

## CONTROL MEASURES - TO PREVENT INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN



### Tarbert Comprehensive School

We must do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our School. If infection is not introduced it cannot be spread.

The risk of spreading the infection once introduced exists in all interpersonal interactions; student - student, teacher - teacher and teacher- student, and must be managed in all settings. 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, students, parents and visitors as far as possible within the school. The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis.

It is critical that students, parents and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements. Staff equally have a role to play and will follow similar protocols. Staff will be inducted and trained on measures accordingly.

*Actions by parents and students to minimise the Risk of Introduction of COVID-19 into Tarbert Comprehensive School:*

- Symptoms of Covid-19 include: high temperature, cough, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties, loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste. Any student that has Covid symptoms must not attend school – instead they are to phone their doctor and to follow HSE guidance on self-isolation;
  - Any parent or student is not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement;
  - Any student that develops COVID symptoms at school are to bring this to the attention of one of the teaching staff who will send them to the office area where office staff will contact home. Under no circumstances are students to text home. No visitors are allowed to the school without a prior appointment or invitation from the school;
  - All students who leave school with suspected Covid symptoms must immediately contact their GP and have a Covid test. Students can only return to School following a negative Covid test result.
  - All parents and students entering the school building need to perform hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser. Each classroom now has a hand sanitiser - all students will use this hand sanitiser on entering each classroom during the school day. Washing of hands frequently in school bathrooms with warm soapy water is also strongly encouraged;
  - All parents and students entering the school building needs to perform good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby red bin (not recycling). All bins will be emptied daily.
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- All visitors to the school during the day will arrive by prior arrangement with the Principal and will be received at the main office area;
- Classrooms are being reconfigured to maintain a social distance of at least 1 meter between all single desks (double desks are no longer in use);
- Junior (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> Year) students and Senior students (TY to LC2) will now have different breaks – meaning more social distance available at break times;
- Students are not to congregate close to each other or in large groups so as to decrease interaction. Physical distancing between students and students, staff and staff as well as staff and students will also be observed. Social physical contacts such as hugs and handshakes are not allowed;
- Students should avoid sharing personal items. Where teaching and learning involves use of keyboards or tablets, the contact surface of the device will be cleaned at the end of each class and hand hygiene encouraged;
- Students will wipe down their own desk and chair at the end of each class – appropriate material will be provided;
- School water fountains will no longer be available. Students are advised to bring sufficient water to school;
- PE changing rooms, for now, are not available;
- Students and staff are required to wear visors in class and along the corridors as well as break time. Visors are not required at break times if outside (and a 2 meter social distance is maintained). Masks may be worn on buses;
- Students and staff with additional respiratory concerns may wear masks in addition to visors. Parents of such children are asked to contact Mr Prendiville prior to opening.
- **Reminder to anyone attending school who has travelled abroad** - Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of 'normal precautions' ("green"), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Therefore no student is allowed into school until this 14 day period has elapsed.

## Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

Students should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. The following outlines how the School will deal with a suspected case that may arise in a school setting.

A designated isolation area (Resource Room) is identified within the school building near the office area. This designated isolation area is behind a closed door and away from other staff and students. If a student displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school the following are the procedures to be implemented:

- the parents/guardians will be contacted immediately;
  - The person will be Isolated and will be accompanied to the designated isolation area, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times;
  - If it is not possible to maintain a distance of 2m a staff member caring for a student will wear a face covering or mask. Gloves will not be used as the virus does not pass through skin;
  - A mask will be provided for the person presenting with symptoms He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises;
  - The individual who is displaying symptoms will be immediately directed to go home/be brought home by parents and must call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home;
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- The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. They should cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided;
- Once collected, the students should then, through their parents, inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used;
- Once empty the isolation area will be appropriately cleaned
- The HSE will inform any parents of a student who has 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 student confidentiality is essential at all times.

## **Conclusion**

Tarbert Comprehensive School will reopen for all our students in early September. While everyone wants the School to operate as normal, it is recognised by all that it will be a different environment to how our School operated in the past. Physical distancing, much less interaction between classes and class groups, staggered breaks and lunch times and a lot of flexibility within the School to maximise school spaces (including the use of practical rooms) will be a feature.

I am aware that there will be a broad range of responses when the school reopens, ranging from students and their parents being happy and relieved to get back to school to some students and their families being fearful and nervous. With that in mind I am more conscious than ever that the wellbeing of the entire school community is hugely important and we will make every effort so that our students feel safe, educated and welcomed.

As always the Student Support Team (SST) will meet weekly within the School to assist students who struggle to come back to school, vulnerable groups and those children who may experience loss, grief and bereavement during the period of school closure. The School Chaplain and Guidance Counsellor remain fully accessible to students.

A significant cultural shift in the behaviours of students, their families and staff is expected with each playing their roles in keeping the virus out of Tarbert Comprehensive School.

Reopening our School is not just a matter of achieving a certain minimum physical distancing. It is also about getting students re-engaged fully with learning, socialising with their peers, and for some preparing for examinations, for others transitioning to school life or a different level in terms of moving from primary to post-primary. Students will need the support of their families, teachers and school staff in readjusting to school life and physical learning environments again.

*Richard Prendiville*

**PRINCIPAL**

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