



Ag Filleadh ar Scoil 1^ú Márta 2021

A thuismitheoirí/a chaomhnóirí,

It's great to be able to return to our school building and work with our students face-to-face and in person even if at a distance. We returned to school on the 11th January and there has been a lot of work done since then – maith sibh!

On March 1st, children in Junior Infants, Senior Infants, 1st, 2nd & 3rd classes will return to the school building. For the moment, online teaching and learning will continue for children in 4th, 5th and 6th classes.

Please find outlined below some information about our return to school on March 1st 2021.

As before, **a return to the school building is not a return to normal.** With the risk of covid-19 even higher now than before it is important that we all follow the guidelines as set out by the experts.

Children returning to school must fill out a **Return to School Form before they can return.**

The Return to school form will be available on the school website and will be sent to all families (google form). All previous morning and home time arrangements remain in place. We are following all the latest guidance and are doing all that we can to facilitate a safe return to school.

Here is some useful information:

The Department of Education has issued an [Updated COVID-19 Response Plan for Primary and Special Schools.](#)

Here is a [Summary of the additions to the above COVID-19 Response Plan](#)

Please read the following information from the HSE: [Covid-19 Advice for Parents here](#) & [here](#)

A copy of our Covid-19 Response Plan can be viewed [here](#)

Letter from Norma Foley Minister for Education available [here](#)

Link to video for parents on what to do if your child is a close contact [here](#)

IMPORTANT, PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Covid-19

Déanann an litir seo cur síos ar na bearta atá curtha i bhfeidhm sa scoil chun an baol a bhaineann le hionfhabhtú an virús Covid 19 a thabhairt isteach inár scoileanna a íoslaghdú agus agus bainistiú a dhéanamh ar an mbaol go scaipfidh sé. Tá siad déanta ar son sábhailteachta agus sláinte gach duine sa scoil agus beidh bhúr gcomhoibriú riachtanach le haghaidh iad a chur i bhfeidhm go h-eifeachtach.

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/guardians and visitors as far as possible within the school. Your co-operation with the implementation of these measures is essential.

Key facts about Covid-19

COVID – 19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and is caused by a new virus called the Coronavirus.

Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. To infect you, it has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into your eyes, nose or mouth. This can be directly or indirectly (on hands, objects, surfaces). If you come into close contact with someone who is shedding the virus and who is coughing or sneezing or if you touch - with your hands - surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without having washed your hands thoroughly you may contact the virus.

We love to see all of our children at school every day. However, under the current circumstances, parents/guardians **must keep children at home** if they display **any** Covid-19. Please follow up to date government advice.

Know the Symptoms. <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

- [a fever \(high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above\)](#)
- [a cough](#) - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- [shortness of breath](#) or breathing difficulties
- [loss or change to 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 a Child Displays Symptoms at school.

A designated isolation area has been created.

If a pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:

- The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation area.
- A distance of 2 meters will be maintained. If this is not possible, the person accompanying the child will be provided with a face covering to wear.
- A face covering will be provided to a child who is symptomatic.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone. To help us in this regard, **parents are asked to make sure that their contact details are kept up to date at all times. Please ensure that somebody on your contact list will be able to answer the phone if called.**
- If the child is well enough to go home, arrangements will be made for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible.
- Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
- If the child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Similar procedures are in place for staff members.

Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19

The following are the best ways to manage the risk of spread of Covid-19:

- Hand hygiene – regularly thoroughly wash your hands
- Social distancing
- Respiratory hygiene & cough etiquette
- Use of PPE

Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol 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 a COVID- 19 Response Plan which involves many changes for pupils and staff in the day to day running of the school. The BOM, school staff, parents & pupils are all responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus and ensure that we can stay in school.

Changes to the day-to-day running of Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maol

1. Arrival and Departure.

(a) Daily Morning Arrival

We have made some changes to the drop off and pick up arrangements for the children coming to school from March 1st. This is to facilitate their safe arrival and exit with social distancing in mind.

