An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Primary Curriculum Guidance

Frequently Asked Questions   16 Nov 2020

Primary schools have reopened since the beginning of September, and teachers and school leaders have made extraordinary efforts to adapt their usual teaching and learning methodologies to ensure that pupils continue to learn in a safe, healthy environment. Undoubtedly, these changes to practice have led to questions about how teachers should best support learning in the context of COVID-19. This set of frequently asked questions is based on queries that have arisen from teachers and schools across the country, and serves to support teachers throughout the remainder of the school year. It will be updated regularly.

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1. Timetabling and time management

1.1 Should teachers have an adjusted timetable to reflect the curriculum priorities outlined in *Returning to School: Curriculum guidance for primary school leaders and teachers*? If so, for how long should this be in place?

Teachers were asked to prioritise Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (PE), language (English and Irish) and Mathematics during the initial weeks of the first term. Teaching and learning priorities will evolve and be based on the needs of the pupils in each individual school. This is due to the fact that the pupils' experiences during the COVID-19 closure have varied significantly from school to school and from class to class. The focus on wellbeing as a foundation for learning is the rationale for the curriculum priorities of SPHE, PE, language and Mathematics. Teachers should ensure that their timetables are amended as they get to know the pupils' specific needs and make pertinent judgements around current priority learning needs. In most cases, following the October mid-term break, the pupils will be ready to experience the more typical and broad curriculum and more usual timetabling. However, this timeframe should be decided following consideration of the needs of the pupils in the class, and in some circumstances additional time may still be needed for priority learning areas for a further extended time.

1.2 How should schools manage the time needed to implement hand sanitising, hand washing etc. throughout the day without eroding teaching time?

As schools opened in late August and early September 2020, teachers prioritised and took time to establish new school routines that support health and safety. Embedding these practices took time at the start, but by now teachers and pupils have become used to these new routines. Therefore, there should be no *significant* erosion of teaching time due to hand sanitising and other Covid-19 issues after the first few weeks. The importance of personal hygiene, how to wash hands thoroughly, and coughing/sneezing according to the medical guidance can be addressed as part of the SPHE curriculum.

1.3 Should schools stagger starting and finishing times to keep the number of people gathering outside the school at any time to a minimum?

Schools should avoid eroding teaching time and maintain the required amount of contact time with all pupils each day. In a small number of cases, staggered starting and finishing times might be the only way a school can ensure large numbers of people do not congregate outside the school. In these cases, all pupils should still be afforded the correct amount of contact time. However, in most schools, the use of additional entry and exit points will ensure that classes can be admitted and released from school in a safe manner. Equally, parents should be reminded of the need to maintain social distancing and adhere to public health measures when dropping off and collecting their children. This should eliminate the need to stagger starting and finishing times.

1.4 How will teachers and schools find time and space to collaborate, to plan and to work together with a whole-school focus?

Current health and safety guidelines advise that gatherings of adults be discouraged. Therefore, the convening of whole-staff meetings should be avoided at this time, thereby reducing the potential for infection among staff. Socially distanced engagements with a small numbers of teachers could be facilitated to ensure that whole-school priorities on curriculum provision are implemented consistently. Croke Park hours can be used to support collaboration and planning. In addition, SETs can use a portion of their time in line with the SEN guidelines to facilitate collaborative planning. Teachers should continue to communicate through online platforms and maximise the use of existing digital platforms such as Aladdin and Google classroom, and video-conferencing facilities such as Zoom and Webex.

2. Wellbeing

2.1 Some pupils in my school remain subdued and nervous since their return to school. What steps can be taken to promote wellbeing to ensure that pupils are ready and able to learn?

It is understandable that pupils may have been anxious and subdued as they returned to school after a prolonged period of time. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected pupils in different ways with some pupils experiencing illness, grief or loss and other pupils living in

homes where financial or other circumstances may have changed. SPHE and the caring day-to-day culture fostered by the school and in individual classes are particularly important in responding to how COVID-19 has impacted on pupils in terms of their feelings, thoughts and behaviours. The SPHE curriculum content is useful too in providing general and specific support to pupils who are finding it difficult to be in school. In some cases, there may be a temporary need to increase the amount of time spent teaching SPHE to cater for pupils who have increased anxiety about being in school during COVID-19. However, schools should strive to find appropriate balance in the total amount of time spent on each subject over the course of the term / year. Learning experiences that support pupils to focus on their strengths, positive attributes and qualities to enable reconnection with the school community will assist pupils in remaining comfortable and happy in the school setting. The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Wellbeing toolkit contains many practical examples to be used to support positive wellbeing for pupils in primary schools. Pupil wellbeing should be monitored closely as the term progresses.

