

METNS update 18th November 2021

Please read the below Covid related information.

The information is split into two:

- **METNS School Plan**
- **HSE protocols**

METNS School Plan:

COVID 19 and where we are in November 2021 in METNS.

Well it hasn't gone away and primary schools are the present focus; the children are unvaccinated for the most part and generally un-masked.

The consolation is that the children who contract COVID 19 do not seem to get too sick.

We have positive cases in the school, and the best of METNS good luck to those families. I hope that none of your family members are really ill.

School support for children at home:

As a staff we are working through plans to best support children who are out; self-isolating because of a positive case in the family or who have indeed tested positive.

- We are putting **homework up on the Seesaw** platform and if your child/children are not sick, they could access this work.
Hopefully the duration of the absence will not be too long.
Be patient with the teaching staff if they do not immediately correct the work on Seesaw; staff are spreading themselves thin on the ground these days.
- Should a class have a **critical number of children** out for positive test reasons (a mandatory 10-day self-isolation), we will deliver limited supports to that pod, if possible. It may be by Zoom, it may take other forms, and everything will depend on who, how many and for how long. We will do our best to support where we can. Obviously, the class teacher cannot teach 1/2/3 children at home while teaching the class in school.
- If the **critical number of positive cases in a class was high**, we may have to consider closing the class and asking all to stay home and provide a blended learning programme using Zoom and Seesaw.

General considerations in school:

We are struggling to find substitute teachers so please be patient with our staff as we spread our support around the school.

In some situations, support teacher (SET) will be acting as a class teacher this impact will impact the SET caseload.

We ask for your patience and forbearance over the next few months.

Your support:

You as parents/guardians could help out by adopting mitigating strategies in your lives. Maybe consider some or all of the following:

- Outdoor parties and not indoor venues
- Limit the number of friends the children invite for play dates
- Narrow social circles
- Advise your 5th/6th class child to wear a mask.

Regards, AnnMarie.

HSE Protocols:

Press Release 18th November 2021

The Department of Education and the HSE, working in collaboration with the Department of Health, have developed a programme in which antigen tests will be made available to the children in a primary school pod, where a child in the pod has had a PCR test that detected COVID-19. Where two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 occur in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing will be offered to the full class. The tests will be sent to the children's parents by the HSE.

Parents/guardians of a primary school child, who has been confirmed as having COVID-19 following a PCR test, are asked to inform their school's principal. The school principal will then inform the parents of other children in the pod of a confirmed case. No personal details of the child will be shared. These parents will be provided with the option to receive free antigen tests for their child, which they will be able to order for delivery to their home.

It is not mandatory for children to participate in antigen testing. Children who are in a pod where a child has tested positive for COVID-19 can continue to attend school, whether they participate in antigen testing or not, provided that they are not experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.

If a child displays any symptoms of COVID-19 they should self-isolate immediately and a parent or guardian should arrange a PCR test.

School principals will not be required to gather evidence of participation or of antigen test results.

How the programme will work:

When a parent receives a 'detected'/positive PCR COVID-19 test result on their child, they should notify the school principal immediately.

The school principal will inform the parents of the children in the case's pod that they are close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case. The name of the case or any other details will not be shared.

The school principal will identify the children in the case's pod, and inform their parents, offering the opportunity to order antigen tests from the distribution company.

The antigen tests will be posted to the parents of the children in the pod.

Parents carry out the antigen test on the day that they receive it and every second day until three tests have been done.

The children in the pod can continue to attend school as long as they remain asymptomatic and their antigen test results remain not detected.

If a child's antigen test indicates a positive result:

If an antigen test is positive, the child isolates at home and the child's parent/guardian logs onto the HSE to request a PCR test.

The antigen test distribution company will record the numbers of antigen tests distributed, batch numbers and the names of the relevant schools.

If a child develops symptoms of COVID-19:

If at any stage a child becomes symptomatic they should isolate at home and organise a COVID-19 PCR test if indicated. A 'not-detected' antigen test holds no value in this situation of a symptomatic child.

If two or more cases arise in a class, outside a single pod:

In a case where two or more cases arise in a class, within a seven-day period, outside of a single pod, antigen testing will be offered to the full class.

Department of Education:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/f5630-ministers-foley-and-donnely-confirm-arrangements-for-a-new-system-of-antigen-testing-of-asymptomatic-close-contacts-in-primary-schools/>