



*Tús maith, leath na h-oibre*



## Action Plan for Communication & Supporting Pupils' Remote Learning 2020-21

Updated: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### Introduction

Following the publication of the *'Guidance on Remote Learning in a Covid-19 Context: September–December 2020,'* the In-School Management Team met on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2020 to discuss, develop and implement an Action Plan to support children's learning in the event of absences for individual children/Pods/class or full school closures.

The Principal update the Plan again in February 2021.

There are many reasons why a child may not attend their pod or class. However, if a child does not attend because they have tested positive for COVID-19, then the school will be informed by Public Health Services (HSE). If your child is identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, then they will need to restrict their movements for 14 days after last exposure to the child of who tested positive, and they will be offered testing for COVID-19 (day 0 and day 7 tests).

The school will always await official confirmation from Public Health services that specific action needs to be taken in relation to COVID-19 to prevent any misunderstanding and unnecessary restrictions.

The school is bound by data protection legislation not to identify pupils or staff that may have symptoms or ultimately test positive. The school would like to advise administrators of any parent association and/or class based WhatsApp groups that the members of the group should not engage in commentary in the event of a case being identified.

Equally the same protocol applies to staff. Whilst it may be obvious to staff as to which member has symptoms, it is the prerogative of that staff member to disclose or not disclose that information. Staff have been briefed by the Principal of their data protection responsibilities regarding not sharing any information disclosed to them by parents and staff members but that it is the responsibility of the HSE to inform close contacts who have contract Covid-19. Staff are also updated as needs be with new guidance by the Covid-19 Lead Work Representative who uploads new information to the staff via the shared school drive. However, staff themselves have a responsibility to check in with the DES website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) to keep themselves informed of any new updates, procedures and protocols that they need to follow.

The school will always be guided by the HSE who will carry a Public Health Risk Assessment in the event of a member of staff or pupil testing positive to Covid-19. As part of this risk assessment, all close contacts will be identified, contacted and advised of the next steps. Close contacts are requested not to come to school, in line with HSE Public Health advice. If Public Health does not make contact with you, you are not impacted and can continue to attend school.

If directed and required by the HSE, the school may share the following message with the school community: "The HSE is guiding our school through the actions we need to take to protect staff, students and our school community. A Public Health Risk Assessment has been carried out. All close contacts have been identified and sent home from school to restrict their movements for 14 days. The school community will continue to engage with and implement Public Health advice to protect ourselves and the school community from COVID-19". [Covid-19 Community Testing Pathway- gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie/covid-19-community-testing-pathway)

This Action Plan should inform parents of different approaches the school would implement to different scenarios regarding supporting children's learning remotely from home.

### **The Role of Chairperson of the BOM:**

The Chairperson has access to Aladdin, the school's database system where he can contact the staff via email or phone should the Principal and the Senior Management Team fall ill. The Chairperson of the BOM also has the telephone numbers of the ISM Team and the school inspector Catherine Treacy who can be contacted at [catherine\\_treacy@education.gov.ie](mailto:catherine_treacy@education.gov.ie)

### **The Role of the Principal:**

The school Principal should maintain an oversight of the procedures put in place to support pupils' learning from home to ensure that the learning experiences provided are appropriate to the pupil's needs.

The Principal should support the staff by communicating with them regularly and keeping all staff abreast with any new circulars from the Department of Education & Skills (DES). The Principal should check-in with the staff who may be struggling whilst working remotely. This can be achieved successfully using Zoom calls, emails and telephone.

The Principal should communicate regularly with the parents via email keeping them up to date with revised practices. The Principal can alert parents and staff to the fact that a positive case has been identified in a certain class without divulging the identity of said case.

