

The UNUSUAL

# BACK TO SCHOOL

*we ALL need to prepare for*

YOUR JOURNEY TOWARDS  
A COVID-SECURE SCHOOL





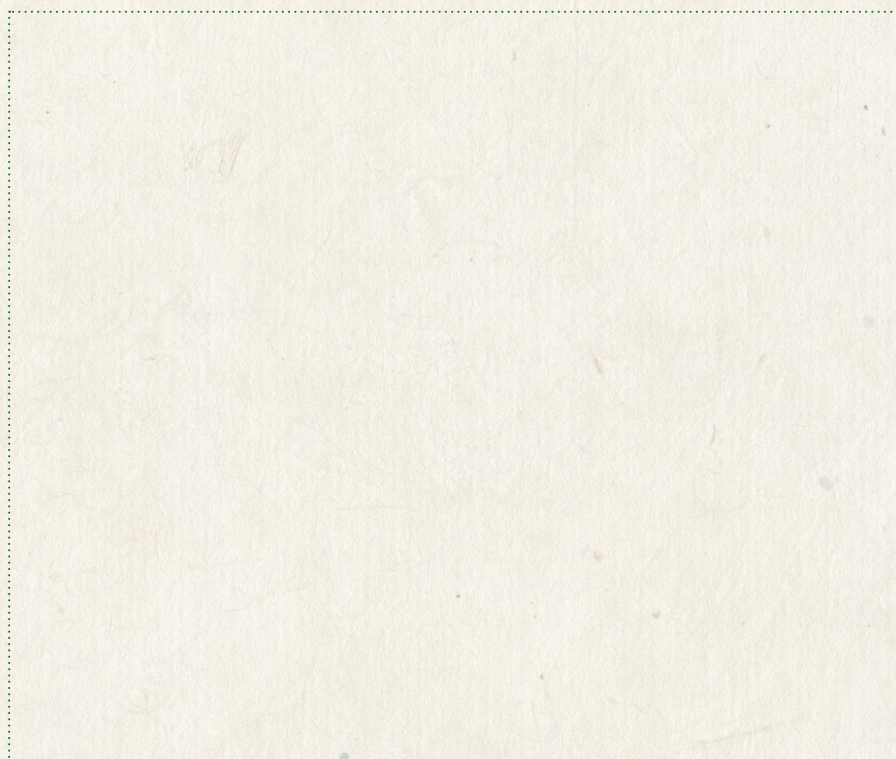
# THE JOURNEY

## *Reopening our Schools*

These past few months have been a really tough time for teachers and pupils alike. Routine is a luxury of the past. Without friends and support systems, days are long and learning is hard. When it is time to open our schools again, let's make sure we're ready to hit the ground running. This short guide will remind you of what you might need to consider in order to open your school in a covid-secure way. Helping everyone to feel safe and be safe and get back to school happy.

What's the journey to make those things happen?  
Let's get started.

*Add your goals here:* Click and type or print and write



# THE NEW NORMAL

The upside down. Limbo. Somewhere in-between lockdown and life as we once knew it. It's unlikely there'll be a return to 'normality' anytime soon of course, but there maybe light at the end of the tunnel.

Until then, as lockdown is gradually eased, we will need to adapt and be prepared. Additionally, your journey towards covid secure schools will need to carefully consider your *staff*, your *pupils* and their *parents / guardians*.

## Your PUPILS

may be nervous about a return to school so you need to do everything you can to help them to *be safe* and to *feel safe*.

AND

## Your STAFF

need to feel that their working environment is suitable to return to work so they can focus on supporting students' development.

So, what's your goal? It might be useful to write down in simple terms exactly what you want to achieve as a starting point. Use the space on the page to the left to take note of these.

For example;

***I want my school to reopen in a safe and practical way.***

***I want my staff and pupils to feel safe and to be safe.***

***I want to create clear and considered plans and policies so that development and learning can remain our top priority.***

What's the journey to make those things happen?

*Let's get started.*

## Quick links

*This is an interactive PDF click when you see this icon or any URL.*



## Phase 1 - Communication

# KEEP TALKING

When doors closed, normal went out the window and we've not seen it since. But a new world awaits us on the other side.

There's a lot of fear bred from the unknown, and that's really understandable. It will be felt by your staff, parents/guardians and pupils. Share your reopening plans and policies with them in as timely and concise a manner as you can. *Remember that an update to let them know that you're working on this counts!* People don't need everything at once, right now, they just need to be kept in the loop to feel more comfortable.



