

Advice for parents during COVID-19:

Returning to Special Schools



School communities are working hard, with the support of public health officials, to ensure the safe operation of our schools for students, staff and families.

All schools have put in place rules and routines which must be followed to keep everyone safe. The latest public health advice on returning to school is available on gov.ie/schools.



The rules and routines to follow to keep everyone safe:

Close Contacts: if a student or staff member in a school tests positive for Covid-19, they are required to self-isolate and public health will conduct a risk assessment. Any student or staff member who is deemed a close contact is required to restrict their movements and not attend school.

The HSE has issued a guide for parents on close contacts on gov.ie/schools.

Example 1

Close contact required to restrict movements

- Teresa O'Farrell is in 2nd class in St Mary's special school
- A child in her pod has tested positive for Covid-19
- Following a public health risk assessment, Teresa has been identified as a close contact
- Teresa's parents are informed that she should restrict her movement for 14 days since the day she was last in touch with the child who tested positive.



Example 2

Contact of a contact: not required to restrict movements

- Peter O'Farrell is in 5th class in St Mary's special school
- He is Teresa's brother
- He has not been identified by Public Health as a close contact of the child who tested positive
- Peter can continue to attend school
- If Teresa or anyone else in the household tests positive then Peter must stay at home.



- **Good handwashing and hygiene practice** – important for all students. It's important that students' hands are washed regularly. Where possible students should be taught to cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue which must be binned immediately.



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➤ Special schools are returning on 11 February on a 50% basis. This means that up to 50% of the pupils will be present at one time.

➤ Schools will organise how this will work for classes and pupils



➤ Staff members will wear appropriate **personal protective equipment (PPE)** when they cannot keep 2 metres apart from others. They will also wear other PPE such as **gloves** or **aprons** when they are providing close or intimate care for children.

➤ Schools have been provided with the funding to supply this PPE for staff members.



➤ **School transport** – students have an assigned seat that they must sit in. School buses are moving to operate at 50% capacity and further progress will be made on this in the coming weeks.

➤ **Pick up** and **drop off** can be a busy time.



➤ Please ensure social distancing by following the school's guidance on when and where to go. Please drop and collect your child quickly without lingering.

➤ Parents should follow public health advice on socialising outside of the household to keep their children safe outside of school.

For video guidance from Public Health specialist Dr Abigail Collins, click [here](#).

For more see gov.ie/schools