### **Digital Communication Methods:**

Staff will communicate to each other using:

WhatsApp level groups

FaceTime

Email

Phone

### **Staff will Communicate to Parents:**

Due to the young age of our pupils, Staff will communicate directly with parents to support pupils' learning using:

- Telephone calls
- Zoom calls
- Emails
- Designated school email addresses where the same procedures are adhered to as if the school was open:
  - Teachers will try to read emails each morning before the children arrive to note any absences or urgent information
  - It is not practical for teachers to respond to emails within the school working day whilst teaching
  - Teachers will respond to a parent's email Monday to Friday by scheduling a response within 24 hours of receiving it
  - Teachers will not respond to general queries by parents outside of these hours other than to answer an urgent email

- Emails will not be answered at the weekend
- Parents should contact the school office Monday-Friday if there is an urgent matter that needs sharing at [stsylvesters@gmail.com](mailto:stsylvesters@gmail.com) or 01-8450061.

#### **Staff will Communicate to Colleagues:**

- Telephone calls
- Zoom calls
- Emails
- WhatsApp year groups

#### **Staff will Communicate to Pupils:**

- Verbal and written feedback to work set by the teachers for pupils will be communicated via Seesaw
- Pre-recorded lessons
- One pre-recorded check-in message per week

#### **Enforced Prolonged School Closure:**

The BOM recognise how challenging an enforced prolonged school closure has on pupils, parents, teachers, SNA' and school staff, many of whom have to juggle child care whilst working from home, supporting their child/ren's learning, minding toddlers with inquisitive minds, taking care of sick loved ones, sharing devices, looking after their mental health and the challenges of living in a pandemic. The BOM would like to recognise that everyone can only do their best in the circumstances they find themselves.

#### **Remote Live Lessons:**

There are many live platforms that provide an effective means for communicating work meetings, parent/teacher, staff and planning meetings. They are also an excellent forum to be used to teach young and responsible adults who do not require parental supervision, direction or input. However, we do not believe live remote lessons are a suitable platform to use to teach the young and vulnerable age group of our pupils. There could be serious implications around using live remote lessons in relation to child protection. Parents would also be required to sit by their child's side during a live lesson to support their child's learning, and to ensure no harmful issues arise – such as inadvertent access to harmful internet material.

#### **Inaccessibility and Unavailability of Multiple Suitable Devices in a Home:**

Attending live remote lessons can be problematic for some children as in many homes, there aren't enough suitable devices for siblings to access remote live lessons scheduled at the same time.

Many of our parents are working from home and need to use their devices for work which can invariably cause stress if parents have to share devices with their children at a certain specific time of the day.

There can also be a problem with the amount of bandwidth streaming that live lessons require, and this often becomes an issue when children are trying to join live lessons at the same time that parents are trying to have virtual meetings.

#### **Advantage of Pre-Recorded Lessons:**

One of the biggest advantage of pre-recorded lessons is accessibility.

Pre-recorded lessons delivered via Seesaw, which are methodically planned by teachers allow pupils to pause, rewind and revisit lessons. For safety, parents do not have to sit by their child's side during pre-recorded lessons as children are in no danger of unintentionally accessing unsuitable material on the internet.

Teachers can think more carefully about the quality of explanation and more easily build in video clips and other animations that help to bring the explanation to life.

The teacher's concentration is entirely on the material produced rather than on what everyone else in the session is doing or not doing!

Pupils can also look forward to hearing their teacher's voices through pre-recorded lessons on 'Seesaw'. Parents can play the pre-recorded lessons to their child at a time that suits them.

### **Maintaining Attention:**

It is challenging at the best of times to hold the attention of 28 pupils whilst teaching in the classroom. However, teachers are proficient at knowing how to direct, redirect and maintain pupils attention in the classroom using voice intonation, walking around the classroom, stopping at a pupil's chair and discreetly removing distractable objects from pupils without losing the flow of the lesson. Teachers cannot do this in a virtual classroom as it would be impossible to hold the attention of our young pupils during live video calls. Therefore, bearing in mind all the above considerations, we will not be engaging in any form of remote live lessons with our young pupils.

