



Coronavirus
COVID-19

St. Joseph's College – The Bish

Return to School Guidelines 2020/2021

Introduction

Welcome back everyone. We are very happy to be nearing the end of our first full week and we are delighted to have our students back on site.

Since the school closure last March there have been a significant number of changes to our school building, procedures, lay-out and order of classrooms to prepare for the full return of students and reopening of St Joseph's The Bish for the coming year.

In keeping with our ethos of respect, and our motto "Love God, Work Hard and Take Care of Each Other", we endeavor to make our school a safe welcoming place for The Bish Community. We are facing many challenges and are all concerned about the health and wellbeing of our friends and family members at this time. Our primary objective when reopening our school is the safety of staff, students, parents and visitors. Adhering in every way possible to the department guidelines creates a very different school day but a safer school day for everyone.

These short guidelines are an overview for the coming year on the new procedures we all must follow to keep everyone as safe as possible. Each one of us has a responsibility to promote and maintain a safe environment for everyone.

Fáilte ar ais,

John Madden, P.J. Folan and Seamus Cahalan

***“ Love God, Work Hard and Take Care
of Each Other”***



Public Advice

Health

Measures to be implemented in school to minimise the risk of the introduction of infection are:

- Regular and good hand hygiene
- Good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Enhanced cleaning regimes
- Maintaining physical distancing in the classroom and within schools

Symptoms of Covid-19

No person (student/staff member/parent) should attend school if unwell or any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with Covid-19. These symptoms are:

- Fever
- Dry Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

Face Masks/Visors & Physical Distancing

Face masks/visors are to be worn by students during class time, in hallways and while inside the school buildings. We also ask our students to wear masks outside the school where social distancing is challenging.

Physical distancing in school falls into 2 categories with necessary measures to be put in place these are:

- *Increasing* separation
- *Decreasing* interaction between students themselves, between students and staff when they are together.

New Measures to be Introduced

New start dates for each year group are required to allow for settling in time and further school preparatory works. The new start dates for each year group are outlined in the table below. During the first week of term each year group will attend school for a short induction programme.



- If your student falls into one of the high-risk categories set out in the HSE guidelines and is unable to return to school, **you must** contact the school office by email at office@bish.ie
- Home rooms 1st to 3rd years have been rearranged to accommodate the varying numbers in each year group. All Junior school students' classes will have their own home room. The exception will be where students must move to rooms for practical subjects and PE. Many classes are small with an average of 20 students, bigger classes in 2nd and 3rd year are accommodated in overflow rooms with classes streamed to these rooms. **All classrooms have been organised to facilitate social distancing.**
- Where students must move classroom, incoming students will be requested to wipe down their chairs and tables with the wipes provided
- **STUDENTS MUST HAVE A FACE MASK WITH THEM IN SCHOOL AT ALL TIMES.** The guidelines state that all students must wear a face mask/visor in post primary schools.
- Please ensure your son has all items needed for the following day the night before. As parents can only enter the school by appointment, we will not be in a position to have items dropped into school.
- *On days where students have P.E, they may come to school in their tracksuits.*
- As per HSE and Health and safety guidelines, all lockers have been removed and students must bring all materials home with them each evening.
- **Students are to bring to school only one multi-subject copy ('Pukka Pad') and to transfer their subject notes each evening to separate folders when they get home.**
- Sixth Year students are now located in the Old Presentation Secondary School on Presentation road (4min walk from the Bish) For their own Protection and to minimize the risk of infection to them, are not permitted to return or enter any of the school buildings on the main school campus.
- Staggered breaks have been introduced for all school years to avoid congestion and aid social distancing. **1st 5th and 6th years will have a 20 minute break mid morning at 10:41 and 2nd and 3rd years will have their mid morning break at 11:39. Lunch breaks (40minutes) will also differ with 1st, 5th and 6th years at 11:57am and 2nd and 3rd years at 13:55pm.**

- To reduce the number of class changes and movements in the school's narrow corridors all classes will be one hour long.
- Regular hand washing/sanitizing is expected throughout the day. Hand sanitizers have been installed outside classrooms and in many locations around the school.
- The schools has been reorganized into Zones or 'Pods' to facilitate each year group. All years are expected to remain in their own 'Year Pods'. and to use the one way system when moving about the school.
- To avoid congestion there will be a one-way system in place for movement around the school students are asked to make themselves aware of this system.
- Lunch has been shortened by 20mins and is now 40 minutes long every day which will result in an early finish every day. Because of the staggered lunch breaks, the end of the school day will also vary. (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday will have the same finish at 3:33 same for all, Fri is only one different,

How to wear a face covering: Cover your nose and mouth.



