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Eyrecourt,
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Co. Galway.
H53 R772



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Covid 19 Response Plan September 2020/June 2021

Ratified by the Board of Management of St. Brendan's NS, Eyrecourt on 26/08/20.

Signed:

Fr. Declan McInerney
Chairperson, Board of Management

Ms Éilis Treacy
Principal

Signed copy filed in school.

Introduction & Rationale

This document is intended to provide clear and helpful guidance for the prevention, early detection and control of Covid 19 in Eyrecourt NS. It provides key messages to minimise risk for staff, pupils, families and the wider community while recognizing the importance of Education for the wellbeing of our children.

This document focuses on the practical steps we will take to avoid the introduction of Covid 19 into our school and how we will reduce the likelihood of its spread. These arrangements and protocols will be clearly and regularly communicated to staff, parents and pupils through staff briefings, direct teaching, signage, Texts and the school website www.eyrecourtns.ie.

Documents used to inform this plan are available to view at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0bff-reopening-our-primary-and-special-schools/>

This document aims to provide details of:

- 1. COVID-19 School Policy**
- 2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School**
 - a. School Building**
 - b. Signage**
 - c. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)**
 - d. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment**
 - e. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)**
- 3. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
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- 10. Staff Duties**
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 - a. Start/End of the School Day**
 - b. Class Bubbles and Distancing**
 - c. Playground Supervision**
 - d. Other Measures to Implement this Policy**

The assistance and cooperation of all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided in this document. However, should errors or omissions be identified, please notify us so that appropriate measures can be taken to rectify same.

Note: The plan is a live working document and may be reviewed and amended to take into account new guidance from www.Gov.ie, www.dbei.ie, www.hse.ie, www.hpsc.ie, www.hsa.ie; www.education.ie

1. COVID-19 School Policy

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

COVID-19 Policy Statement

Eyrecourt NS. 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 the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our staff
- provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques
- agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan
- inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements
- adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing
- ensure staff engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education
- implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school
- provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time
- implement cleaning in line with Department of Education advice

All school staff will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representative(s), who will be supported in line with the agreement between the Department and education partners.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

2. Planning and Preparing for Return to School

The Board of Management aims to facilitate the resumption of school-based teaching and learning and the return to the workplace of staff. The return to the work must be done safely and in strict adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and the Government.

a. School Buildings

Before re-opening school we will ensure the following has taken place:

- ✓ Water system flushed at outlets to prevent Legionella disease
- ✓ All clutter removed especially on classroom surfaces
- ✓ Windows can be opened to allow for ventilation
- ✓ School equipment furniture checked for defects/wear and tear
- ✓ Taps/soap dispensers functioning correctly

b. Signage

The Department of Education will supply age-appropriate signage in advance of school opening. This will detail cough and sneeze etiquette, handwashing etc. and will be displayed prominently at entrance and exit points, in all classrooms and bathrooms, staffroom, corridors and photocopying and art rooms.

Additional signage reminding members of the school community to socially distance will be purchased.

c. Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)

In order to return to the workplace, staff must complete a **Return to Work (RTW)** form, which is available electronically or from the Principal. A hard copy is attached also at **Appendix 1**.

A RTW form should only be completed **at least 3 days** prior to any proposed date of return to the workplace.

On receipt of the completed form the Principal will provide: details of the **Induction Training** for completion by staff prior to the return to the workplace and details of any additional health and safety measures in place in the school to facilitate the staff member's return to the school facility.

Note: Induction Training for staff will be developed by the Department in consultation with stakeholders and made available for all schools and staff.

d. Safety Statement and Risk Assessment

COVID-19 represents a hazard in the context of health and safety in the school environment. A template risk assessment to identify the control measures required to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in school settings is attached at **Appendix 2**.