### **Remote Teaching and Learning:**

Following the enforced school closure from March-June 2020, the digital platform 'Seesaw' was successfully used in an age appropriate manner for our pupils. It allowed for our pupils to engage in two way communication with teachers in meaningful learning activities. 'Seesaw' is a secure, online pupil portfolio that allows teachers to share lessons, teach content and allow for feedback between teachers and pupils. Families are only able to access or view the Seesaw account of their own child.

For the school year 2020/21, it had been decided and agreed by the BOM and staff that in a situation where the school is required to close again for a prolonged period of time, 'Seesaw' would be used for remote teaching and learning. However, Seesaw may also be used for homework activities throughout the year while the school remains open.

Teachers will always provide written or verbal feedback to pupils and correct the work set on Seesaw by the teacher. This is quite time consuming and therefore teachers cannot provide feedback for extra activities uploaded to Seesaw by enthusiastic pupils! This can also reduce the unnecessary competitive pressure than can be put on parents to do extra work with their children and upload this additional work on Seesaw.

The work posted will only be visible to teachers and will not be visible to other pupils in the class.

In September 2020, class teachers sent Google Consent Forms to parents. This allowed staff to set pupils up on the class Seesaw account. Once teachers obtained consent, they sent an email to the parents with the pupil's home code for accessing Seesaw.

In the case of a whole/partial school closure, staff will begin to use a combination of emailing educational content and devising lessons accompanied where necessary by a voice-over of the teacher to be uploaded to Seesaw as soon as possible.

### **Weekly Remote Lesson Plans:**

- Teachers will schedule emails to be sent to parents each Friday with an overview of the weekly plan for the following week. This may include, but is not limited to, workbook page numbers; digital links to support lessons; poems; prayers and mindfulness activities.
- There will be one day allotted for the revision of previous completed learning activities in each weekly plan with an addition of suggested but not compulsory fun activities for parents to do with their child on this day.

- A daily menu of learning activities with the focus on Literacy, Numeracy, SPHE (Well-being) and P.E., SESE and religion.
- There will be four days of homework activities
- Teachers will attempt to limit where possible any need for families to print off resources. Workbooks, copies and resources will be bagged and sent home with pupils if directed by the Department of Education to an enforced a school closure. Bagged books/copies should not be opened by children during a school holiday and should be returned to school intact after the holiday.
- New literacy and numeracy content/concepts will be taught over Seesaw using pictures/video with a pre-recorded teacher voiceover
- Other subject areas to be covered (e.g. PE, Art, SPHE) will be sent by email
- It is preferable that each teacher would create their own SPHE lessons. However, year groups may jointly develop generic well-being and mindfulness SPHE lessons using the voice-over of one of the teachers in the year group to share with other classes
- In the case whereby the whole school is closed for an extended period of time, teachers may work together to create a bank of Seesaw lessons/resources that can be shared and used by the entire year group
- Some lessons may have a voiceover of one of the teachers in the year group. Class teachers can then choose to use which lessons would be of most benefit to their class, and when.
- Teachers will check Seesaw daily and give pupils feedback on their work within 24 hours Monday to Friday. i.e. if it suits a parent to complete school work with their child on a Tuesday, the teacher will respond on Wednesday. If the work was to be completed on Friday or over the weekend, the teacher will respond on the next working day, i.e. Monday.

#### **Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN):**

Children with SEN and their parents may require further support from the school. This may take the form of extra contact to maintain a good relationship between the child and their SNA/Special Education Teacher (SET). Children with SEN will be supported daily by their SET, as deemed appropriate to their needs and specific circumstances. In the event of a prolonged enforced closure, the SET's will take responsibility of creating and giving feedback of lessons set on Seesaw in collaboration with the class teacher.

#### **SNAs**

SNAs will make contact once or twice a day as deemed appropriate with the children they support. This can be achieved by:

- FaceTime: SNAs may support their child using video calls
- Videos: SNAs may support their child by sending a video or voice recording of themselves reading a story to their child using Seesaw.

