



Colaiste Muire

Ballymote, Co Sligo

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COVID-19 Response Plan & Roadmap for School Re-opening 2021-22

The COVID-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management (BOM) in putting measures in place that aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our school environment.

The COVID-19 Response Plan details the policies and practices necessary for our school to meet the Government's 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', the Department of Education plan for school reopening that will aim to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in our school environment.

It is the responsibility of all staff, parents/guardians and students to work together to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 in our school and to ensure the continuity of schooling for our students. All staff, students, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors have a responsibility, both as individuals and collectively to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others and to assist with the implementation of this COVID-19 Response Plan and associated control measures. Responsibility for the development and implementation of this COVID-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies with the Board of Management and school management.

This Covid-19 Response Plan is fluid and may alter depending on Public Health advice over the coming weeks. Any updates to the response plan will be emailed to all parties.

Parents/guardians and students can also play a role in ensuring the continuity of school. Please continue to observe all the Public Health Advice that has been and will be issued. Parents/guardians and students must follow the advice of the HSE in relation to symptoms, contact tracing and isolation periods. Parents/guardians are asked to keep the school informed so that attendance can be correctly recorded.

Travel abroad - it is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, to follow the most recent public health advice around restriction of movement, and this includes school staff, parents/guardians and students. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. Our school has a duty of care to all of its students and staff members. If there are reasonable grounds for believing that this duty of care is being undermined in circumstances where a person – staff member or student - has not observed the mandatory requirements following return from abroad, the school will refuse access to the student or staff member during this period. Living with a parent/guardian who travels abroad for work does not prevent children from attending school. The parent/guardian should follow all of the HSE guidelines when they return home.

Health and safety and wellbeing of staff and students continues to be of priority concern and to this effect, there continues to be many changes to the day to day running of our school and new systems that staff and students must continue work with.

The main notable differences are as follows:

1. **Changes to the physical layout of the building** – classrooms and staffrooms have been reconfigured to support physical distancing. Unnecessary clutter has been removed to further facilitate distancing and to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school. Appropriate posters and signage to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 have been added to the exterior and interior of the building. All rooms are adequately ventilated as per the guidance issued by the Department of Education & Skills in ‘*Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools*’.
2. **Wearing of a face covering** during the school day. Our classrooms and class sizes mean that it is not be possible to distance everyone at 2 metres apart, thus it is **mandatory for students to wear face coverings throughout the day**. We ask that all students have **three re-usable face coverings with them each day** – they will be changed after morning break and after lunchtime. Plain face coverings rather than patterned or sloganed coverings are required. Snoods and scarves/bandanas are not acceptable as face coverings. Face coverings should be laundered each evening, therefore it is advisable each student has a rotating stock of face coverings to enable this. Parents/guardians are requested to show their child(ren) how to put on and wear a mask – this has been reinforced by the school during student induction and at regular intervals thereafter. The following link may prove useful for this purpose: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBR0udoIaiY>. Where a student presents to school without a face covering, the parent/guardian will be contacted and requested to bring the student’s face coverings to the school. Refusal to wear a face covering, consistent failure to bring a face covering or misuse of face coverings will be sanctioned.

In the event where a student is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, a visor will be acceptable, but only on presentation of a medical certificate from the student’s GP. The parent/guardian should also contact the school by emailing the Principal at principal@cmbm.ie in advance to advise of same.

3. **Respiratory and hand hygiene** – all in our school must practice good respiratory and hand hygiene. This means covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or a bent elbow when coughing or sneezing. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin. The school has been fully equipped with sanitiser stations in each classroom, at the entrance to all toilets and the main entrances to the school. Students and staff are required to sanitise or wash their hands:
 - a. on entry to the school each morning,
 - b. before eating or drinking,
 - c. after using the toilet,
 - d. on exit from the school each evening,
 - e. when there is a need to move classrooms during the day,

- f. after playing outdoors,
- g. when their hands are physically dirty,
- h. when they cough or sneeze.

It is advised that **each student carries his/her own small bottle of sanitiser** for sanitising before and after eating.

4. **One way system** – students have designated entry and exit points to and from the school and are required to follow a one-way system on the corridors at all times. This is in the interest of health and safety and must be adhered to. The entry points will be advised on induction day. Information regarding entry to the school on induction day for each class will be notified to parents/guardians a day or two in advance of their class’s return date to school. In addition, the induction presentation conducted with students will be emailed to parents/guardians following the return to school.

Students must wear face coverings on corridors at all times.

