

Bennettsbridge N.S.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Bennettsbridge N.S. Covid-19 Policy Statement
3. Bennettsbridge N.S. Physical and Logistical Plans

Covid19 Response Plan as outlined by the DES (separate pdf)

Planning and preparing for School Return

- Training
- Procedure for Returning to Work (RTW)
- Lead Worker Representative
- Display signage
- Safety statement and Risk Assessment

General Advice to prevent the spread of the virus

Managing the risk of spread of Covid 19

Control Measures

Dealing with a suspected case of Covid 19

Staff Duties

Covid Related Absence Management

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

Introduction

This Covid-19 Response Plan is designed to support the staff and Board of Management in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Bennettsbridge N.S.

This Covid-19 Response Plan details the policies and logistical practices necessary for our school to meet The Department of Education and Skills, 'Return to Work Safely Protocol', plan for school reopening and to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the school environment. It also incorporates the general guidance issued in the DES' COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe & sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools which can be accessed on our school website.

It is important that the resumption of school based teaching and learning and the reopening of school facilities comply with the protocol to minimise the risk to students, staff and others. As the advice issued by NPHEC continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures that management and staff need to address may also change.

The response plan supports the sustainable reopening of our school where the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and pupils while promoting the educational and development needs of the children in the school.

In line with the Return to Work Safely Protocol, the key to a safe and continued return to work, and re-opening of our schools requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between the Board of Management, staff, pupils and parents.

This plan is a living document and will be updated to reflect current advice about measures to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the community issued by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHEC) & DES.

The assistance and co-operation of all staff, pupils, parents, contractors and visitors is critical to the success of the plan.

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Bennettsbridge N.S.

COVID-19 Policy Statement

Bennettsbridge N.S. 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 handwashing 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.

LWR: Olivia Selmon

DLWR: Catriona O' Keeffe

This plan was adopted by the Board of Management on Sat 15th Aug 2020.

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Bennettsbridge N.S.

Bennettsbridge Physical and Logistical Details

School Profile

- 196 pupils
- 7 Mainstream classes
- 3 Special Education Teachers (1 shared with St. John of God 1 day per week until Christmas and two days per week from Jan to June)
- Administrative Principal
- 2 Full Time SNA posts
- Full Time Secretary
- Part Time Caretaker
- Contract Cleaners (new)

Physical Profile

- 7 mainstream classes all with toilet facilities
- Gym
- Prefab building with one large and 1 small room, both currently used for SE
- 1 small SE room in main building
- Staffroom, kitchen,
- Secretary's office and Principal's office
- 2 Staff Bathrooms and 1 Physically Adapted Bathroom
- Playground

Additional Challenges

- Playground: Difficulties foreseen in maintaining integrity of class bubbles within current space
- Shape of Senior classroom compromises physical distancing requirements
- Storage of excess furniture

Extra Human Resources

- Aide – 2 days
- Secretary (from 10/8/20)
- Deputy Principal – 5 Leadership and Administration Days

School Re-Opening

26th Aug: Staff and Infant Induction

27th Aug : School will re-open for all pupils

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Bennettsbridge N.S.

Physical Distancing and Safe School Attendance

We are currently working on reviewing our procedures and routines within the school to ensure that there is as much physical distancing as is possible in our building. We will apply physical distancing in a practical and sensible way, recognising that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue. The DES guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

Physical Distancing will be achieved in two ways:

1. *Increasing Separation:* This will be achieved by re-configuring the classrooms to maximise physical distancing. Children in classes 3rd to 6th will be 1m apart.
 - This is achievable in Mrs. O' Keefe, Mrs. Pembroke and Ms. Dunne's classrooms.
 - Mr. McDonald will swap rooms with Ms Nagle to achieve physical distancing.There is no requirement for children from J1 to 2nd Class to maintain a physical distance.

2. *Decreasing Interaction:* The children and their teachers will work in Class Bubbles. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes from arrival in school in the morning until the children go home at the end of the school day. There will be assigned routes for various bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. We will observe our usual practice of keeping to the left when in the corridors.

Signage

- Signage outlining the signs and symptoms of Covid-19, supporting good hand and respiratory hygiene and requesting social distancing will be displayed in prominent areas such as offices, corridors, staffroom area, classrooms and toilets.

Sanitising & Cleaning (Including measures already taken and measures planned)

- BRJ contracted to deep clean the school and prefab
- Ms Nagle's room to be painted
- Complete Hygienic flush out of Water Systems
- Automatic dispensers to be installed at all entry/ exit points of school and classrooms
- Hypoallergenic Cleanrite products to be purchased
 - i. Hydrogel for dispensers
 - ii. Atomiser Spray laptops and for additional hand sanitising in classrooms
- Surface Sprays for classrooms surfaces
- Newly purchased Fogger (Cleanrite sanitiser) to be used twice weekly in all rooms and for additional sanitising of toys, etc.using Cleanrite Sanitiser.