2.2 What supports are available to protect the wellbeing of teachers and school leaders?

Teaching principals have been provided with up to eighteen additional principal release days to allow for one release day per week in respect of the 2020/21 school year. This has been provided to give teaching principals additional time to deal with the extra workload associated with the COVID-19 context. Deputy principals in schools with an administrative principal have been also provided with between 5 and 16 release days in respect of the 2020/21 school year to support the additional workload facing schools this year.

The Employee Assistance Service (EAS) *Wellbeing Together: Folláine le Chéile* provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, mediation etc. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace. This service is available to all members of the school staff and a bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available offering a host of online services, including online cognitive behavioural therapy. As part of the EAS, a Mental Health Promotion Manager is also available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives. Spectrum.Life will also be providing a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools during the upcoming school year. The EAS is accessible through the dedicated Free-phone Confidential Helpline at 1800 411 057 and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Alternatively, text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 to avail of EAS support on SMS & WhatsApp. Further details are available at https://www.education.ie/en/Education-Staff/Services/Employee-Assistance-Service/employee-assistance-service.html .

The Department's Inspectorate is also engaging with schools in an advisory capacity to discuss the successes and challenges facing school leaders and their community at this time. These sessions, if availed of by the school, provide an opportunity for the school to seek advice and guidance across a range of school priorities.

3. Planning (whole-school and individual planning)

3.1 If I am engaged in thematic planning, do I need to plan for other subject areas?

Yes, teachers should continue to plan for all subjects, including thematic planning for SESE and Arts Education as appropriate to their context and the needs of the pupils in the class, while prioritising SPHE, PE, language and Mathematics. The pace of learning in these areas may be different from other years but a thematic approach will allow for teaching and learning to progress over many curricular objectives. Section 3.4 of *Returning to School: Curriculum guidance for primary school leaders and teachers* references both integrated and well-planned thematic approaches to support teachers in their planning.

3.2 What level of whole-school planning are schools expected to implement?

Teachers should be familiar with existing school policies on curricular provision in identified priority areas of SPHE, PE, languages and Mathematics. Teachers should endeavour to ensure that agreed whole-school policies in regard to these subjects are implemented as consistently as possible. Where changes in emphasis are necessary at whole-school level, these changes should be agreed by and clearly communicated to all teachers. Regular fortnightly and termly/yearly teacher preparation should continue, with any adaptations agreed at whole-school level. Teachers should continue to maintain monthly progress reports of work completed.

4. Teaching and learning

4.1 How do I adapt my teaching to suit the needs of the pupils in my class while adhering to public health advice?

Teachers should continue to provide a broad range of active learning experiences for all pupils. As social distancing is not required for pupils up to second class, play-based learning opportunities should continue. Play is very important for younger pupils and it can transact very effectively for pupils working in 'pods' – both in the classroom and in the outdoor environment.

Even when pupils are socially distanced, collaboration can be facilitated as pupils can listen to, react to, and work with the ideas of their peers while still maintaining a physical distance (e.g. across the desk, using ICT, in pairs and within pods). Pupils should continue to engage in pair and group work in these ways.

Pupils should continue to be given access to manipulatives and other materials where it will assist their learning and further guidance on the use of shared equipment is available in Section 6 of *COVID-19 Response plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of primary and special schools.*

4.2 While the phase 'slow down to catch up' is promoted, how can I ensure progression across the curriculum?

Teachers have spent time from September 2020 establishing where pupils are at in their learning. This baseline information gives teachers the initial information they need to begin to adapt and adjust the teaching approaches they use. This will help them to differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils in their class and provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils in order to facilitate optimum engagement in learning.

Specific curriculum guidance on learning across the curriculum is provided for schools in *Returning to School: Curriculum guidance for primary school leaders and teachers* *Section 3.6 – Curriculum priorities*. Once teachers are clear on where pupils are at in their learning, they will be able to prepare to progress aspects of learning again. While some pupils may need time and extra support, other pupils are ready and eager to progress their learning and to regain a sense of purpose, structure and normality.