#### **Special Education Teacher (SET)**

SET's can teach the children they are assigned to through:

- Emails: Class teacher and SET may send the parents of a child with SEN personalised emails in order to differentiate work, set work separate to the class work, or to offer support and feedback
- Seesaw: The SET in conjunction with the class teacher may send the parents of a child with SEN personalised Seesaw activities with voice-overs or messages in order to differentiate work separate to the class work
- Phone calls; to offer support and feedback.

## **How to Support Learning in the Event the School is Open but Staff/Pupils are Absent:**

### **How to Share Short Term Plans with Substitute Teachers?**

Class teachers are asked to put a copy of their monthly planning in their Sub Pack at the beginning of each month. This means that if a class teacher is absent at short notice, there is always an up to date plan of work to hand to the sub. Fiona Kirby (post-holder in charge of sub packs) has put a clearly labelled container with the Sub Packs in a prominent position on a shelf in the Comm's Room. Class teachers are asked to return their Sub Pack to this container when they return to work, having checked that all the relevant information is in place, including labels with pupils' names, etc. If any teacher is absent unexpectedly on uncertified leave and a set of worksheets was used by their class, they are asked to replace them in readiness for use by other teachers in their year group.

Teachers who are absent from work as a result of having to restrict their movements but are in good health, can also share weekly and monthly plans with a substitute teacher directly via email, phone, desktop of the laptop, or through the year group.

Teachers in the relevant year group can also identify for the substitute teacher what aspects of the plan have already been covered/ to prioritise.

### **What to do when an individual child/Pod and/or a class or SET is advised by the HSE to restrict their movement?**

Teachers or SNA's will never be expected to teach or support children's learning/development if they themselves are sick.

School work is never sent home

- To any pupils who are unwell
- When parents choose not to send their child to school (e.g. holidays during term time/restricting movements following a holiday/choose to self-isolate in advance of a festive event)

In the event of an individual child/Pod/Class/full school closure, the following procedures will be adopted:

In general, children will adopt the guidelines of the *'Weekly Lesson Plans'* as per the section above.

#### **Individual Child:**

- Where a child is at home for 5 -14 days (close contact/restricting movement) but well, the child's parent should request work to be completed at home. The reasoning behind this is if a parent is ill, they may not be in a position to complete work with their child
- The class teacher will email school work to the parents as soon as possible (within 48 hours of notification).
- The teacher will then email an outline of suitable activities that can be completed at home for this time. The focus will be on Literacy, Numeracy, PE and SPHE/Well-being Activities (as recommended by the Department of Education & Skills)
- The child should bring their completed work back to school on their return, and following a period of quarantine of the work (minimum of 72 hours), will receive feedback on it from their class teacher.
- New content will always be taught using voice-over recorded lessons on Seesaw.

#### **Pod:**

- Simple activities will be uploaded onto Seesaw containing content similar to that being completed by the rest of the class in school, in the areas of Literacy, Numeracy, P.E. and SPHE/Well-being
- If there is prior knowledge that the pod will be sent home, the children will also have their books sent home with them

- Lessons/activities will be sent by email, at the start of the period. This will be a week's plan of work, broken down into daily lesson plans which will be emailed daily
- There will be reference to workbooks and copybooks, rather than parents printing worksheets
- Seesaw will also be utilised in order to directly teach new concepts e.g. a video whereby the teacher models the formation of a the 'new number/letter of the week'. These videos will be a voiceover of the teacher modelling the completion of a task and may not include the teacher's face.
- All work set by the teacher will be uploaded to Seesaw daily by the teacher. This will take place during the normal time the class SET supports the class. The SET can take over teaching the class to allow the class teacher time to support the pod's learning.

#### **Class/School:**

- Only in the event that the school is notified of an impending school closure all workbooks & copies will be bagged and sent home with pupils that day.
- Pupils are not to complete pages in their workbooks without being directed to by their teachers.
- If the bagged books and copies need to be used during an enforced closure, they will be quarantined for a minimum of 72 hours on return to the classroom before being used again. If not, books can be carefully removed from the sealed bags by the class teachers/sna's using protective gloves.
- If a child is absent on the day of an enforced closure, the class teacher is required to leave those books on the child's desk, in the event that management needs to distribute the books during closures.

