designated classes.
- Parents will be given designated arrival and drop-off/and collection times to allow for safety in the car-park and to avoid congestion.
- No loitering in school is permitted at home time. Children must go straight to their car and leave the grounds.
- Where possible and appropriate, teaching/learning will take place outside. This will be clearly communicated and documented by the class teacher on a communal document to ensure that there is no interaction between 'bubbles'. Each bubble must only use their designated area outside.
- The play tower will be used on a weekly basis by designated 'bubbles': P1, P2/3 and SCU. The same 'bubble' will use the play tower for the duration of the week allowing the weekend for disinfection and decontamination.
- The play tower is out of bounds to all other children (including younger siblings at pick up/ collection time) unless directed by their teacher as it is reserved on a rota for Protected Bubbles
- If there is a need and it is financially viable, 'The Den' will provide wraparound care. The details of this are still to be confirmed; attention must be given to maintaining protective bubbles/family units. 'The Den' will most likely operate in a cordoned off area of the hall as this is more easily cleaned/disinfected.
- There will be no 'after-schools' activities until further notice.

Workforce

- Staff who are clinically vulnerable should be supported to work from home where possible, by asking them to support remote education. If they do not wish to work from home they should be offered the safest available on-site roles in line with social distancing.
- Staff who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable) can attend their education or childcare setting.
- Staff who are shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people) will have received written confirmation from their GP. These staff should not attend school in person.
- Staff living with someone who is shielding should only attend the education setting if they are able to stringently adhere to social distancing.
- Such staff should have an individual work assessment conditions or are pregnant, 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.
- Staff who exhibit any symptoms associated with COVID-19 should not attend educational settings.
- If a child, young person or a member of staff lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting.
- 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 7 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 7 days from the onset of your symptoms (regardless of what day you are on in the original 14-day period); 7 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 7 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 7 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 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.

Hygiene

- The use of PPE within education settings is not required other than for certain tasks deemed to be of higher risk of transmission for example giving children medication, providing first aid and intimate care (toileting needs).
- PPE in the following situations means:- • fluid-resistant surgical face masks; • disposable gloves; • disposable plastic aprons; and • 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 2m 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; and
- 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.
- Facemasks: **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; and **MUST NOT** be touched once put on, except when carefully removed before disposal.
- Children should not wear PPE.

Cleaning

- All cleaning activity will primarily focus on surface cleaning, such as desktops, taps, toilet handles and door handles.
- Should a COVID-19 confirmed case occur, the EA cleaning service will be notified. Following notification the normal process is undertaken of isolating the prevalent location within the school where any incidence of COVID-19 is likely to have happened. Then after three days of isolation an enhanced clean of the isolated location will be conducted. The normal cleaning regime then resumes thereafter.
- Normal cleaning products used throughout the year are sufficient in supporting hand hygiene and the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' measures. Bleaching agents (such as sodium hypochlorite or a chlorine dioxide solution) are not recommended in the school setting, however, on occasion these can be deployed to address more specific cleaning requirements such as where bodily fluids on surfaces are present.
- Enhanced and Terminal Cleaning are only recommended during an outbreak of COVID-19.

Reopening preparation

- There will be routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g. telephones, keyboards, door handles, desks and tables).
- There is no need for additional cleaning over and above the normal school cleaning regime, except for any reactive cleans to specific incidents or enhanced cleans following a confirmed case of infection.
- Work-stations will be allocated consistently to the same staff and children rather than having spaces that are shared. We will make sure that each workstation is wiped down and disinfected before the next person uses it.
- Resources which are not easily washable or wipe-able will be removed.
- Cleaning of the staff areas will be considered as part of the overall cleaning strategy. Staff will use their own cup/cutlery and ensure these are cleaned straight after use.
- Any crockery and cutlery in shared staff kitchen areas will be cleaned with warm general purpose detergent and dried thoroughly before being stored for re-use.
- Our staff will consider continuous cleaning of toilets and wash facilities.
- Clear signage regarding the washing of hands after using the toilet should be displayed and appropriate hand drying equipment (hand dryer/paper towels) should be provided.