Returning to School: Curriculum guidance for primary school leaders and teachers, *Section 3.4 – Learning approaches* suggests the use of integrated and thematic approaches to teaching and learning which will allow pupils to continue to make progress in their learning across the curriculum while maintaining a focus on SPHE, PE, language and Mathematics.

4.3 Ós rud é go raibh briseadh mór i bhfoghlaim páistí le linn tréimhse dúnta na scoile, tá dushlán ann do mhúinteoirí áirithe dul chun cinn a dhéanamh i bhfoghlaim na bpáistí sa Ghaeilge arís, go háirithe a gcumas, úsáid neamhfhoirmiúil na Gaeilge agus a muinín in úsáid na teanga. Cad iad na tosaíochtaí don teanga sa seomra ranga?

Tá sé ríthábhachtach go bhfaigheann na daltaí deiseanna cainte agus deiseanna an teanga a usáid go neamhfhoirmiúil i rith an lae. Moltar deiseanna a chruthú do dhaltaí an Ghaeilge a chloisteáil chomh minic agus is féidir, taobh amuigh den cheacht Ghaeilge chomh maith. Is fiú an teicneolaíocht a úsáid chun deiseanna éisteachta a chruthú; tá neart cláracha do pháistí ag gach aois leibhéal ar TG4 agus Cúla 4. Beidh Cúla4 ar Scoil ar TG4 gach lá ag 10am agus arís ag 4pm. Is féidir breathnú ar na cláracha ar cúla4.com nó ar TG4.ie agus tá ceachtanna ar fáil ar youtube Cula4. Ba chóir go leor deiseanna a chruthú do dhaltaí an Ghaeilge a chleachtadh go spraíúil agus go taitneamhach. Is fiú réimse leathan de rannta agus dánta a mhúineadh agus a aithris go rialta i ngach rang. Cabhróidh sé seo le foclóir a fhorbairt agus líofacht a chothú sa teanga. Is féidir na rannta agus dánta a chleachtadh mar ghníomhaíochtaí aistrithe i rith an lae, roimh na sosanna agus roimh am dul abhaile. Tá smaointe eile agus acmhainní oiriúnacha ar fáil ar www.pdst.ie agus ar www.cogg.ie

It is very important that the pupils receive opportunities to speak and to use informal Irish during the day. It is also advised that pupils should receive opportunities to hear Irish as often as possible, outside of the Irish lesson. It is worth using technology to create listening opportunities; there is a wealth of programmes for pupils of every age on TG4 and Cúla 4. Cúla4 ar Scoil airs Monday to Thursday at 10am on TG4, and is repeated at 4pm. It is possible to catch up anytime on TG4.ie or Cúla4.com and watch individual lessons on Cúla4's youtube channel. Pupils should be playful and enjoy opportunities to use their oral language. It is very worthwhile to teach and recite a wide variety of rhymes and poems regularly at every class level. This helps with the development of vocabulary and language fluency. The rhymes and poems can be used as transition activities throughout the day,

before breaks and before home time. There are other ideas and suitable resources available from pdst.ie *and* cogg.ie

4.4 Toisc nar fhreastal daltaí Naoinán Mhóra ar Scoil ó lár Mhí Marta go deireadh na scoilbhliana, ar chóir don scoil leanúint ar aghaidh le tumoideachas i rang 1 ar feadh tréimhse?

Tá sé chun tairbhe daltaí i nGaelscoileanna agus i scoileanna Gaeltachta a bheith ar ais sna suímh tumoideachais, mar d'fhéadfadh nach raibh deiseanna ag leanaí áirithe taithí rialta a bheith acu ar an nGaeilge le linn tréimhse dúnta na scoileanna. Seans go bhfuil dul chun cinn le feiscint cheana féin ina nGaeilge. Beidh an *Treoir do Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta: Táscairí Dea-Chleachtais don Tumoideachas* úsáideach chun reimsí forbartha a aithint. Is cóir do gach múinteoir ranga faisnéis a bhailiú ó chomhráite agus ó ghníomhaíochtaí labhartha eile ar bhonn leanúnach chun eolas agus tuiscint reatha na ndaltaí ar an nGaeilge a mheas chun tacú le foghlaim teanga na ndaltaí go cuí le linn na scoilbhliana 2020/21.