### TOP TIP

It can be really hard to get students engaged if you're teaching remotely. Get creative with science, geography or history themed backgrounds. Take a trip around the world or dive under the sea. Use virtual or fabric backgrounds to build context over video call.

## BEFORE SCHOOL OPENS

We're sure your bookmarks bar is probably a collection of Google classroom this, Class Dojo that and a splattering of SeeSaw for Schools from trying to continuously support your students and their parents and guardians over that last number of weeks. *And boy do we applaud you!*

A weekly email from the school including news and updates can help put parents' minds at ease and save you having the same conversation multiple times. Having an email designed and sent each week sets structure and boundaries so guardians and pupils understand when to expect an update and what that might be.

## ONCE SCHOOL HAS REOPENED

The importance of hygiene and safe distance is something that teachers and guardians have worked really hard at instilling in pupils.

Some ways you can alleviate the pressure of making that a reality are by using large posters and individual desk info cards to remind children to maintain distance, wash their hands and practice great hygiene. These supports might help reduce the number of things going on in pupils' heads as they return to school and enable them to focus on learning and having fun.



**Wash your hands**  
for 20 seconds at  
regular intervals



**Keep 2m apart**  
from your class  
mates if possible



**Have patience**  
and wait for  
your turn



**Wash your hands**  
for 20 seconds at  
regular intervals

**Keep**  
from  
mates if

## *Phase 1 - Communication*

# REINFORCE

Your 'new normal' plans may need to change and evolve. It makes sense to have a set way for briefing down and communicating each phase. You'll need sending out frequent and consistent briefings to reduce any feelings of uncertainty. There are plenty of things you can do to make sure your plans are front of mind.



### TOP TIP

Use visual reminders, like posters and wall graphics, in common areas to remind everyone of hygiene policies as well creating staggered schedules for common rooms and breaks.

## **TEACHERS AND STAFF**

Remember to have regular group calls, open forum discussions and one-to-one conversations with your teachers and staff so they understand what's happening. Sharing your plans with your team enable them to get on board. It also improves engagement and motivation and reduces the unrest and fear that some may associate with going back to school with unknown plans.

## **PUPILS**

Be candid, clear and comforting with your message. As we're sure you've experienced already, this lack of routine and normality can be a scary and upsetting time for children. Perhaps a whole school art and literacy project would be a great way to get everyone prepared for going back and provide something that ties them together as one once your school starts to open. Postcards could be sent out to each pupil who might write a recount of what they've done over the last few weeks, or share 3 things they look forward to doing when they get back to school.

## **PARENTS**

As plans become concrete, share them with your parents so they feel more comfortable and so they can explain plans to their children. Use regular emails, video content and be sure to update your website with new policies and reopening news.





## Phase 2 - *Online presence*

# LOOK READY

How does your school present itself? What do people think when they look at your website and through your school gates? Engagement will be most important as pupils start returning to school, so make sure your school is a reflection of your values and beliefs both online and offline.



### TOP TIP

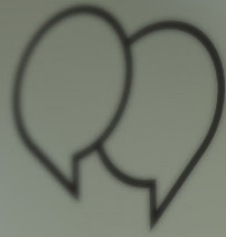
Create a blog on your website and update it with policies and procedures as well as news from each class and messages from teachers. It's a fantastic way to stay in touch and can be shared in your weekly email home!

Update your website with news of reopening dates and policy updates like staggered times for classes. This is often the first port-of-call for people trying to find information. To save you having 100 identical phone calls and to save parents having to rummage around finding accurate information, make sure you keep your website, social media and Google my Business up-to-date with accurate information.

You can keep everyone informed and in-the-know by posting regularly and consistently on your Google my business and social media channels as well as updating information on your website, writing articles or giving advice and sharing these insights with teachers, staff and guardians.

Create a policy handbook and how-to guide for your integrated learning platform to share with parents and guardians. This encourages them to get more involved with learning. It also makes a staggered return to school that bit smoother if some grades only return a few days a week.

A staff guide to best practices to coincide with updated policies can be another resource to ensure a more confident return to work. Clearly explain how you expect teachers and other staff members to operate and communicate messages of suitable distances. Include a frequently asked questions section that staff can refer back to periodically.



worcester  
language centre

**FOR YOUR SAFETY, THIS IS NOW  
A COVID-SECURE BUILDING**



Wear a face mask  
to protect others



Keep 2m away  
from others



Sanitise hands  
at provided station

## Phase 2 - Offline presence

# BE READY

Government guidelines suggest you'll need to have social distancing measures in place at your premises for your staff and your pupils in order to reopen.