5. **Base rooms** – all classes have a base classroom and for junior students in particular, remain there for most lessons and move only when required to for a practical subject or for a block change. These base classrooms will be notified to students on their induction day. Each student has a designated table and chair in their base classroom. Students must sit at this designated desk and only move from the desk/room as instructed to do so. Students leave their school bags underneath their desk. Desks have been positioned to make the best use of spacing in the classroom – markers are positioned underneath each desk and desks must not be removed from the designated marker.
6. **A designated day for PE** – students wear their PE uniform to school on ‘PE’ day as there is no availability of changing rooms. Timetables indicate the designated day for PE for each class. PE will be scheduled outdoors as long as weather permits. Please note that our PE uniform is **strictly** a plain navy tracksuit bottom/leggings/shorts and the crested t-shirt and zipped top provided under the student services charge. No other gear may be worn. Students with incorrect uniform (regular or PE) will be sanctioned for non-compliance with our uniform policy.
7. **Canteen facility** – the canteen will not operate therefore all students must bring a packed lunch to school. Please note that we have a child with a nut allergy attending therefore we would ask that packed lunches do not contain nuts and that items with nut based ingredients are kept to a minimum. Students eat at their desks in their base classroom as the canteen space has been reconfigured as a classroom. Students may dispose of lunch litter in the bins provided but must bring home any drinks bottles at the end of each school day. For health and safety reasons, drinks bottles cannot be left in the school.
8. **Staggered breaks and lunch times** – break and lunchtimes for each class will be notified on return to school. **Senior students are not permitted** to go down town this year for health and safety reasons. Staff must bring their own crockery/cutlery to school.
9. **Timetables** - double classes have been scheduled where possible to minimise movement around the school between classes and also to reduce the load each child is required to carry to and from school in school bags. Timetables will be issued to students on their induction day.

10. **Use of toilets** – is strictly during break and lunch times and on a rotational basis to avoid overcrowding in toilets. All classes have a designated toilet for use. If a student has a medical condition that requires more regular use of the toilet, the parent/guardian should email the Principal at principal@cmbm.ie to advise of same and this will be taken into account.
11. **Lockers** – are not available for health and safety reasons. The timetabling of double classes has meant less carrying of books to and from school. Students will be required to keep their books at home and only bring what is needed on a daily basis. Each student desk will have space beneath it for a storage box.
12. **Access to the school** by parents/guardians or visitors is **strictly by appointment only**. Where a parent/guardian or visitor must visit the school, an appointment must be made with the school secretary. On arrival at the school the parent/guardian/visitor will be required to complete a contact tracing log. All contact tracing records and data will be maintained and processed in compliance with the GDPR and Data Protection Acts. Parents/guardians and visitors must wear a face covering when visiting the school.
13. **School transport** – students travelling to school by bus must follow the appropriate guidelines and protocols of the bus operator. Where students are driven to school, the designated drop off zones and one-way system must be used by parents/guardians. Parents/guardians must not enter the staff parking zone for health and safety reasons. Parents are asked to leave the grounds immediately after dropping students and not to linger. We encourage as many students as possible to walk or cycle to school. The school has a bicycle rack (students should have their own lock) to facilitate those who wish to cycle.
14. **Arrival at school** – students should arrive to school as near to their class start time as possible (9.10am). This is to help avoid congregation of groups and social distancing issues. Students must use the correct entry point for their class group and proceed immediately to their desk in their designated base classroom and remain there until the beginning of the first timetabled class. Where timetabled for a block or practical subject, students will proceed to the relevant room at the designated time. **Under no circumstances may a student go to another base classroom or room in the school**, unless timetabled in a different room for a practical class or block subject. Students are not permitted to congregate in corridors before class begins or in between classes.
15. **Exit from the school** – students are dismissed at 5 minute intervals at the end of the school day to avoid a large number of students leaving the school concurrently. Students must leave the school promptly and not remain in groups socially. Those availing of bus transport must proceed to their bus collection point immediately. Those in cars must be collected promptly. Parents/guardians in waiting cars must maintain social distance at all times and must not linger. Those walking/cycling must leave the school grounds promptly. Exit times will be introduced to students on induction day.
16. **Digital learning** – students will use Microsoft Teams to access and complete homework. Teams is also used by teachers to share class resources with students. All students have a Microsoft account with access to Teams. It is advisable that students have access to a device (laptop/tablet) for homework. Students will use their mobile phones in class from time to time and as directed by staff to access Teams and complete work online. Students are not permitted to use their mobile phones to access social media or to take photographs during school time and are not permitted to use their

mobile phones during break and lunch times. This is for health and safety reasons and failure to comply will be sanctioned in line with the mobile phone policy under the Code of Behaviour.