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[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- In accordance with the DES guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, sink and toilet facilities.
- Detailed Daily Cleaning schedules to be devised for new contract cleaners
- Water, soap and paper towel dispensers are available in all bathrooms (installed Jan'20)
- Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged, and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message. **Hands will be washed after activities where hands 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.
- Waste bins will be emptied daily by cleaners.
- **Dec' 20: New Caretaker / cleaner employed. New Steam cleaner purchased**

Drop –Off and Collection Procedures

We have now finalized our plans for drop-off and collection of the children every day. We would ask all parents to familiarise themselves with the routines. Patience and flexibility are required as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year. There will undoubtedly, be some unforeseen challenges and we will deal with these as they arise.

It is imperative that;

- Adults maintain a 2m social distance both outside the school gate and in the adjoining field. No adults should enter the school grounds at this time. (see separate infant arrangements).
- Parents do not try to have meetings with members of staff at drop-off and collection times
- All parents adhere to the drop-off and collection plans as outlined below

We are very fortunate in BBNS to have 3 main entry and exit routes.

1. Main Gates
2. Green side gate to the field
3. Green double gates to the field

We also have 6 different doors leading directly into classrooms or into the school building.

We will use all these entry /exit points to ensure physical distancing and maintain the integrity of the class bubbles as much as is practicably possible.

Drop-Off

- School will be open for drop-off from 9:10am to 9:20am. No person should be on the school grounds prior to this time.

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[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- Children will go directly to their classes on arrival.
- School staff will be at the 3 main entry points from 9:10am to direct the children to their classrooms until such time that they are familiar with the morning procedure.
- Class teachers will be in their classrooms by 9:10am.
- Sanitising stations have been installed at all entry/exit points.
- Senior Infant and Junior Infant parents can drop their children to the main door using the one way system in the courtyard where they will be met by a staff member. A staff member will bring the infants to their respective classrooms.
- Arrangements for Junior Infants for Thurs 27th and Fri 28th will be communicated directly to parents during the induction morning on Wed 26th.

Entry and Exit points to the school for each classroom	
Mrs. Selmon (Junior Infants)	Main Entrance(through front courtyard) (from Mon 31 st Aug)
Ms. Morrissey (Senior Infants)	Main Entrance (through front courtyard)
Ms. Nagle (First Class)	Side door of classroom (near prefab)
Mrs. O' Keeffe (2 nd & 3 rd)	Side door of classroom (access from inside main gate along by wall)
Mrs. Pembroke (3 rd & 4 th)	Gym doors at rear of school
Ms. Dunne (4 th & 5 th)	Front Doors
Mr. McDonald (5 th & 6 th)	Side door of classroom (access from front courtyard)

Drop Off:

1. To avoid congregation at school gates parents are asked to remain in their cars until 9:10 bell. Children may then be accompanied to main school gate or either green gate in the field (weather dependant)
2. Parents are asked to wear masks at all times in the school environs.

Afternoon Pick-Up

The procedures outlined below are designed to maximize physical distancing and minimise physical interaction between adults and children alike while maintaining an orderly exit from the school premises.

Junior Infants: (12:20pm from Aug 27th – Sept 11th inclusive and 2:00pm from Mon Sept 14th)

Senior Infants: 2:00pm

Junior and Senior Infants will be dismissed from the gym doors.

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[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

Parents will use the Afternoon One Way system.

1. **Enter** the school playground via the green side gate
 2. Use the space in the yard to socially distance.
 3. **Exit by**
 - Boundary wall at side door of Mrs. Aylward's office around by the front boundary wall and out the main gates
OR
 - Double green gates to the field
1. **Parents are asked not to congregate at the school gates or field gates prior to the 3 0' clock bell.**
 2. **Parents are asked to wear masks at all times in the school environs.**

Exceptionally Wet Days Only

1. Enter the school playground via the green side gate
2. Enter school building via the gym doors using the gym to socially distance.
3. Children will be collected from the classroom door.
4. Parents exit through the main entrance.

Dismissal of Classes 1st – 6th @ 3:00pm

1st Class

- Exit side door of classroom and assemble along the path (beside the silver birch tree) at corner of prefab. Parents can collect and exit green side gate or return to the main gates via the 'stepping stones' path.

2nd - 6th Class

- As always parents are asked to make suitable arrangements for collecting 2nd – 6th class child/children eg. front gate, playground, field, walk home etc.
- 2nd - 6th Class children can exit independently via the main gates, single green gate to the field depending on parental instruction regarding meeting point.
- Teachers will instruct older siblings on pick up procedures if they need to collect younger siblings.

Collection of children during the school day.