Make it clear to everyone that your premises are as 'covid-secure' as possible.

Clarity and creativity will help students internalise your message and set guardians' minds at ease.



### TOP TIP

Get Creative!

Socially distanced play can be really fun with floor stickers guiding pupils through hopscotch and counting games, all while keeping their distance.

## SCHOOL

There will be so many habits to build and learning to be encouraged once pupils return that visual prompts can be a fantastic way to alleviate some of the pressure to remember new practices. Posters, floor stickers, info cards on their desks and banners can all act as scaffolds to support your pupils in maintaining great hygiene practices and social distancing measures as per your policy.

Stickers could easily identify which shared resources have been sanitised and are ready for use and which need to be sanitised. Whiteboard walls can be a fantastic use of space to convey alternating messages, perhaps letting teachers and classes know staggered break times or sports hall rotas.

## COMMON ROOMS & YARD

*Something you probably don't even want to contend with right now!* Break time can be a bit mad on the best of days. A lot of teachers we know are chatting to their pupils now and working with parents to remind children of best practices when they get back to school. Large PVC banners can demonstrate social distances and outdoor floor stickers can create fun games that children can play together without having to come in physical contact with one another. Sanitiser stations could be placed by doorways and entrances with automatic dispensers that reduce the contact required.



🛒 **Regular Branded  
Face Masks**  
25 from €180

🛒 **Premium Branded  
Face Masks**  
5 from €49



🛒 **Floor Mats** from €103

🛒 **Hand Sanitiser Stations**  
From €169



🛒 **Sign Posts** from €92.70

🛒 **Floor Stickers** 16 from €86.40

### Phase 3 - *Stay safe*

# SAFETY FOR YOUR TEAM

Even though the whole country's been cooped up for weeks, it's only natural that both your staff and your pupils may be apprehensive about returning to the 'outside world'.

Having the right safety policy in place is vital if you want to help your staff and students focus on learning and having fun.



## TOP TIP

Your staff and students need to *be* safe and to *feel* safe. Involving your team in the process means that not only are you getting valuable input, you may also help to relieve some staff anxiety too.

- ✓ Perform a risk assessment
- ✓ Limit the number of people at your school with alternating shifts and classes
- ✓ Use floor graphics to remind everyone to maintain a suitable distance
- ✓ Reduce the use of shared desks
- ✓ Use desktop dividers between staff and students who need to work closely together
- ✓ Separate entrance and exit points to reduce interaction
- ✓ Stagger break times to reduce pressure on break areas
- ✓ Use outside areas for breaks with zones for each grade
- ✓ Schedule drop offs and collections to avoid crowding
- ✓ Share visual prompts and reminders with Correx Signs
- ✓ Designate staircases as 'up only' or 'down only' with interior signage
- ✓ Regulate the use of corridors and lifts with sign posts
- ✓ Clean door handles, lift buttons and handrails regularly
- ✓ Install hand sanitiser stations
- ✓ Put up safety 'explainer' posters
- ✓ Use Whiteboard walls to share frequently changing information such as staggered breaks and use of common rooms



🛒 Sneeze Guards from €47



🛒 Pavement Signs from €129

🛒 Bollard sleeves from €57.60



🛒 PVC Barriers from €33

### Phase 3 - *Stay safe*

# SAFETY FOR YOUR PUPILS

You'll want students to be excited to come back to school and to be able to focus when they do. For that to happen, making them feel as comfortable as possible is an important step. Being as visible as possible about what steps you've put in place onsite can go a long way to making an unfamiliar situation more comfortable.



## TOP TIP

Reinforce the learning you and your pupils' guardians have worked so hard on over the last few months. Be explicit about the safety policies you have in place with visual cues and reminders from the moment they arrive to when they leave and everywhere in between.

- ✓ Perform a risk assessment
- ✓ Provide clear guidance to students upon arrival and with info cards on their desks
- ✓ Shaped floor stickers to guide pupils, parents and staff along one-way routes
- ✓ Define the number of people that can follow 2m social distancing on your premises
- ✓ Use floor graphics to remind everyone of safe distances
- ✓ Regulate behaviour inside and outside your school with queue barriers
- ✓ Shaped floor stickers for children to play hopscotch or snakes and ladders from a safe distance
- ✓ Install hand sanitiser stations
- ✓ Free-standing metal displays that reinforce messages and reminders portable to anywhere in the school
- ✓ Clean door handles, lift buttons and handrails regularly
- ✓ Stickers to identify resources that have been sanitised
- ✓ Use large PVC banners to show true to size suitable distances that can be designed in fun and creative ways

# CHECKLIST

Use this nifty list to check off as you execute your plan.