17. **Teaching and Learning** – the Department of Education guidelines on curriculum adjustments at Junior and Senior Cycle level are followed by the school. There has been much focus on student wellbeing with the use of Department of Education SPHE and Wellbeing resources which have been specifically designed for return to school.
18. **Class equipment and materials** – students are not be permitted to share items such as pens, pencils, art materials, etc. Students must have an adequate supply of these items for school each day. Where equipment must be shared, e.g. PE equipment, the equipment is cleaned between uses. Art students will be provided with an Art pack.
19. **Induction training for staff** – all new staff must complete the induction training provided by the Department of Education before returning to school. All existing staff will be required to re-familiarise themselves with the induction training completed in August 2020.
20. **Return to work forms** – all staff must complete a ‘Return to Work’ form prior to returning to school.
21. **Lead Worker Representative (LWR)** – the school has appointed a LWR who works in collaboration with the Principal and Deputy Principal to assist in the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and monitor adherence to those measures and to be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the school.
22. **Illness and absence** – the following procedures apply to staff and students:
 - a. Staff or students that have symptoms must not attend school, their doctor should be contacted and HSE guidance on self-isolation should be followed. The symptoms are:
 - i. High temperature
 - ii. Cough
 - iii. Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
 - iv. Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
 - b. Staff and students must follow the most up-to-date HSE advice where he/she has been identified as a contact for a person with COVID-19.
 - c. Staff and students that develop symptoms at school must bring this to the attention of the Principal (or Deputy Principal if the Principal is unavailable) promptly.
 - d. Students will not be permitted to text parents/guardians requesting collection from school owing to illness or other reasons. The student must alert their teacher or the Principal/Deputy Principal if ill.
 - e. Parents/guardians are asked to keep the school notified of any absences so that a correct and up-to-date record of attendance can be maintained. Parents/guardians can do this via a note from the student’s school journal or by completing the online absence record form for the school.

23. Procedure to be followed in dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19:

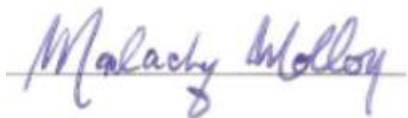
- a. If the person with the suspected case is a student, the parents/guardians/ will be contacted immediately.
- b. The student will be accompanied to the school's isolation area via the one-way system. The accompanying staff member will keep at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic student and will ensure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic student at all times. Face coverings will be worn at all times by the student and staff member and by the student when exiting the school.
- c. The isolation area is situated across from the Deputy Principal's office.
- d. Parents/guardians will be requested to come immediately to the school to bring home the student. The parent/guardian must drive to the rear of the school and when parked, call the school office to indicate their arrival. A staff member will then escort the student to the car. The parent/guardian must not enter the school building. The parent/guardian should call their doctor and follow his/her advice. The student may not return to school until the isolation period has elapsed or a negative test result is produced (whichever comes earlier). Public transport of any kind may not be used.
- e. Where a student in isolation cannot go home immediately, he/she will be facilitated by remaining in the isolation area. The parent/guardian will be advised to contact their doctor immediately. Where a parent/guardian cannot be contacted by the school, the school will contact the student's doctor and the cost of a phone consultation (if any) will be charged to the parent/guardian. The student will be advised to avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice will be given to the student presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag/bin provided.
- f. Where a student member 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.
- g. An assessment of the incident will be undertaken which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.
- h. Arrangements for the appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved will be made thereafter.
- i. If the person with the suspected case is a staff member, he/she will be advised to leave the school and return home, contact their doctor and follow the advice received. Points f, g and h above will be activated as necessary.

The HSE will inform any staff/parent/guardians who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and student confidentiality is essential at all times.

24. **Very-high risk category** –provision for students in this category will be made. Certification from a consultant or medical doctor to certify that a student is in the 'very-high risk' category for contracting COVID-19 must be provided to the school Principal. Staff in this category must inform the Board of Management and follow the procedures in Circular 0042/2021.

25. **Cleaning** – the school is cleaned in line with HPSC advice and guidelines.

26. **Health & Safety Risk Assessment** – the relevant risk assessments have been completed.
27. **Employee Assistance & Wellbeing Programme** – this is available to all staff, teaching and non-teaching. Under the EAS, employees have a dedicated free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year providing advice on a range of issues such as wellbeing, legal, financial, mediation, management support etc.



Malachy Molloy, Chairperson



Michelle McDermott, Principal

Date: 19th August 2021