Where possible and if safe to do so, we request that children walk or cycle to school to avoid congestion at school gates.

Each family will be assigned an entry point and time map & details [here](#)

At 8.40am the gates will be opened. The pupils will enter the school maintaining social distancing through one of the three doors at the designated time. It is set down only and parents are requested not to enter the school building. Please only stop and let your child out when you have reached the assigned school door so that children are not crossing in front of traffic.

For those parents assigned the Tesco side, unfortunately we have inadequate space to allow cars enter the school grounds on this side. Therefore, we are asking you to park outside the school grounds and walk the children in. We really appreciate your cooperation in this regard.

(b) Daily Departure: From 1.20-1.30 pm for Infants & 2:20-2.30pm 1-6 class.

The children will be released to their assigned door at the set time allocated to each family. You will receive times and details shortly.

2. Staggered Break Times

To ensure that social distancing can be maintained, there will be staggered break times for all classes. The amount of break time will remain at the standard 40 minutes per school day (2 x 20 min breaks.) The school yard will be clearly marked and classes/ bubbles allocated specific spaces. Children will be regularly reminded to stay within their pods & bubbles and maintain social distancing on the yard. There will be sanctions if they repeatedly disobey the teachers on duty.

3. Access to school buildings

Access to the school building during the school day by parents or visitors will not be allowed unless absolutely necessary and pre-arranged. This is being done as an infection prevention measure. If your child has to be picked up during school hours this must be arranged in advance with the class teacher via e-mail and a set time given.

4. Pupil's Personal belongings

School Bags: All children must have a bag that they can carry on their back or over their shoulder. Children will need to have their two hands free on entering the school to be able to sanitise them correctly. They will not be able to do this with a wheelie bag.

Personal items are to be kept at home: Unfortunately, due to cleaning regimes in the school personal items such as toys are not to be brought into school.

Children should not bring unnecessary items to school e.g., toys, keyrings, fancy colouring pencils, balls etc. Children should have one pencil case for school containing the basics i.e. pencil, pens, eraser, parer, ruler & colours. This should stay in school and should have their name clearly visible on the outside. They should have a separate pencil case at home for use at home.

5. School Curriculum

We are mindful that the children have not been in school since mid-March. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families.

Each child will be at a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2020/2021 school year. The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

In the short term the four main areas of our teaching and learning focus will be:

- SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education)
- PE
- Literacy (English and Gaeilge)
- Numeracy and Maths

All other subjects will of course be taught but for the re-entry period in September, all teachers will be focusing on these. The children will continue to enjoy other activities such as art, music and drama as well as work in Science, History and Geography and RE (where applicable).

6. Social Distancing Arrangements

Physical Distancing will be implemented in a number of ways:

Class Bubbles: each class will be referred to as a bubble and we will endeavour to ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles.

Class Pods: within the bubbles (classes), children will be organised into pods. A pod is a group of children (normally 4 – 6) who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom. In classes from 3rd – 6th class desks will be arranged to facilitate social distancing as required with at least 1m between each pupil at all times.

The pods, as arranged by the teacher, will remain in place until a review takes place in line with Department of Education guidelines. Only in very exceptional circumstances will a pod be changed.

(Due to the number of pupils we have in the school and the needs of each individual class it is impossible to arrange pods by friends, neighbours, crèche users, childminders, etc.) They are as follows:

- Junior Infants- 2nd Class. Following DES guidelines there will be no social distancing within the classroom but children will be assigned to pods.
- 3rd -6th class. Following DES guidelines, children will practice social distancing and will be strictly assigned to pods. They will work and play with children in their allocated pods.



Staggered entrance, exit and break times will help to implement social distancing. A clearly marked one-way system will operate in the school (everyone walks on the right in the corridors.) This will be clearly marked with floor stickers. Regular whole-school activities such as Teacht le Chéile, choir and concerts will be accommodated through different formats this year. We will still endeavour to celebrate our children's learning and achievements and encourage a sense of unity and togetherness in a safe manner.