Schools should review their existing risk assessments to consider any new risks that arise due to the school's COVID-19 Response Plan. Any changes to the school's current risk assessments should be documented. Emergency procedures involving fire safety and first aid should be reviewed and changes documented.

e. Return to work safely and Lead Worker Representative(s)

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan and the associated control measures lies primarily with the Board of Management and the School Leadership.

The Return to Work Safely protocol provides for an agreed procedure between management and staff to appoint a Lead Worker Representative to carry out a specific role.

The role of the worker representative) is to ensure that Covid-19 measures are adhered to in the workplace as follows

- ✓ Work collaboratively with the employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees in relation to COVID-19.
- ✓ Promote good hygiene practices such as washing hands regularly and maintaining good respiratory etiquette along with maintaining social distancing in accordance with public health advice.
- ✓ Assist with the implementation of measures to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace.
- ✓ Monitor adherence to measures put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- ✓ Consult with colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.
- ✓ Make representations on behalf of their colleagues on matters relating to COVID-19 in the workplace.

If a staff member has any concerns or observations in relation to the Covid-19 Response Plan and control measures or the adherence to such control measures by staff, parents/guardians, contractors or visitors, he/she should contact the lead worker(s) who will engage with the Principal/BOM.

<i>Name of Lead Worker Representative:</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Gerardine Moran-Barrett	gbarrett@eyrecourtns.ie
<i>Name of Deputy Lead Worker Representative</i>	<i>Contact Details</i>
Patricia Dunican	office@eyrecourtns.ie

All staff, 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 the Covid-19 Response Plan and associated control measures.

3. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- High temperature
- Persistent Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell or taste

The best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a school is to minimise the risk of introduction of the disease into the school setting in the first place.

This can be achieved through the following measures:

- ✓ Promote awareness of COVID-19 and its symptoms amongst staff, pupils, parents and visitors.
- ✓ Advise staff and parents of pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19 or other acute infectious diseases not to attend school, to phone their GP and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.
- ✓ Advise staff and parents of pupils who have been identified by the HSE as contact of a person with COVID19 not to attend schools and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement.

- ✓ Ensure that staff and pupils know what to do if they develop symptoms at school.
- ✓ Everyone entering the school building should be required to perform hand hygiene with hand sanitiser.
- ✓ Limit visitors to the school.
- ✓ Visitors to school during the day should be only by prior arrangement and should be received at a specific contact point.
- ✓ Have a designated meeting point for visitors.
- ✓ Have a designated drop-off point for forgotten items.
- ✓ Staff, pupils and visitors should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the Covid-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

The Department of Education and Skills will ensure all updated advice is circulated to schools. Eyrecourt NS will arrange for this advice to be circulated to staff, pupils and visitors in a timely manner.

4. Managing the Risk of Spread of Covid-19

a. Wash your Hands Frequently

Regular hand washing with regular soap and water is effective for the removal of COVID-19. Follow the HSE guidelines on handwashing. The following link will be helpful:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

Hand hygiene should be performed:

- ✓ On arrival at school
- ✓ Before eating/drinking
- ✓ After using the toilet
- ✓ After playing outdoors
- ✓ When hands are physically dirty
- ✓ After coughing or sneezing

b. Hand Hygiene and Hand Sanitisers

Hand hygiene can also be achieved by the use of a hand sanitisers (when hands are clean).

Hand sanitisers will be deployed to avoid disruption to teaching and learning and to avoid congestion of staff and pupils waiting to use hand washing facilities. Children in the middle and senior rooms will have a small personal hand sanitiser at their desk also.

Sanitisers will be available at entry and exit points, in each classroom/SET room, offices, photocopying and staff rooms.

Children who cannot perform hand hygiene will be supported by staff.

c. Avoid Touching Eyes, Nose and Mouth

Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

d. Physical Distancing

Physical distancing is recommended to reduce the spread of infection in the workplace. A distance of 1m and where possible 2m's should be maintained. Staff should avoid being at children's eye level – remain standing as opposed to crouching down.

e. Practice respiratory hygiene

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow 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.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and Covid-19.