Coronavirus
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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

COVID-19

Stay home and avoid close contact with others, rest and stay hydrated.

Call your national health authorities immediately if you think you may have contracted COVID-19



- Social distancing from others when coming to school and returning home is encouraged.
- Students **must** remain at home if feeling unwell or displaying any virus symptoms.
- Isolation rooms, one in each building, have been created for any student who feels unwell and is displaying Covid-19 symptoms.
- Should your son present unwell during the day the school will contact you as soon as possible. In accordance with the guidelines you must be available to come to the school, bring your son home and contact the GP. It is most important that we have your most up to date contact details, please contact the office if necessary.

Parent / Visitor Protocol

We must work together to help reduce the risk of spreading Covid-19 in our school. If any family member has symptoms of Covid-19 or are self-isolating, you should not visit the school during this time.

Parents/Guardians should only visit school in exceptional circumstances, please do not arrive unannounced at the school reception.

In exceptional circumstances where you must visit the school, we ask that you follow these procedures:

- Parents/Guardians do not visit the school without a prior appointment. Should you wish to speak/meet with a member of staff please make an appointment by calling the school office at 091 565980 or email office@bish.ie.
- If an *in person* meeting has been agreed, please report to the school office on arrival and adhere to social distancing of 2m. (Children other than Bish students should not be present)
- Use the sanitiser station in the reception area.
- Always wear a face mask/covering.
- The office staff will take your details and record these in the school contact tracing logbook.
- A no hand shaking policy is currently in place.
- Please conduct your business in the school in a timely manner.
- Any parent/guardian who has travelled abroad recently are requested to follow the Department of Foreign Affairs / HSE Guidelines around self-isolation on return.
- Where possible the school will attempt to conduct online meetings with parents/guardians via Microsoft Teams.

Extra / Co-curricular Activities

All extra/co-curricular activities where class groups/students mix are paused until further notice.

Activities within class groups and on site may take place once adhering to physical distancing.

Suspected Case of Covid-19

A number of student designated isolation areas have been created in school. If a student displays symptoms of Covid-19 the following procedures will be implemented:

- The Principal/Deputy Principal will be notified ASAP.
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted to discuss arrangements for collecting the student.
- The student will be brought to their nearest isolation area.
- Reminder that the virus is spread through droplets and is not airborne. Therefore, maintaining physical distance if in the same room is enough to reduce the risk of spread to others.
- Staff members caring for someone in the isolation room will wear PPE (mask/visor/apron/gloves).
- Advice will be given to the student not to touch any surfaces and observe good cough/respiratory etiquette.
- The parent/guardian will be asked to contact their GP to seek guidance. (The school should be kept informed of results of this advice / testing.)
- Public transport must not be used to travel home.
- If there are any concerns about the health of the student, the emergency services will be contacted.
- Management will ensure the cleaning staff are informed when the student leaves the premises so cleaning of the isolation areas can be quickly managed.

The HSE will conduct contact tracing where there is a confirmed case and notify any parents/students. The instructions of the HSE must be followed and student confidentiality is essential.

Preparing for all eventualities this year

We need to be prepared for another school closure. We ask for your co-operation in ensuring that your son's school email address is working properly at all times. Any issues with student email addresses or passwords please email: N.Spellacy@bish.ie.

In the event of a closure the following procedure will be implemented to continue with your son's remote learning:

- All classes will continue through Microsoft Teams.
- The school timetable and schedule of lessons will continue as normal online.
- Where a student does not have access to ICT at home, we ask that you contact the school office so we may be able to support you.
- Monitor your students online work and ensure assignments are completed and submitted.

Further guidelines will issue if school closures become necessary.



A list of Frequently asked questions FAQ's



Parent Questions



Student Questions.

FAQs on school re-opening



Parent: What should I do if my son is a little off but I know it's not COVID?

