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# Scoil Lios na Groí

Lisnagry National School

Lisnagry, Co. Limerick Fón: 061 331011 Fax: 061 331062  
Email: info@lisnagryns.ie



Dear Parent(s),

It was wonderful to see so many happy and smiling faces as we reopened our school last Thursday. We would like to thank you for your co-operation to date and look forward to working with you as we assist the children adapt to the necessary changes.

It will take some time for all of us to get used to the “new circumstances” as we become familiar with the new routines and procedures designed to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of the virus. There will, undoubtedly, be some unforeseen challenges and we will deal with these as they arise.

I have attached a letter from the Acting Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ronan Glynn regarding the reopening of schools.

Please see below some of the main points of what to expect if there are confirmed cases of Covid-19 within the school community, and also the principles that will underpin the management of outbreaks or potential outbreaks and the aligned testing strategy within a school setting;

The response to confirmed cases or outbreaks of Covid-19 in the community or in a school is the responsibility of and will be led and managed by Public Health HSE. All decisions as to appropriate actions following a confirmed case or outbreak will be made by their teams in the context of a full Public Health Risk Assessment procedure. Any actions to be taken by the school will be communicated directly by Public Health HSE. School management will be informed as and when such actions such as exclusion of children or staff; partial or full closure, are deemed necessary on public health grounds. If the school is not so informed, it has not been deemed necessary by Public Health.

It is inevitable that with confirmed cases of Covid-19 circulating within the community, there will be suspect or confirmed cases amongst pupils and staff attending, or working within, educational facilities.

However, children will also continue to display symptoms of many other circulating respiratory viruses. It is known that young children often have a persistent cold. A child with a blocked or runny nose, but no fever can attend school. A child with a fever must stay at home for 48 hours and parents or guardians should contact the GP to assess whether a Covid-19 test is required.



If a child displays symptoms which may be consistent with Covid-19 while at school, the school will contact their parent or guardian and ask them to collect their child as soon as possible. The child will be cared for appropriately by a staff member whilst they are waiting to go home in a designated isolation space. The isolation space will be cleaned and contact surfaces disinfected after each use by a suspected Covid-19 case. The staff member who has cared for the child with symptoms during this time does not need to go home unless subsequently advised to by Public Health HSE.

At this stage, no further action by the school is required.

In particular, schools are asked to note that they should not inform other parents or staff members that a pupil or staff member has gone home due to their symptoms. Other pupils or staff do not need to be removed from class, including siblings or other household members.

When the GP of the child or staff member has assessed the symptoms to be consistent with Covid-19 infection, e.g. fever OR a new cough, shortness of breath, deterioration of existing respiratory condition OR symptoms of aguesia or dysgeusia (essentially loss of or changes to the sense of taste) and the person is referred for a test, at this point the person becomes a suspected Covid 19 case and household members including siblings should be withdrawn from school by their parent or guardian.

If a child is tested and the test comes back as “not detected”, the child or staff member should remain at home only until he or she is clinically well enough to return to school (unless specifically requested by HSE to do otherwise). In particular, all diarrhoea symptoms need to have been resolved for 48 hours prior to return to school. Household members can return to school immediately following the receipt by the parent or guardian or staff member of a “not detected” result.

When a case has been confirmed, the Medical Officer of Health and teams will liaise directly with the school and inform them of the confirmed case as necessary and will undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment to inform any further actions and recommendations.

Core to this assessment will be the likelihood of onward transmission from the confirmed case and will be informed by an urgent discussion with the school to establish any appropriate isolation for identified staff or pupils. Every school setting is unique and therefore the risks will be unique too.

The definition of close contacts within a school will be variable and determined by a risk assessment that will take account of individual factors within each school or class. It will not be automatically assumed that a whole class will be deemed as close contacts. Close contacts will be directly notified by the HSE and advised to restrict their movements and present for testing on day zero and day seven. Close contacts will restrict their movements for 14 days even in the event that Covid 19 is not detected in both of their tests.

**There is no blanket policy to test entire classes or years. The testing strategy will be aligned to the Public Health Risk Assessment which may recommend widespread swabbing within a class or school under HSE mass testing procedures.**

**In the event of an outbreak, Public Health will determine between a range of possible interventions, from exclusion and testing of a small group or pod of pupils up to and including closure of an entire affected school.**

**This is for your information. We ask all parents to err on the side of caution. We are delighted to have our pupils back at school this week. It is great for us all to have a sense of normality. With your help and support we will do our utmost to keep our school open.**

**Best regards,**

**MICHAEL FEENEY**

**Principal**