Personal Hygiene

- We will encourage all staff, pupils, volunteers, contractors, service users and visitors to maintain personal hygiene throughout the day. This includes:-
- frequent washing (in tepid / luke warm water) for 20 seconds and drying thoroughly (hand dryer / not shared towel), particularly when entering/leaving the building and always before/after eating as set out by PHA; Pupils will wash hands at the beginning of the school day before entering the school building.
- encouraging pupils/staff to avoid touching their faces including mouth, eyes and nose; and
- using a tissue or elbow to cough or sneeze and use bins that are emptied regularly for tissue waste.
- Regular reminders and signage will be applied to build awareness and maintain personal hygiene standards throughout the day.
- Adequate facilities will be available for hand hygiene, including handwashing facilities that are adequately stocked and alcohol based hand rub at key areas (e.g. entry and exit points).
- Bins with bags will be provided in classrooms and in other key locations around the site for the disposal of tissues and any other waste. Consideration should be given to their disposal including double bagging and emptying.

School Uniforms

- Coronavirus can land on fabrics and remain for some time, schools are not a high risk environment. We encourage all children and young people to wear a clean uniform or fresh clothes each day.
- The uniform policy will be relaxed for an initial period and reviewed in due course.

Staff and children who become symptomatic /

Ventilation

- The opening of doors and windows will be encouraged to increase natural ventilation and also to reduce contact with door handles.
- Propping open of external doors, security access systems and any other fire safety doors is prohibited.
- Pupils/staff who become symptomatic during the school day will be taken to the porch at the back door (with the back door open for ventilation) to wait until they can be collected safely and taken home. (A member of staff will wait, socially distanced and wearing PPE with a child until collection is possible. A visor will need to be worn by the adult if the child is coughing, vomiting or spitting).
- We will keep a full record of such actions using our First Aid record sheets and request the parent / carer / guardian to record their acknowledgement of this action.
- If the child needs to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom if possible. 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 2m cannot be maintained (such as 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, call 999. They 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 will wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds after any contact with someone who is unwell. They will clean the affected area with available cleaning products, followed by disinfection and dispose appropriately of used PPE.

Communication

- We will ensure regular, timely and clear communication with our school communities about the approach we are adopting to a phased return to schooling in line with the Education Restart Programme and supporting guidance.

Parents and Carers

- We will engage in dialogue with the Parent Support Group /associations and any wider parent forums.
- Two-way communication is vital. The gathering of questions, issues or concerns from parents and carers will be just as important as clear communication to parents and carers about how things will work. We will gather this information if necessary on the return of pupils in August/ September.

Children and Young People

- We will gather pupil views through the use of questionnaires which may help to clarify and address difficulties in relation to returning to school after Covid19 .
- We will hear concerns from pupils through the use of our School Council.

Catering

- Pupils will eat at their desk, or alternative locations such as outside, using disposable containers, packaging and cutlery.
- We anticipate that school meals will be available but may have to be eaten in each child's own classroom.
- Whilst it is not possible to eradicate cash handling arrangements at this time, it is suggested that cash is accepted in a clearly marked envelope- the parents will send this in on a Monday with the exact amount and details of which days school meals are required. This envelope will remain in a sealed container for 72 hrs and can then be handed to the school secretary. Anyone counting cash or banking cash can will do so wearing gloves.

Workforce Planning

As there is evidence that COVID-19 may disproportionately affect some groups, we should ensure that the Occupational Health Service (OHS) provides practical support and advice to BAME staff, particularly where they are anxious about protecting themselves and their families.

All Minority Ethnic staff with underlying health conditions and disabilities, who are over 70 or who are pregnant should be individually risk assessed and appropriate reasonable or workplace adjustments should be made

following risk assessment. The EA and schools will also need to be mindful of their wider equality obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

- A proportion of staff may also be shielding or absent due to COVID-19 symptoms, which may affect their ability to attend physical settings. Staff may require access to childcare to allow them to attend school under the blended model of education.
- There will be a specific workload pressure arising from the need to adapt existing resources to align with a blended model, providing in-school learning for an increased number of groups and support for offsite learning. The deployment of additional staffing is expected to be critical to ensuring this can be managed - we will use NISTR

Workforce Capacity

- We will undertake a review of the availability of teaching and support staff, including caretaker, cleaning and office staff, to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the workforce to prepare settings and deliver education under a blended model of education.
- We will keep staffing arrangements as consistent as possible. Wherever possible, we will keep them with the same pupil group and in the same

settings.

COVID Amendment to Behaviour Policy

- Pupils who willfully refuse to adhere to the recommended social distancing or refuse to implement basic hand washing procedures will in the first instance be given a reminder and teachers will follow normal class rules.

- If problems persist, parents will be informed and asked to reinforce the need for social distancing at home with their child.
- Persistence may result in exclusion and remote home learning only being provided.
- Any child who deliberately spits or coughs on another child or adult will be verbally reprimanded and parents contacted. A second offence will result in immediate exclusion from school based learning and the child will be provided with remote home learning activities.