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that all staff and children adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

f. Do

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

g. Do Not

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, musical instruments.

h. People at Very High Risk (Extremely Vulnerable):

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk. The HSE has set out these groups, which include people who:

- are over 70 years of age - even if you're fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)

- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and you are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. Staff who are in this group should self-declare on the Return to Work form if they believe that they are at very high risk. Details of the leave arrangements that will apply is available from the Department of Education and Skills.

5. Control Measures

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. These control measures are outlined in this document.

The control measures shall continue to be reviewed and updated as required on an ongoing basis. It is critical that staff, pupils, parents/guardians and visitors are aware of, and adhere to, the control measures outlined and that they fully cooperate with all health and safety requirements.

Staff, in particular, should note that they have a legal obligation under Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to comply with health and safety requirements and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues and other parties within the workplace.

The following control measures have been put in place:

a. Return to Work Form

Staff will be required to complete a RTW form at least 3 days prior to any return to the school facility (see section 2 above). The purpose of the RTW form is to get confirmation from staff that, to the best of his/her knowledge, he/she has no symptoms of Covid-19 and is not self-isolating or cocooning or awaiting the results of a Covid-19 test.

b. Induction Training

All staff will undertake and complete Covid-19 Induction Training prior to returning to the school building.

The aim of such training is to ensure that staff have full knowledge and understanding of the following:

- Latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health
- Covid-19 symptoms
- What to do if a staff member or pupil develops symptoms of Covid-19 while at school
- Outline of the Covid-19 response plan

Staff will be kept fully informed of the control measures in place in the school and their duties and responsibilities in preventing the spread of Covid-19 and with any changes to the control measures or guidance available from the public health authorities.

If a staff member is unsure about any aspect of the Covid-19 Response Plan, the associated control measures, or his/her duties, he/she should immediately seek guidance from the Principal.

c. Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

It is crucial that all staff, pupils, parents/guardians, contractors and visitors are familiar with, and adopt, good hand and respiratory hygiene practices.

Guidance documentation and Information posters will be available at various locations within the school facility and handwashing facilities and/or hand sanitisers are available at multiple locations across the school facility (See Section 2)

d. Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is recommended if a physical distance of 2m cannot be maintained. PPE will also need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas.

Such include roles where:

- Performing intimate care/First Aid
- Where a suspected case of Covid-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- In SET Rooms
- Supporting children with classwork
- Where a teacher feels it necessary in order to keep safe

Appropriate PPE will be available for dealing with suspected COVID-19 cases, intimate care needs and for first aid.

Where staff provide healthcare to children with medical needs in the school environment they should apply standard precautions as per usual practice.

The use of a face covering can conceal facial expression and can make communication difficult and as such will be used sparingly. A visor in addition to a facial covering may be used where there is a concern that physical distancing cannot be maintained, there will be prolonged close contact and/or that exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets is likely.

d. Wearing of Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school setting by pupils or staff is not generally appropriate. It does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Gloves may be used for First Aid/Intimate Care.

e. Cleaning (Please see separate Covid 19 Cleaning Policy for detailed arrangements)

Arrangements for additional cleaning of areas and surfaces within the school has been made.

Regular and thorough cleaning of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces shall be conducted; in particular any high touch areas (toilets/door handles/tables). Cleaning will be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

All staff will have access to cleaning products and will be required to maintain cleanliness of their own work area. Under no circumstances should these cleaning materials be removed from the building. Staff should thoroughly clean and disinfect their work area before and after use each day. All utensils used by staff at break must be put in the dishwasher.

There will be daily collection of used waste disposal bags from offices and other areas within the school facility.

f. Access to the school building /contact log

Access to the school facility will be in line with agreed school procedures.

Arrangement for necessary visitors such as contractors and parents/guardians will be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.

The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus and protecting the health and safety of the individuals themselves and other staff, contractors and visitors at the workplace. A detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities should be maintained. The school should maintain a log of staff and students contacts. See visitor contact log at **Appendix 3**.

g. First Aid/emergency procedure

The standard First Aid/Emergency procedure shall continue to apply in Eyrecourt NS.