If your son displays any one of the symptoms of COVID then you **must** keep your son at home and consult your GP. Information about the symptoms of COVID may be found here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#symptoms>



Student: What will happen with classrooms?

Students will be classroom based as far as possible and we will adjust the topics covered to facilitate this.



Parent: Does my son need to bring their own hand sanitiser/mask/gloves?

Your son should bring their own face covering/mask. Further guidance on this is provided in this document. While we will have approximately 110 hand sanitising dispensers in the school, we advise each student to bring in their own small bottle of hand sanitiser which they could have in their possession at all times. Your son **may not** bring gloves as we have been advised that these pose a potential source of infection for other people when discarded. If hands are washed/sanitised this provides optimal protection.



Student: What will be the arrangements for using the toilet facilities?

A set of toilets will be allocated to each year group, but use will be limited to a maximum of six people at a time. This is advice we have received from health and safety consultants. You must wash your hands after using the toilet. The windows and doors will remain open to ensure there is adequate airflow.



Student: What will happen with PE?

Your PE teachers will be delivering PE classes and the activities in these classes will be based on the current advice from the HSE and the Department of Education received to ensure that everyone stays safe. We are happy to say that unlike other schools we did not need to convert the Sports Hall into classrooms. However, we have converted the existing weights room into two first year classes and relocated the weights room to a different location in the school.



Parent: What will happen if there are more students in a room than social distancing allows for?

We have planned for each student to be at least one meter apart. All students are also required to wear face masks. We will look at other options if the need arises to remove a student from a room. All rooms have been laid out to accommodate social distancing regulations with floor markings indicate where desks should be located and Perspex screens fitted to each teacher table.



Parent: What if I want to keep my son at home?

If your son is unwell then you **must** keep them at home, consult a GP and follow their advice. If you are concerned about your son because they are in a high-risk category please complete the form here: <https://form.jotform.com/202225106007034>
If your son is not unwell or is not in a high-risk category then you should send him into school as normal.



Parent: What if the school needs to go into lockdown, how will lessons be taught?

We have examined this possibility, and we will be following the guidance that we receive should such a situation arise. The platform we use **is Microsoft 365 and Microsoft Teams** and we envisage this being central to any solution.



Student: What if I'm not wearing my mask but I have it on my ear, is that OK?

We want to work together with students to keep everyone safe. You are being trusted with that responsibility. Our goal is to support students, and we want to work together cooperatively. Please note that other students in your class, or staff, may feel uncomfortable with a student being in the class without a face mask. The Board of Management of the Bish are obliged to create an environment that is *as safe as practically possible* for all. The DES has recommended use of face masks, and we are following this recommendation.



Student: If I need to borrow a ruler or pen from another student is that OK?

Everyone forgets things from time to time, it's part of being human. However, to reduce the risk of cross-contamination, we do not envisage you being able to borrow something from another student or teacher. Most people will not wish to share their items, as they will need to protect themselves. If, in the exceptional circumstance, you are allowed borrow something by your teacher, you will need to ensure that it is sanitised before *and* after use. By reducing the number of copies you bring into the Bish to 1 and limiting the number of school books that you require to use in class we hope that it will facilitate an easier organization of your school bag and in doing so you will be less likely to forget things like rulers or pens.



Parent: Who do I contact if I have a query?

You should email your query to office@bish.ie and we will be in touch. Please keep in mind that it can take a little longer to get back to you because of the volume of contacts and work we have at the moment, but bear with us and *we will reply*.



Parent: What if I want to drop off something to my son , maybe he forgot his lunch?

As you know, we need to keep contact to a minimum to help protect everyone from the virus. It won't be possible drop items to the office as that will pose a risk for staff. Equally, Sharon or Ciara won't be able to leave the office to find a student who is in class. We know that this may be frustrating for you, but it's based on the best advice we have received. If there is an exceptional or emergency situation, then you need to phone the school in advance – **091 565980** – and we will do our best to make arrangements. Please note that this is only for emergency situation.



Parent: What will happen with parent-teacher meetings?

We are awaiting guidance from the Department about this and as soon as we receive it we will share it with you. However, we do not envisage any face to face parent teacher meeting happening in The Bish before Christmas.



Student: What will happen with break times?