7. Hand sanitising & hand washing in school:

We have hand sanitising stations at every entrance door to the school. There is a hand sanitiser in every classroom.



All toilets and classrooms have hand washing facilities. Regular handwashing will be timetabled into the school day for pupils.

8. Home-School Communication

We continue to recognise the role of the parent as their child's primary educator and to promote meaningful home/school relationships.

In this time of COVID-19, parents may not enter our school except for a scheduled appointment to ensure the safe and sustained reopening of our school. If you wish to make an appointment, please e-mail or call and we will arrange one with you then. Teachers will make a concerted effort to return emails on the same day or next day. Staff members you wish to speak to may also be happy to meet you via Zoom or to call you.

Regarding events for parents organised by the Home School teacher, these are also suspended for the time being but the HSCL officer will be in contact with all families over the coming weeks.

All parents/guardians must make an appointment *in advance* to enter the school building. Call 096 73828 or 087 9152568 or e-mail scoilnagceithremaol@yahoo.ie

When entering the building by appointment all visitors must wear a face covering, and sanitise hands on entrance to reception. Visitors will be asked to complete a visitor register that complies with DES contact tracing form.

9. Parent Teacher Meetings

Parent/Teacher Meetings (Usually end of Nov) may take place via phone or be postponed. We will assess the situation closer to the time.

10. Homework

As the children settle back into school, they will not be assigned any written homework for the first part of the term. However, homework will gradually be reintroduced and assigned homework may be based on online activities as selected by the teacher.

11. Uniforms:

Labelling: Please label your child's school jumper and any jackets which are brought to school. This is particularly important this year as we do not want to send home the wrong jumper to a different house.

Washing: There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is probably not practical for most families. However, their uniforms/tracksuit must be clean and washed regularly as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.

Parents should change their child's uniform/tracksuit **at least twice during the week** and they must be washed after use. The school tracksuit may be worn on any day.

Outside school: As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **only for school related activities.** Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc. If the uniform has to be worn after school, please wash it before wearing it to school again.

Shoes: The pupils of junior/senior /first class should wear Velcro fastened shoes. Please ensure that older children are capable of tying shoe-laces before they wear laced shoes to school.

Other: We may take extra breaks/do some lessons outside so please ensure your child wears sun cream/hat as appropriate.

12. Lunches

School lunches will continue to be delivered daily from Monday 7th September and our healthy Lunch policy remains in place. Forms for the school lunch will be sent out the first week back. The children should have a reusable sturdy drinks bottle with them every day. If necessary, it can be refilled with water during the school day.

13. PPE

Staff will be wearing face coverings:

In line with Department of Education Guidelines, all staff, where necessary, will be wearing face coverings (facemasks and/or visors).

The government advise against children under 13 wearing a face covering. Pupils may wear a visor/face covering in school if parents/guardians or the child wishes. However, school staff will not monitor or enforce pupil wearing of face coverings.



Remember:

Re-opening our school safely and keeping our school open will take the effort of the entire school community.

International evidence shows that the key factor in keeping schools Covid-free is having very low transmission of Covid-19 in the community.

The measures the school puts in place will only work if our school community decides to take care of each other. So let's work together to keep our children in school and all of us – children, parents/guardians, grandparents, minders, school staff and their families and other vulnerable people we know – free of Covid.

This needs to be a community effort. Here's what you can do to help:

- Limit your interactions with those outside of the people you live with
- When you do meet people, maintain physical distancing as much as possible
- When distancing is not possible, wear a face covering
- Practice excellent hand hygiene and proper sneezing and coughing etiquette
- Maintain a contact log of people you meet/spend time with. This will help with contact tracing, should a case of Covid-19 arise. Consider using the Covid App.

Please go over the changes with your child(ren) so that they are familiar with them before they come back to school. Assure them that these changes are to allow for a safe return to school and we will endeavour to make their school day as normal as possible so that there is no need for them to be anxious or concerned.

Mile Buíochas

Frances Ní Bhriain