It is beneficial for pupils from Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools to be back in their immersion education settings as some pupils may not have had regular engagement in Irish during the school closure period. Improvement in their Irish has probably already been observed. The Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools: Táscairí Dea-Chleachtais don Tumoideachais *will be very useful to schools in identifying areas for development. Each class teacher should gather evidence from conversations and other oral activities on a regular basis in order to gather information to assess the pupil's grasp and understanding of Irish, so that their learning can be supported appropriately during the 2020/21 school year.*

4.5 Should schools continue with team-teaching? If so, how can this be carried out safely in line with public health advice?

Schools should continue team-teaching if they feel that it is in the best interests of the pupils and if they can do so in a safe working environment in line with health and safety guidance. Every school context is unique in terms of available space and personnel. In light of COVID-19 safety measures, it is best to limit the number of SETs and other adults working within a classroom for the purposes of team-teaching. Access to resources, the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and the provision of cleaning materials so that staff can clean their own desk and workspace after each "bubble" interaction should be factored into the arrangements. Social distancing guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

5. Assessment and feedback

5.1 Should I assess the pupils in my class and how can this be done effectively, without adding to the anxiety levels of the pupils?

Once pupils have begun to settle back into the routine of school, teachers should begin to create a picture of where pupils are at in their learning. The initial focus for schools will have been on Mathematics, languages (English and Gaeilge), PE and SPHE and these areas should be the first to be assessed. Assessment can be carried out in a range of ways from informal to formal and it is important that teachers choose the best ways to gather the information on pupils' progress that they need. Comprehensive guidance on assessment is

provided in Section 3.2 of *Returning to school: Curriculum guidance for primary school leaders and teachers*. This provides advice in relation to identifying the starting points for learning and the role of assessment in preparation for teaching and learning.

5.2 When should we administer standardised tests to pupils?

Standardised tests for the school year 2019-2020 did not proceed in May 2020, and **it is not envisaged that standardised tests of reading and Mathematics will be administered this term.** The DE grant for standardised tests will issue in April 2021 for tests to be administered in May 2021 as usual. This means that for the majority of pupils, standardised assessments will be postponed until May 2021. However, in a small number of cases, for example some pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) or special educational needs (SEN), SETs and class teachers may decide to use a limited range of diagnostic tests and benchmarking assessments to check progress and to ascertain if additional support is needed. Any such action should be based on the specific needs of the pupil.

5.3 Is it safe for me to provide written feedback for pupils on their copybooks/homework?

Teachers can continue to handle copybooks or work completed by the pupils but there must be a strong emphasis on hand hygiene at all times. The provision of feedback to pupils, which affirms and motivates them, is a very important element of guiding pupil learning. Pupils could use just one notebook / copybook for homework exercises this year. The use of plastic, wipeable covers is advised to enable cleaning before and after handling. Oral feedback should be provided frequently and pupils could be asked to record this feedback on their work themselves, where appropriate. Common points of feedback could be collated and shared with the whole class using the normal teaching and learning procedures (e.g. clarifying a teaching point on the use of long division, teaching pupils how to extend sentences etc.). Pupils could also be encouraged to submit homework electronically using the school's digital platform (e.g. Seesaw, Google Classroom). Samples of pupils' work could be stored digitally with feedback included. Content of these folders can be shared periodically with parents, via email or other online platforms.

6. Special Education

6.1 Some pupils will be presenting with additional needs for the first time. How can schools support these pupils?

Teachers and schools have been monitoring and observing pupils' progress since their return to school. Some pupils who have not previously been identified as having additional needs may now be presenting with needs. The needs of all pupils should be identified early so that communication and collaboration with parents/guardians and the learners themselves is established and appropriate supports and structures put in place. The school should use the NEPS *Continuum of Support* model - universal support for all learners, support for some and support for a few - to decide on the most appropriate approach to supporting the particular needs of each pupils.

6.2 How can SETs meet the needs of the pupils in the room when they are in different pods?

The *Covid-19 Response Plan for the Safe and Sustainable Reopening of Primary and Special Schools* recommends that movement of teachers between classes and pods should be limited as much as possible. However, the Department recognises that this is not always possible. In ensuring that the needs of pupils can best be met in line with public health advice, teachers may need to work with pupils from different pods. Therefore, access to resources, the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and the provision of cleaning materials so that staff can clean their own desk and workspace after each bubble/pod interaction should be factored into these arrangements.