Best advice is that being outdoors is safest. We are currently working on providing sheltered outdoor areas for students to use during breaktimes. We hope that these sheltered areas will be constructed over the forthcoming weeks.



Student: Are there set doors for coming in now?

Yes, this was explained to you during your induction. The school has been designed with separate zones for each year group. Please follow the One Way system that exists in the school and remember to stay in the Zone for your year.



Student: Will we still be able to play in the yards at break/lunchtimes?

We want to be able to say yes to this, but right now we need to take a gradual approach to getting things back to normal. That's why we're sorry to say that for the first few weeks the yards won't be available for soccer at break or lunch. Also we have undertaken to build new classrooms adjacent to both yards and so the yards are building sites for the next few weeks. But, as the school gets back to normal as we can see that social distancing is working then we will be able to open up the yards during break and lunchtime. The yards may be used however, as 'hang-out' areas, where students can chat to each other, while ensuring that social and physical distancing is maintained.



Parent: My son comes to school by bus, is there anything I should know?

We understand from reporting that the following apply:

- Not to use school transport if they are displaying symptoms
- To maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport
- To always sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or a boy from their class group (this should be the same boy at all times)
- To use hand sanitiser on boarding the bus
- To observe respiratory etiquette at all times while waiting for and on-board transport services
- To disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
- With the exception of those children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to wear a face mask or face covering, all other students travelling on the post-primary scheme are required to wear face masks while waiting for and on-board transport services.

However, you should direct any questions to your local office, the contact details for which are here:

<https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=256>

[The Department is currently adding information on school transport to www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool) and you should check this for updates.



Student: Where will I keep my books?

At junior school, (1st, 2nd and 3rd years) You will be based in the same classroom for as many lessons as possible and you will be assigned the same seat in that classroom. You should keep your books in your bag at your desk, or on your desk. At the senior school 5th years and TYO students must bring their books with them to each class. As the number of copies and books that a student needs to bring to school have been reduced we feel this is less of a problem than it might have been. The Leaving Certificate students in The Presentation may be in a position to use lockers and we hope to sort some solution for them next week. We will be reviewing the use of lockers and once we are sure it is safe to use them.



Student: Do I need to wear my school uniform?

Yes. All students must wear their school uniform daily except on days when you have PE. On those days you may wear your school tracksuit to school.



Parent: Do I need to wash my son's uniform each evening?

No. There is no evidence or recommendation to suggest that school uniforms must be washed daily. We expect all students to be in uniform.



Parent: How do I contact a teacher/year head/deputy principal/principal?

If you want to make contact with a member of school staff you should call or email. The contact details are here:

Phone: 091 565980

Email: office@bish.ie

Your e-mail will be directed to the appropriate person.



Student: Will I have to do my summer exams again?

No. All students received a summer report and details on future exams will be communicated to you by your teachers.



Parent: What will happen about the junior cert?

Details provided by the Department of Education & Skills may be found here:

<https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/State-Examinations/junior-cert-2020.html>



Parent: What will you do if you have a suspected case of COVID?

The Department of Education & Skills has mandated the following procedure to be used:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48037-dealing-with-a-suspected-case-of-covid-19-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

We have outlined our procedure in the first part of this document and all parent that tuned into our Zoom meeting last week were made aware of each step involved. All students were also make aware of this process in their induction training.



Parent: How will we hear any further news?

We will be keeping you updated by using text alerts with links to communications and by sharing information on all our channels: Our Compass school App, (main method of communication) , email, website (www.bish.ie) and on our Facebook and Twitter feeds.



Parent: Should we take our son's temperature in the morning/evening?

We don't have a role to advise you on whether you should take your son's temperature. We know that some businesses e.g. dentists, physiotherapists, doctors and some sports clubs require temperature checking. A temperature of 38°C or higher is one of the symptoms of the virus but having this temperature doesn't mean that you definitely have the virus. However, if your son has a high temperature you should not send them to school. Instead, you should call your GP.



Parent: What arrangements are in place for cleaning?

The Department has set out the requirements here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e30d9-hygiene-and-cleaning-in-schools-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

The school has put in place arrangements with the contract cleaners and with the caretaking staff to ensure that the cleaning arrangements are fully compliant with the public health advice. Also, the school has purchased additional sanitising devices that will help ensure surfaces are hygienic.