In an emergency or in case of a serious incident, call for an ambulance or the fire brigade on 112.

9. Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Staff and pupils should not attend school if displaying symptoms of Covid 19. The following outlines what to do if a suspected case arises in the school.

Staff members will be required to manage a suspected case in line with the protocol and training.

Gerardine Moran Barrett (Patricia Dunican) is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the protocol to deal with suspected cases have been adhered to.

Suspected Case

If a child is displaying one or more of the following symptoms:

- ✓ Persistent Coughing
- ✓ Temperature (Thermometer available if high temperature suspected)
- ✓ Breathless
- ✓ Loss of smell/taste

then Covid 19 protocols should be initiated.

1. Staff member contacts Gerardine (Patricia if Gerardine is not available)
2. LWR (Lead Worker Representative) takes the office phone and list of parent contacts into the Isolation Area
3. LWR puts on appropriate PPE and collects child from location
4. The child is taken to the Isolation Area and given a mask to wear
5. LWR makes contact with parent/guardian and arranges for collection

Isolation Area

The library will be used as an isolation area. The following items will be kept in this area:

- Tissues

- Hand sanitiser
- Disinfectant/wipes
- Gloves/Masks
- Waste Bags
- Bins

If there is more than one suspected case these should still be isolated in the library but at a 2m distance from each other.

Isolating a Person and Arranging for them to Leave School

1. LWR will accompany the affected person to the isolation area while physical distancing from them (2m).
2. The affected person will be given a mask to wear and seated in the isolation area.
3. Contact should be made with parent/guardian. Siblings should go home as normal (not with the affected child) to avoid close contact. Under no circumstances can a pupil use public or school transport to travel home if they are a suspected case of COVID-19.
4. The parent/guardian should be advised to contact their GP
5. A disposable mask should also be worn by the affected person when exiting the building.
6. Staff – if the staff member feels well enough they can make their own way home immediately.
7. If the person is too sick to go home or advice is required call 112 and inform them the person is a Covid 19 suspect.
8. The affected person should be advised to avoid touching other people, surfaces and objects.
9. The affected person should cover their mouth and nose with disposable tissue(s) when they cough or sneeze, and put the tissue in the bin.
10. The affected person should be advised not to go to their GP surgery or any pharmacy/hospital
11. The affected person should continue wearing the face mask until they reach home.

Follow up

12. An assessment of the incident will take place to identify any follow-up actions needed.
13. Staff will be available to provide advice and assistance if contacted by the HSE.
14. Children can return to school once:
 - a) medical advice has been sought and they have been advised that they may return to school **or**
 - b) they have a negative test and have been symptom free for 48 hours

Note: Siblings of the affected child may not come to school until either a) or b) at 14 has occurred.

Cleaning

15. The isolation area will be out-of-use until cleaned and disinfected as soon as is practical after the affected person has left the building.
16. Arrangements will be made to clean and disinfect any classroom space where the staff or pupils were located.

Please see Covid 19 Cleaning Policy

10. Staff Duties

Staff have a statutory obligation to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of their colleagues and other parties. In order to facilitate a safe return to work, these duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ✓ Adhere to the School Covid-19 Response Plan and the control measures outlined. The cooperation and assistance of all staff is essential to reduce the risk of spread of Covid-19 and to protect health and safety as far as possible within the school. All staff have a key role to play.
- ✓ Coordinate and work with their colleagues to ensure that physical distancing is maintained
- ✓ Make themselves aware of the symptoms of Covid-19 and monitor their own wellbeing
- ✓ Self-isolate at home and contact their GP promptly for further advice if they display any symptoms of Covid19
- ✓ Not return or attend school if they have symptoms of Covid-19 under any circumstances.
- ✓ If they develop any symptoms of Covid-19 whilst within the school facility, they should adhere to the procedure outlined above
- ✓ Complete the RTW form before they return to work
- ✓ Must inform the Principal if there are any other circumstances relating to Covid-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to facilitate their safe return to the workplace
- ✓ Must complete Covid-19 Induction Training and any other training required prior to their return to school
- ✓ Must be aware of, and adhere to, good hygiene and respiratory etiquette practices
- ✓ Keep informed of the updated advice of the public health authorities and comply with same.