6.3 Can SETs be deployed as mainstream class teachers, to support social distancing requirements?

No, SETs cannot be deployed as mainstream class teachers to support social distancing requirements. The *Guidelines for Primary Schools Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools* states that special education teaching supports **cannot** be used to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in mainstream classes. Neither can they be used to allow any special education teacher sole responsibility for the delivery of any curriculum subject to any particular class. These guidelines remain in effect in the context of COVID-19.

6.4 Can SETs be used for substitution?
Yes, the sequence for covering teacher absence is outlined in Circular 0045/2020 and includes SETs as the fourth option, if no substitute is available from the first three options. However, if an SET is deployed to cover a teacher absence, a substitute may be employed on a subsequent date when one is available to make up for any time lost.

6.5 Where pupils who attended an ASD/special class had traditionally been integrated for part of the school day into mainstream classroom, should this practice continue?

Mainstream integration is both beneficial and necessary for pupils in special classes but during the pandemic it must be operated in a safe manner. Pupils in special classes should continue to interact, or integrate, with mainstream classes. However, the number of mainstream classes with which each special class pupil integrates should be minimised, in order to maintain pod grouping to the greatest extent possible, and to assist contact tracing mechanisms, should this become necessary. Further guidance is available here.

7. Resources

7.1 Where can schools find suitable resources to support the use of the outdoor environment for learning?

The PDST website provides a range of resources and ideas for using the outdoor environment, including ideas for socially distanced PE, STEM, learning trails and Mathematics outdoors. The *Beyond the Classroom* resources available on scoilnet.ie

produced by PDST provides further assistance to schools. Many aspects of the six strands of PE can be taught, reinforced and assessed using online resources available on the PDST website. The school yard can be used to extend learning in PE using minimal equipment. The strands of *Athletics* or *Outdoor and adventure activities* should be prioritised. The most effective activities allow pupils to work in small groups with physical activity and movement of a non-contact nature.

7.2 Is it safe to continue to use resources such as library books, toys, musical instruments and digital devices for learning within the classroom?

Pupils should have regular access to resources and materials to support learning, but the sharing of materials among pupils should be minimised. Where possible, pupils should have their own individual resources, for example: textbooks, pencil cases, art equipment and musical instruments. Some resources can be shared when necessary, but should be cleaned between uses, in line with the Department of Education (DE) *COVID-19 Response plans for the safe and sustainable reopening of primary and special schools*.

It is very important that pupils have access to a wide range of books. Books should be covered in transparent, wipeable plastic covering that can be cleaned with a suitable household cleaning agent between uses. Pupils should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after using any shared item. Pupils should minimise handling of books.

Digital technologies can be effective tools in the classroom. The sharing of educational material between pods should be avoided/minimised where possible. Shared electronic devices such as tablets, touch screens, keyboards should be cleaned between use and consideration should be given to the use of wipeable covers for electronic equipment to facilitate cleaning.

Further guidance is available in Section 6 of the DE *COVID-19 response plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of primary and special schools*.

8. Pupils at very high risk to COVID-19

8.1 What should schools do in cases where individual pupils or parents/guardians are reluctant to return to school due to fears related to COVID-19?

The school should make contact with the families, and should outline the safety measures that have been put in place to reassure families that it is safe for their child to return to school, unless their child is medically certified as being in the very high risk category and therefore advised to learn from home. Home-school community liaison (HSCL) teachers, where available, may also be in a position to reassure and support families as the schools reopen.

Under DE Guidelines, all pupils are expected to attend school as usual, except those who are medically certified as being at very high risk to COVID-19. Therefore, if pupils do not return to school, the school principal is obliged to notify TUSLA of their continued absence. TUSLA Education Support Service (TESS) have been working systematically with schools since the early part of the year to ensure that pupils receive support in relation to their return

to school and school attendance. TESS staff will support school personnel to follow up on attendance issues, providing guidance and signposting appropriate support services and referral pathways. TESS have also devised a useful set of Frequently Asked Questions for parents which can be accessed here.

NEPS has developed resources for parents, pupils and teachers on anxiety. It has also produced a Return to School webinar and toolkit which provides resources to support pupils' return to school. NEPS are available to advise schools on how best to support pupils and parents in this cohort. Parents should also be reminded that if they wish to home-school their children, they are obliged to register with TUSLA for home-schooling.

8.2 How can a sense of connectedness and continuity of learning be supported for pupils who have complex special educational needs and are required to learn from home due to being at very high risk to COVID-19?