*Click to type or print and write.*

## Phase 1 - Communication

	REQUIRED	COMPLETED	QUICK LINK
Pre-opening training explaining safety guidelines for staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safety guideline handbook for staff and guardians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Schedule video calls with different teams outlining the protocols upon return with Q&A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Incorporate integrated learning software for students as standard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communicate separate entrance and exit points for staff and students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create and share staggered class/break schedule across staff, guardians and pupils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social media posts announcing updates/opening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Email campaign with opening schedule/other guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Send postcards to announce the reopening date with a space for a writing activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communicate to guardians that classes will be returning gradually, if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Schedule weekly staff or guardian newsletter to maintain updated guidelines and news	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Write thank you notes to staff or pupils thanking them for their hard work and efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Phase 2 - Presence

	REQUIRED	COMPLETED	QUICK LINK
Update social media with reopening plans and resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Update website with reopening plans and policies to reduce the need for individual calls	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
School safety policies updated and posted on website if applicable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Graphics designed for child-friendly messaging and to gamify social distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Window decals/A-boards communicating new safety guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safety signage out front to communicate queuing, drop off and collection rota	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Directional guidance encouraging safe entrance/exit/social distancing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Make resources available to be downloaded online for to consolidate learning at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



## Quick Links Interactive PDF

This is an interactive PDF. Click when you see this icon or any url.

## Phase 3 - Safety in your School

	REQUIRED	COMPLETED	QUICK LINK
Work out your phased plan of reopening of school premises for your staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limit the number of people at your school at any one time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use floor stickers to remind staff and pupils to maintain a distance, gamify these for fun	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Identify suitable distances in common areas and staff rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use desktop dividers for teams that have to work more closely together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If practicable, separate entrance and exit points and collection and drop-off points	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Schedule drop-offs, collections and lunch times to avoid crowding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Plan to hold guardian-teacher meetings over video where possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Designate staircases as 'up' or 'down' with signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a schedule for regularly cleaning door handles, lift buttons and handrails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Install hand sanitiser stations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safety 'explainer' posters hung at key points in building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Stickers to identify shared resources as sanitised and ready for use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide pens, pencils and holders for each classroom to limit sharing of items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use branded labels in shared kitchens to ensure food items remain separate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Install sneeze guards at welcome desks & where teachers or pupils work closely together	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create a rota for staggered break times and use of sports halls and common areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Regulate use of corridors and lifts with messages on signposts, posters and floor stickers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Communicate to pupils the reason for the new safety guidelines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Clearly advise students to use their own books and resources where possible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Offer face masks to those in close contact with one another to reduce risk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Create one-way systems with way-finding signage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safety 'explainer' posters hung in throughout the school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fabric booths can create smaller spaces where students can work independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



# USEFUL LINKS

There are additional Government guidelines that may help you navigate your way through the social distancing measures. Here a few useful links you may want to read through. Be prepared though, it's not exactly a thrill a minute.



## TOP TIP

Develop or update your response plan. Guidance in Section E here: [www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf](http://www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf)

### **Coronavirus guidance and support:**

[www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/](http://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/)

### **Getting Ireland Back to Work Safely:**

[www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Reopening-Business-Getting-Ireland-Back-to-Work%E2%80%94Safely.pdf](http://www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Reopening-Business-Getting-Ireland-Back-to-Work%E2%80%94Safely.pdf)

### **Return to Work Safely Protocol:**

[www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf](http://www.dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Return-to-Work-Safely-Protocol.pdf)

### **Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business:**

[www.gov.ie/en/news/58bc8b-taoiseach-announces-roadmap-for-reopening-society-and-business-and-u/](http://www.gov.ie/en/news/58bc8b-taoiseach-announces-roadmap-for-reopening-society-and-business-and-u/)

### **Supports and Guidance for Schools:**

<https://www.education.ie/covid19#guidance>

### **Workplace social distancing:**

[www.nettl.com/uk/covid-19-essentials/](http://www.nettl.com/uk/covid-19-essentials/)



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