



Returning to school

Guidance for teaching and learning

Junior Infants - 2nd class

March 2021

This document provides practical advice for teachers as schools recommence face-to-face learning for pupils from junior infants to second class. It should be read in conjunction with previously published guidance on teaching and learning in a COVID-19 context available at gov.ie/backtoschool

As pupils return to school, teachers should:

- Allow time for pupils to settle back to school and adapt to school procedures and routines
- Be flexible in addressing needs arising from varied remote learning experiences: adapt lesson length; use visual prompts to support routines
- Use active, playful and engaging methodologies to support the transition back to learning in school

- Create a calm, reassuring atmosphere for pupils with positive language and praise and opportunities for pupils to communicate their needs
- Promote active listening and concentration skills and encourage peer learning and reflection
- Use observation and parent/pupil views when considering pupils' needs in literacy and numeracy.

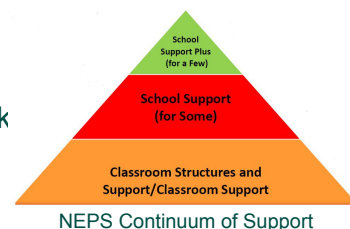
Teaching and learning approaches

- Ensure pupils have the opportunity to play and socialise in line with public health guidance
- Create opportunities for pupils to talk and discuss, in order to re-establish relationships and to support learning across the curriculum - make frequent use of story, read aloud and provide daily talk-time
- Avoid the over use of teacher-directed and didactic approaches to teaching and learning in an effort to 'catch up' or 'cover lost ground'
- Engage pupils in inquiry-based and hands-on learning experiences to stimulate their interest, motivate them to learn and support positive learning outcomes
- Tabhair deiseanna do dhaltáí chun an Ghaeilge a chloisint, a úsáid agus a dhaingniú le modhanna múinte idirghníomhacha (spraoi, rólímirt, drámaíocht, ceol, rainn, dánta agus amhránaíocht)
- Bring pupils outdoors and to local amenities to enhance learning, support social distancing, promote physical activity and help positive wellbeing. Webinars produced by the NCCA on outdoor learning are available [here](#)
- Promote collaborative learning with opportunities for pupils to engage with and learn from the ideas, perceptions and opinions of others (for example, use technology or individual whiteboards/markers to allow pupils to share ideas in a socially distanced manner)
- Use integrated and thematic approaches to deliver the full curriculum, to support creative and enjoyable learning experiences and to blend literacy and numeracy skills with creative expression and scientific exploration

Supporting emerging learning needs

To inform teaching and learning and identify pupils for additional support, teachers should make use of:

- Teacher observation
- Questioning
- Pupil conferencing
- Teacher-designed task
- Reports from parents
- The views of pupils



For most pupils, priority needs emerging from the period of remote learning will be addressed at the *Classroom Support Stage* of the Continuum of Support through carefully monitored and differentiated learning activities and targeted team-teaching. SETs should collaborate with class teachers to adjust and reprioritise their timetables to ensure support is targeted at pupils with greatest need



- Screening and/or diagnostic tests to identify the needs of pupils who require more intensive and individualised support at the *School Support Stage* should only be carried out when the pupils have had adequate time to settle back to school routine

Where possible, engage with teachers and SNAs who delivered the in-person supplementary programme to gather appropriate information about the needs / progress of relevant pupils



Practical supports and guidance for special education teaching are available from the National Council for Special Education at: <https://ncse.ie/online-resources>



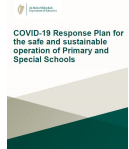
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Promoting safe working and learning environments







 School leaders and teachers should familiarise themselves with the revised COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of schools (updated February 2021), available at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0bff-reopening-our-primary-and-special-schools/#covid-19-response-plan-for-the-safe-and-sustainable-operation-of-primary-and-special-schools>

Reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within the school by:






-  Promoting awareness of symptoms for all school personnel, pupils, families and visitors
-  Advising teachers and staff not to attend work and to self-isolate if unwell or identified as a close contact
-  Thoroughly cleaning frequently used surfaces such as table-tops, door handles and frequently used items such as toys, concrete materials and digital devices
-  Restricting the number of visitors to the school to essential visits that have been pre-planned
-  Creating / reinforcing systems to avoid class bubbles mixing with other class bubbles
-  Continuing to remind parents not to send their children to school if they or other household members have suspected/confirmed COVID-19
-  Continuing to promote good hygiene, face coverings where needed, and respiratory etiquette with reminders throughout the school
-  Carefully managing shared spaces such as staffrooms and corridors, and reminding staff of social distancing requirements
-  Being vigilant and promoting social distancing at arrival and pick-up times and discouraging the congregation of pupils / parents at the school gates at any stage during the day.

Digital technologies

Digital skills acquired as a result of remote learning experiences should continue to be developed and enhanced as pupils return to school. Pupils should be encouraged to continue to use online-learning platforms to support learning as appropriate

-  Maximise opportunities to develop digital skills to enable pupils to utilise the features of online platforms to their full potential
-  Use digital portfolios developed during school closures to provide constructive feedback for improving learning outcomes for pupils
-  Provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on digital tasks which involve creating, sharing and discussing their work
-  Continue to use digital technology to support partnership and communication between the school and the home
-  Consider using digital recordings of learning materials, including songs, rhymes, poems, phrases and reading samples to encourage and facilitate learning at home
-  Further support at: pdst.ie/DistanceLearning/DigTech

Frequently asked questions

-  How can pupils safely learn rhymes and songs to support literacy and numeracy?
Singing in the classroom should be avoided. It can take place outside, when pupils are socially distanced. Alternatively, pupils can listen to songs and rhymes at school and sing them at home.
-  How should special education teachers best organise support for pupils during the phased re-opening?
SETs should work from the school to support all pupils on their caseload, both in-person and remotely, using methodologies that make optimal use of the available space and teaching resources, while adhering to all social distancing and hygiene requirements.
-  Can external coaches support learning in PE?
The use of an external coach or tutor is at the discretion of the board of management, who must satisfy itself that these visitors are Garda vetted, adhere to public health advice, are trained by their governing bodies with regard to COVID-19 and fully implement the school's response plan.
-  How should break and lunch times be managed?
Pupils should remain in bubble structures, separate from other bubbles. Schools should be very vigilant in this regard. If necessary, breaktimes should be staggered to support this.
-  Can student teachers continue to work in classes?
Yes, and they should follow all the same health and safety guidance as other staff in the school.