This could be facilitated through use of check-in phone calls with the pupils (in the presence of their parent/guardian) and/or the sending of suitable materials including photographs or recordings of familiar voices or sounds from the school and the classroom and the provision of videos to support learning using the school's digital platform (e.g. Seesaw). Affirmation is very important in maintaining connection between pupils and their teachers. Supports provided should be based on the individual pupil and their needs and abilities and in line with their agreed targets in their support plan.

The NCSE website outlines a wide range of resources suitable for pupils with special educational needs. It has also produced a suite of online resources '*Getting back to what we know'* to support pupils with complex needs returning to school. Many of the strategies and approaches recommended may be used in the distance learning setting. The NCSE School Support Portal is the platform through which schools can apply to the NCSE for in-school support for whole staff, group and individual teachers. Support may be in the form of telephone support, email support, video-conferences and, in circumstances where public health advice permits, a school visit, or a whole-school seminar. Applications may be made at https://ncse.ie/school-support

8.3 How can schools facilitate ongoing communication between the class teacher and the designated teacher/parents/pupils to ensure that the pupil's learning aligns to that of his/her class?
Schools should use a portion of Croke Park hours to support ongoing communication between class teachers and designated teachers and parents. Schools can make local arrangements depending on their context to facilitate this communication. For example, infant class teachers might find it useful to organise this communication when their class have went home on a shorter day. Equally, principals might find that using some of their administrative time would be beneficial in supporting partnership with parents through these arrangements.

8.4 Are designated teachers required to provide a minimum number of hours teaching to pupils who are availing of adapted education provision?

There is no minimum number of hours prescribed in the guidance documents. It is up to each individual school to ensure that those who are accessing adapted education provision are enabled to progress in line with the curriculum and with their peers. The amount of time allocated to achieving this is a local decision, dependent on the local context. However, daily contact between the designated teacher and the pupils should be provided, using whatever purposeful means is necessary (e.g. digital platform, phone calls, text, etc.).

8.5 Who will quality assure adapted education provision for pupils at very high risk to COVID-19?

School leaders have overall responsibility for oversight of the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. The designated teacher should communicate frequently with the class teacher to ensure that teaching and learning are in line with that of the class, in so far as possible. Feedback should be provided by the teacher responsible for the adapted education provision to the pupil on a regular basis. Pupils should receive supportive, constructive and timely feedback on their work. The views of pupils should also be sought in order to see how the adapted education provision is working from their perspective. This form of two-way feedback is essential for maintaining motivation and progression in learning.

8.6 Are sensitive areas of the SPHE programme (e.g. Stay Safe) suitable to be dealt with through remote teaching and learning?

Section 3 of _Continuity of Schooling: Supporting pupils who are at very high risk to Covid-19_ outlines that agreed approaches to teaching and learning in Stay Safe and other sensitive areas of the SPHE curriculum should be arranged in consultation with parents / guardians and in line with school policies in order to cater for the needs of pupils who cannot attend school. These approaches could include the provision of pre-recorded video or audio, learning tasks to be completed at home, and the sharing of key learning points with the pupils. Parents of pupils in fifth and sixth can be advised of Busy Bodies, a useful resource available here to help support both teachers and parents in providing information on puberty to pupils aged between 10 and 14 years. The Busy Bodies programme supports the teaching of the fifth and sixth class component of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the context of Social Personal and Health Education.

9. Parental Involvement

9.1 How can parental involvement be fostered during this period?

The physical presence of parents in the classroom is not recommended at present due to public health restrictions. In light of COVID-19 safety measures, minimisation of physical interaction with other adults is a key consideration. However, virtual communication with parents should be strengthened at this time given the many questions, fears and concerns parents may have. It may be useful to ensure all members of the school community are aware that an increased emphasis on digital communication in the context of COVID-19 should be encompassed within a teacher's normal, contracted hours. There is no expectation that teachers will be on call/available outside of those hours or at weekends. Schools and parents can use digital technologies to support parental involvement. For example, in infant classes, parents could be involved in story-time using video-conferencing

facilities. Parent-teacher meetings, including meetings to develop and review support plans for pupils with SEN, should go ahead this year, but they should be adapted to reduce face-to-face contact between adults, for example by using video-conferencing, telephone calls and/or email. Schools should refer to the DE guidance for *Supporting collaboration with parents in primary schools* for further information. Special schools may choose to use the approaches outlined in either the Primary or Post-Primary school guidance on collaborating with parents/guardians or a combination of both.