11. Covid related absence management

The management of a Covid-19 related absence will be managed in line with agreed procedures with DES.

12. Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

The Board of Management aims to protect and support the health and wellbeing of all staff (physical, mental, spiritual etc.) both at work, whether in the school facility or at home and outside of work. The Board of Management is mindful that the support and promotion of staff health and wellbeing is particularly important in the current context where the Covid-19 pandemic has caused considerable challenges for, and disruption to, people's personal, family and social lives as well as their work arrangements.

The Board of Management aims to foster a culture and work environment that support healthy behaviours and staff wellbeing and shall continue to make health and wellbeing tools and guidance available to staff as well as organising suitable support programmes, initiatives and events.

These are challenging times for everyone. Should a staff member experience any stress or anxiety in respect of work or work arrangements, he/she should feel free to speak to the principal.

13. Preparation for School Reopening

a. Start/End of the School Day

Eyrecourt NS will put this protocol in place for the duration of the Covid 19 Pandemic. It will be reviewed regularly taking account of HSE Guidelines.

Morning Drop-Off

1. Children to enter the school grounds individually, or with siblings, taking care to distance.

2. Mr Barrett's class will use the left-side gate (beside the old convent) and the other two classrooms will use the right-side gate (beside the pitch).
Please use common sense to avoid crowding at the gate.
3. Ms McGrath's class will line up at the main door in class groupings.
Ms Treacy's class will line up at the exit door beside the main entrance in their class groupings.
Mr Barrett's class will line up back entrance in their class groupings.
4. All classes will enter the school building with their teacher at 9.20am.
5. All children will sanitise their hands on entering their classroom.

Infants Pick-Up

1. Children will sanitise on the way out.
2. Children to be collected at the main entrance at 2pm (sharp) by a parent.

Afternoon Pick-Up

1. Children to leave the school class by class.
2. 1st class will leave first at 2:55pm
3. All other classes will follow.
4. Mr Barretts class will leave at the left hand side gate.
5. Ms Treacy and Ms McGrath's classes will leave at the right hand side gate.
6. There is to be no congregating at the gate. Pupils must go directly to their car at a pre-arranged place.
7. Bus pupils will board the bus straight away.
8. Pupils who are walking or cycling will not congregate at the gate and set off on their journey immediately.
9. All children to sanitise their hands as they leave the school.
10. Children are not to return for anything which is forgotten.

We would ask all parents to facilitate social distancing as much as possible when dropping-off and picking up. Please be patient with staff, particularly at release time, as it may take a little longer than usual.

This arrangement is subject to review on a regular basis.

b. Class Bubbles and Distancing

Physical distancing is not expected for children from Infants to 2nd classes. 3rd - 6th classes will be seated at least 1m apart (with the exception of siblings). Teachers desks will be 2m from the nearest child. Teachers will have a portable screen to use as required.

We will treat each class as a 'Bubble' for example the Senior Classroom is a "Bubble". "Pods" in our context is the class e.g. 4th class. Class Bubbles will not mix throughout the day. Pods will not mix within the classroom.

c. Playground Supervision

Bubbles will have designated areas in the yard and separate play equipment and will continue to have break together with one teacher on supervision.

d. Other Measures to Implement this Policy

We have taken a number of steps to facilitate the implementation of this policy. These include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ All adults entering school grounds must wear a mask
- ✓ Removal of clutter from classrooms and common areas
- ✓ Art supplies for each class
- ✓ Sharing of Resources limited
- ✓ Enhanced cleaning regime
- ✓ Curriculum focus on Languages, Maths, SPHE and PE