Arrangements for ensuring work surfaces are sanitised were shared with students during their induction on return to school.



Student: What do I do if the sanitiser runs out?

You should tell the teacher in your class and they will report it to the office as a matter of urgency. If there is another sanitising station near you, you should use that instead. You may also have the option of using your own hand sanitiser. Also each class in the Bish have been asked to elect a Covid Ambassador to bring concerns of students to the management. This is a good example for when a Covid Ambassador would speak to the school management.



Student: What do I do if I feel unwell?

Tell your teacher immediately. You must continue to wear your mask. Avoid touching surfaces, objects or anyone else. If you cough or sneeze you should cover your nose/mouth with a tissue and put this in the bin after using it. Your parents/guardians will be called and, if necessary, your doctor will be called, or the emergency services, as appropriate.



Parent: What will happen if a staff member feels unwell, will we be contacted?

We will be following the protocol as set out here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48037-dealing-with-a-suspected-case-of-covid-19-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

Contact will be managed by the public health authorities and not by the school.



Parent: Does my son have to wear a mask/face covering?

Yes. The school has been instructed by the Department of Education & Skills as follow:

[Quotation from Department of Education & Skills communication to schools]

It is recommended that teachers, staff and students attending secondary schools wear a face-covering when a physical distance of 2 meters from other staff or students cannot be maintained.



Parent: Are there any exceptions to the above?

Yes. The Department allows for exceptions in the following situations:

[Quotation from Department of Education & Skills communication to schools]

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Primary school or pre-school children
- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

Note that the Department is referring here specifically to cloth face coverings and it may be appropriate in a number of the instances listed above for the individual to wear a suitable alternative to a cloth face covering.



Parent: Is there guidance on the use of face coverings?

Yes. You should read and become familiar with the information at the link below and ask your son to do the same.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>



Parent: My son has tried multiple face coverings/masks but none of them are effective because he wears glasses and the glasses get fogged up no matter what. Is there anything I can do?

Glasses fogging up is caused by warm exhaled air condensing on the colder surface of the lenses. A number of tactics can be used to address this:

1. Wash the lenses in soap and water and allow to air dry – you should check first with your optician if this is suitable for your glasses as some lenses may have special coatings and some frames may not be suitable for this.
2. Fold a tissue so that it is about 2cm in width and place it under the bridge part of mask where it sits on the nose. The purpose of the tissue paper is to improve the seal and stop warm air escaping.
3. If your mask ties behind the head then the higher you wear the band the greater will be the seal with your face.
4. There are some commercial defogging solutions available to buy and these may be of assistance.

No one would wear a mask if there was an alternative, and we all wish that we didn't have

to, especially those of us who wear glasses. But, we realise that the inconvenience of a mask is far out-weighted by the protection it affords the wearer and the people around him/her. Please note that staff and students may not wish to be in the company of someone who is not wearing a mask.



Student: Is there any time I can take the mask off for a break?

Unfortunately The Bish is an old school and It is unlikely that when you are inside the school building that you can be guaranteed to be 2 metres away from everyone all the time. So you must wear your mask at all times when in the school building and when you go outside the school grounds at lunch break. After school when you are not on the school property you can remove the mask as long as you remain 2 metres from the people around you.

Please note that the Bish campus now is spread over 4 building comprising of 1. The Main School, 2. The Monastery, 3. The Presentation School and 4. The Arts Centre next door to the school which will be used while we await the completion of the new rooms in the old Garage and Bike shed.



Parent: I disagree with the idea of wearing face coverings/masks and I've decided that my son won't comply.

We understand that face coverings/masks are not what anyone would choose. But, to get through the challenge we are facing we need to come together as a community and go with the public health recommendations we have received. That means that only the individuals/situations who are listed in the question about exceptions will not be wearing face coverings. For the health and safety of all, students will be expected to wear face coverings inside the buildings and in the school grounds at all times.

We the school management hope that we have managed to answer as many of your questions as possible. All of the above questions were raised by parents and students at our Parent Webex meetings or the student induction sessions. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact the school at office@bish.ie and we will get back to you as soon as possible. Please be patient if we do not get back to you immediately as we are extremely busy getting the school back on track after the prolonged closure.

John Madden, PJ Folan and Seamus Cahalan