#### **Scenarios:**

##### **Scenario 1: What to do in the case if a Pod and the class teacher (who is well) is advised by the HSE to restrict their movements?**

If the class teacher is fit for work but has been advised by the HSE to restrict their movements, they will support the Pod's learning from home. The substitute teacher will teach the class.

The class teacher will send a plan of work for each week (or part thereof). The work will include Literacy, Numeracy and SPHE activities in keeping with the work being taught by the substitute teacher and it would be reasonable to include one Seesaw activity each day. In such a situation the teacher would engage with the pupils' work on Seesaw on a daily basis.

##### **Scenario 2: What to do in the case of a Pod and the class teacher (who is sick) is advised by the HSE to restrict their movements?**

If the teacher is sick, then the SET should support the Pod's learning. The SET should use the time normally allocated to in-class support of the class affected to support the Pod's learning. The SET using a copy of the fortnightly scheme kept in the Sub Pack in the Comm's Room, will be able to give limited support to the Pod's learning from home.

The substitute teacher will teach the class.

##### **Scenario 3: What to do if a Pod is sent home and the teacher is not?**

The teacher may continue to teach the class and ask the SET to support the Pod's learning. The SET should use the time normally allocated to in-class support to support the Pod's learning guided by the class teacher. Or, the class teacher may decide to support the Pod's learning whilst the SET is asked to teach the class during their in-class support time. Teachers will send a weekly outline of work to be completed at home, which can be uploaded to Seesaw by the parents. The class teacher or the SET will respond to this work once per week, to avoid overload, in a similar manner to how homework operates.

**Scenario 4: How will Teachers support the learning of an individual child who has been advised to restrict their movements for 14-17 days by the HSE?**

If a child has to restrict their movements because one of their family is being tested for COVID-19 and if they are well, the teacher upon request, will email numeracy and literacy lessons for the child to complete. These will be corrected and feedback given at the end of the week. The teacher may respond to an email from the parent, midweek looking for clarification or to advise of any up to date information on the child's health.

**Scenario 5: What would happen should a Pod, class teacher and SET all be sick at the same time?**

The substitute will teach the class. The Pod's learning will be supported by the class teacher or SET when one of them is well again to teach.

**Scenario 6: what would happen if there were a number of teachers absent and the school could not employ a substitute teacher?**

The school is fortunate enough to have 6 SET's who can cover 6 classes when substitute teachers are unavailable. However, if a seventh teacher became ill, and if there were no substitute teachers available, the class would be sent home.

**Guidelines for School Children Travelling Overseas: (to or from Ireland)**

Our school has put huge measures and strategies in place to ensure all the children and staff are safe and that the highest levels of safety protocols have been implemented. In accordance with the most recent publication from the Department of the Taoiseach, *'Travelling to Ireland during the Covid-19 Pandemic'* published 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020, Section (C), the school insists in order to maximise everyone's safety, that children of all ages who enter the country must quarantine and restrict their movements for 14 days before returning to our school. This includes children traveling to and from Ireland over the Christmas break.

Parents are requested to notify the school the date of returning to Ireland and the intended date of returning to school. The school will not be supporting the education of children who fall into this category.

**Conclusion:**

A huge amount of time, planning and resources have been put into the safe reopening of our school. The school does not anticipate or foresee any future closures as we believe it is in the best interest of the pupils to attend school. However, the school will always be directed by advice from the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills.

**Ratification:**

This Action Plan was originally ratified by the Board of Management on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 in compliance with Circular 74/2020. The Plan is available for viewing on our website [www.stsylvestersinfantschool.com](http://www.stsylvestersinfantschool.com)

The Board of Management reserves the right to add to or amend this Plan from time to time as deemed necessary. This Plan was reviewed again on the 8th February 2021.

Signed:



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Mr. Michael McKenna,  
Chairperson,  
Board of Management.

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021