

Schools Pathway Document for Covid- 19 – CPSMA Guidance Note

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. The Department of Education and Skills published [*Reopening Our Schools - The Roadmap for the Full Return to School*](#)¹ on July 27th 2020. This Roadmap provided guidance for the reopening of schools and addressed the measures/procedures required for a school's operation to be sustainable in a COVID-19 context.
- b. Under the provisions of the Department of Education and Skills publication [*COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools*](#)², schools are required to identify a designated isolation area within the school building, where staff members/pupils who display Covid-19 symptoms can be accommodated until they can either go home, or receive medical attention onsite, if the situation is urgent.

Section 8 of this document sets out the protocol for Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 and includes an accompanying checklist at Appendix 7.

- c. Schools are required to maintain current lists of staff and pupils, by classes, with contact telephone numbers for parents and guardians. These records should be retained in Excel format, and ready to share with the Department of Public Health, if required and requested under Infectious Diseases legislation, 1981, as amended.³

2. POTENTIAL CASE OF COVID-19 IN A SCHOOL SETTING – SCHOOL-LED RESPONSE

Under the provisions of [*Schools Pathway for COVID-19: The Public Health approach, Office of the Clinical Director, Health Protection, HSE*](#), children with a blocked or runny nose, but no fever can attend school or childcare, but if they require paracetamol or ibuprofen for their symptoms, they must not attend school for 48 hours and GP assessment for testing is indicated.


If a child develops a fever and symptoms such as outlined in [*HPSC guidance*](#) whilst in school, the school should follow the protocols set out in point 1(b) (above).

The following table gives an overview of the school's response to a potential case of Covid-19 in an educational facility:

¹ [*Reopening Our Schools - The Roadmap for the Full Return to School, Department of Education and Skills 2020*](#)

² [*COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools Department of Education and Skills 2020*](#)

³ [*Schools Pathway for COVID-19: The Public Health approach, Office of the Clinical Director, Health Protection, HSE*](#)

Pupil presents with symptoms as set out in HPSC guidance	
Symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss or changed sense of taste or smell.	School Action: Follow the protocol re. isolation in the designated area and contact Parent/Guardian
Parent/Guardian contacted	
Parent/Guardian should arrange to have their child collected from school and should contact their GP to discuss clinical concerns. Request Parent/Guardian to advise school of the outcome.	School Action: None Do not inform parents that a pupil has been removed due to symptoms; Do not remove other pupils from class.
GP will assess the pupil and will advise as per normal clinical practice	
Based on the outcome of the assessment, the GP will determine whether or not the pupil can return to school, restrict movement until symptom free, self-isolate pending further assessment etc. (see HSE/HPSC Isolation Quick Guide)	School Action: None
GP determines that pupil requires to be tested for Covid-19	
Parent/Guardian should ensure that all other household contacts should be removed from the school setting. Parent/Guardian requested to advise school why other household contacts are removed from the school setting (i.e. restricting movement pending result of test).	School Action: None Await contact from the HSE in the event of a detected case. Ensure that current class lists and contact numbers for parents/guardians are available for the Department of Public Health, if required.
Pupil has a Covid-19 “not detected” result	
Pupil remains at home until clinically well enough to return to school, or unless specifically advised by the HSE Public Health to remain at home pending the outcome of other investigations.	School Action: None
Pupil Tests positive for Covid-19	
Parent/Guardian advised that the result will have to be shared with the school, if this is deemed necessary by the Medical Officer of Health.	<p><u>THIS NOW BECOMES A PUBLIC HEALTH HSE - LED PROCESS</u></p>  <p><i><u>Please note guidance for Boards of Management in Section 3.</u></i></p>

3. RESPONDING TO A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19 IN THE SCHOOL/SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

Usually, the school will be contacted by the Department of Public Health, on the same day, but it may be the next day.

If a school has not been contacted by the Public Health HSE in relation to a confirmed case in the school community, then contact with the school has not been deemed necessary.

This is problematic in the context of anxiety associated with the return to school, as well as the circulation of inaccurate and speculative information in the school community. School Principals, in particular, may come under increasing pressure to take a particular course of action based on information that is circulating on social media.

Schools **cannot** take action in relation to the exclusion of pupils, school closures (either part or full), unless it is based on the outcome of a Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA), which will inform any actions that are recommended by the Medical Officer of Health (M.O.H.).

The actions recommended by the M.O.H. will be communicated directly by Public Health HSE to School Management. The communication that will issue to members of the school community will be drafted in consultation with the HSE Public Health.

Confidentiality in respect of the medical information of staff, pupils, and their families must be maintained at all times.

Responding to a confirmed case of Covid-19: Public Health HSE led process checklist	✓
1. Record the name and contact detail of the HSE official	
2. Record the action directed by HSE official & request that it be confirmed by email.	
3. Contact the Chairperson of the Board of Management to advise him/her of the direction of the HSE.	
4. Agree the wording of a draft communication to parents with the Chairperson and the HSE.	
5. If the school is to be closed in whole or in part, confirm that the closure can wait until the end of the school day.	
6. Confirm with the HSE that the Department of Education and Skills has or will be notified of the Public Health direction.	
7. Advise that the request for Pupil Lists/Contact Numbers, setting out the legal basis for the request (Infectious Diseases legislation 1981, as amended) be made by email, and furnish the information without any unnecessary delay.	
8. Notify the Patron of the Public Health Direction.	
9. Notify the Board of Management	
10. Advise staff of the arrangements, bring the details of EAS (Spectrum Life) to their attention, and advise them not to discuss any aspect of the case/closure with other parties.	