- Please advise the secretary by phone of the need to collect child
- Use the intercom at the main front door on arrival
- Child will be brought from class by an adult to the front door
- **Masks must be worn at all times**

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

Parents/ guardians etc cannot enter the school building except by prior appointment or for wet pick up days as outlined above for infant parents only .

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. This will be achieved by all of us working towards this common goal.

Break Times

The DES guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.

- 2/9/20: We have received permission from Fr. Duggan and Fr. Dalton to use the adjoining parochial field to help maintain physical distancing and the integrity of the class bubbles during break times. Mrs. Pembroke, Ms. Dunne's and McDonald's classes will use sectioned areas of the field. These classes will bring suitable outdoor footwear (and extra socks when required) to change into daily.
- We will introduce 2 x 20 min breaks

Break Times	Playground (Divided into 4 sections)	Field (Divided into 3 sections)
1. 10:50 – 11:10am	<u>Classes:</u> Mrs. Selmon	<u>Classes:</u> Mrs. Pembroke
2. 12:40 – 1:00pm	Ms. Morrissey Ms. Nagle Mrs. O' Keeffe	Ms. Dunne McDonald

- Additional staff supervision will be required to monitor both the playground and the field. Staff rotas will adhere to class bubbles as much as is feasibly possible.

Team Teaching/Special Education Teachers/Special Needs Assistants

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

Staff members (particularly Special Education Teachers and SNAs) can rotate between areas/classes but this will be minimized where possible. When rotation occurs, agreed sanitising routines will be observed.

The provision of support will be organised to ensure our support teachers will work as far as possible, within the confines of a bubble.

- Where a support teacher is working alongside a class teacher in a classroom, both teachers must be mindful of maintaining social distance from one another.
- The tables and chairs in SET rooms will be wiped clean in between different pupils or small groups attending.
- The fogger is available to SETs throughout the day for additional sanitising between groups.

Ventilation

- Where practical, internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common surfaces.
- All classroom windows will be opened at least 1hour before school commences.
- Windows and external doors will be open as much as possible during the school day to increase air flow.

Home / School belongings

- Book Baskets will be fitted to all desks from 1st to 5th.
- Teachers will minimise as much as possible home / school interaction of books.
- All children are required to keep a hard /plastic pencil case in school.
- Easily cleaned lunchboxes to be used. Children should be able to manage lunchbox contents without teacher assistance

Uniforms/Tracksuits

- We will follow our usual practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn every day, except on P.E. days, or when otherwise requested by teachers.

Office

- A Perspex screen has been fitted to secretary's desk.
- Photocopier: Staff are asked where possible to plan their photocopying in advance . 3 school zones have been established with SNAs and secretary photocopying for their assigned zone.
- Any staff member who uses the photocopier should clean it down after use with the wipes provided.
- Children should not be sent to the Secretary's Office or to the Reception area to deliver messages.

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- All staff should adhere to social distancing requirements when entering the office
- Epayments: Currently in the process of setting up to minimise handling of cash.

ICT

- A timetable will be drawn up for the use of common ICTs. Devices should be cleaned after use and before they are returned to the charging trolley.

Visiting Teachers/Coaches

- The possibility of facilitating extra-curricular activities will be explored at a later date.

Substitute Teachers and SNAs

- A copy of the Covid-19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/SNA.
- Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online Induction training.

Physical Education and P.E. Equipment

- Physical Education lessons will take place outside when the weather allows.
- Staff members and pupils are encouraged to take additional breaks outside during the school day.
- Staff members must ensure that equipment is 'fogged' or otherwise sanitised after use

Parent/ Teacher Meetings

- P/T contact should be conducted by phone
- Impromptu meetings are discouraged
- Full school P/T meetings normally held in November will be assessed closer to the time

Staff

- Staff meetings will be held remotely or in small groups or in large spaces to facilitate physical distancing.
- 4 staff members at a time in the staffroom. Staff to wipe down tables and chairs after use.
- 2 staff members at a time in the kitchen. Wipes and gloves to be used after using kitchen appliances
- **March 1st '21: Staff will form 3 bubbles for all their breaks . Breaks will be taken in the gym and outdoors when possible,**

Teaching and Learning

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- DES Curriculum Guidance given to staff
- Parents are asked to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.
- Our usual practice is to provide support to pupils based on what is known as the Continuum of Support. This is a tiered system that provides Whole School and Classroom Support for all pupils, additional School Support for some pupils, and School Support plus extra targeted intervention for a few pupils with complex needs.

Supporting the Learning of Children who cannot Attend School

- DES and HSE guidelines will be followed for children who are deemed by their practising consultant to be in the very high risk category. Parents are asked to contact the school principal to discuss if their child is in the very high risk category.

Wellbeing of the School Community

- We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:
 - i. A sense of safety
 - ii. A sense of calm
 - iii. A sense of belonging and connectedness to school
 - iv. A sense of self-efficacy and school-community efficacy
 - v. A sense of hope

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Visor and masks to be purchased for teachers
- Wipes and gloves to be purchased for classrooms, offices, kitchen, main entrance, intimate care and first aid

Staff members are not required to wear PPE. Staff to wear face coverings where a 2m distance cannot be maintained. The children are not required to wear masks or face coverings. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will need to be used occasionally or constantly due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. This might include roles such as:

- Assisting with intimate care needs and providing healthcare to children with medical needs
- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while the school is in operation
- Where staff are particularly vulnerable to infection but are not on the list of those categorised as people in very high-risk groups or may be living with those who are in the very high-risk category.
- When staff members have to move between classrooms to support children with learning needs.

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- 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 will apply standard precautions as per usual.
- As per current guidelines, the Public Health Advice is that primary school children are not required to wear masks or face coverings. Staff must wear face coverings if a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- There is no need for the children to wear disposable gloves. They are considered inappropriate under the guidelines.
- Staff members do not need to wear disposable gloves unless they are looking after a pupil's intimate care needs or administering First Aid.
- There will be an emphasis on hand hygiene rather than on the wearing of disposable gloves.

PPE: All SETS and SNAs will wear medical grade masks EN16483. Other staff will wear a high grade mask. Medical masks are available to all staff if required.

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

While it is not possible to eliminate the risk of infection there will always be an element of risk when humans congregate in a pandemic situation. However with the co-operation of all members of our school community it is possible to minimize the risk of the virus being to school and the consequent risk of its spread.

- We would ask parents to check the HSE website for information on COVID-19 symptoms in children at: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html> If they are displaying the symptoms as outlined by the HSE **they should not be sent to school.**
- Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school. Parents will be contacted immediately. It is vitally important that all contacts supplied to the school in respect of each pupil are active at all times.
- Staff and pupils should self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test
- Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. We would be grateful if you could also emphasise safe behaviour in this regard to your children at home,
- Staff and pupils should not to return to or attend school in the event of the following: → if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 → if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus → If they have travelled outside of Ireland; in such instances staff are advised to consult and follow latest Government advice in relation to foreign travel.
- Staff and pupils that develop symptoms at school must bring this to the attention of the Principal promptly;
- Staff and pupils must cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school

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Bennettsbridge N.S.

Travelling Abroad.

Staff, parents and children who have travelled outside of Ireland are advised to consult and follow the latest government advice in relation to foreign travel.

Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19

A designated isolation area has been created in the Front Hall outside the Principal's office.

If a staff member/pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, the following procedure will be implemented:

- The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation area. Weather permitting the child may sit outside. A face covering will be provided to the child.
- The staff member/ child will be reminded to avoid touching people, surfaces and objects.
- A distance of 2 meters will be maintained. If this is not possible, the person accompanying the child must wear a face covering.
- If a pupil has a suspected case, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately by telephone.
- Staff members who are symptomatic should immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and go to the isolation area.
- If the staff member / child is well enough to go home, arrangements will be made for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible.
- Anyone who is symptomatic is advised to inform their general practitioner by phone of their symptoms.
- If the staff member / child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick person is a Covid-19 suspect.
- The isolation area and work areas will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.
- The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have 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 staff and pupil confidentiality is essential at all times.
- **School staff are encouraged to download the HSE Covid 19 tracker app to assist Public health for contact tracing purposes both in and out of the school setting.**

It is important to remember than any of us can get sick or unwell, and if we do, we need understanding and support from those around us. It is essential that anyone who feels unwell makes that known to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

COVID-19 Related Absence Management

COVID-19 related absences will be managed in line with agreed procedures with the Department of Education.

Teacher or SNA Absence and Substitution

- If a teacher/SNA is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher/SNA for the class/pupil.

Keeping Each Other Safe and Healthy

[Stay Safe](#) [Stay Apart](#) [Wash Hands](#) [Practise Sneezing Etiquette](#)

Bennettsbridge N.S.

- If a substitute teacher/SNA is not available, it is not appropriate for the class/pupil to be divided into groups and accommodated in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class/pupil to attend on that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme

Support for school staff wellbeing will be provided by Department Support Services including the PDST and CSL, as well as by the HSE's Health Promotion Team.

An Occupational Health Strategy is in place as a supportive resource for staff in schools. The aim of the Occupational Health Strategy is to promote the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace, with a strong focus on prevention.

The Occupational Health Strategy comprises the Employee Assistance Service and the Occupational Health Service. The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) is provided by Spectrum Life under the logo of 'Wellbeing Together: Folláinne Le Chéile'.

A free-phone confidential helpline 1800 411 057 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staff members are encouraged to make use of the service when the need arises.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: Feb 26th 2021

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