



**OUR LADY OF MERCY SECONDARY SCHOOL**

**Health and Safety Control of COVID-19 Policy for students**

## **1. Introduction:**

Under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, the board of management of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School as employer is required to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees of the school. The employer is further required to manage and conduct the school in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that individuals at the place of work who are not employees, such as students, parents/guardians, visitors to the school, are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare.

This policy is influenced by the need to minimise the risk of introduction of COVID-19 into the school community and to prevent its spread. Although it is acknowledged that no single action or set of actions will completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission, adherence to this policy will contribute to the reduction of that risk of transmission.

In accordance with this policy students are expected to comply with the standards of behaviour set out in this policy or as directed by the school to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 control measures are consistent with current advice from the HSE, the Health and Safety Authority, the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Foreign Affairs and, as such, may be subject to change. Students and parents/guardians will be notified of any changes to the control measures.

Students are expected to comply with all directions from school staff in relation to the school's COVID-19 control measures. Any failure or refusal to comply with this policy or to follow instructions of school staff should be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour.

Parents/guardians are required to supply the school with a phone number/s of available person/s who can be contacted at all times and who will be available to collect a student from the school should the need arise.

## **2. Symptoms of COVID-19**

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to symptoms of cold or flu. The most common symptoms are:

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath
- loss of sense of smell or taste

More information regarding the most up-to-date signs and symptoms of COVID-19 is available on the HSE website, <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>.

### **3. Standards of Behaviour expected of students to help prevent the introduction or spread of COVID - 19 in the school**

Students are expected to comply with any control measures directed by the school to prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19, including, but not limited to:

- Maintaining a social-distance of at least 1m and where possible, 2m, from other students and staff; where social distancing of 1m is not possible, wearing of face coverings is also obligatory.
- Wearing a face covering (applicable at post-primary level). All students at post-primary level, are required to wear a face covering subject to a limited number of exceptions set out in relevant Department of Education guidance. Face coverings are defined as being cloth coverings, i.e. masks and must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.
- Performing hand hygiene with a hand sanitiser on entering the school.
- repeating hand-hygiene at regular intervals throughout the school day and when directed by school staff;
- Maintaining good respiratory-hygiene. In this regard students should:
  - cover nose/mouth with a tissue when coughing/sneezing and dispose of used tissue in waste bin and perform hand hygiene
  - cough or sneeze into the inner elbow (upper sleeve) rather than into the hand, if no tissues are available.
  - keep contaminated hands away from the eyes and nose
  - carry out hand hygiene after contact with respiratory secretions and contaminated objects/materials
  - not spit or deliberately cough or sneeze at or towards any other person in the school
- not sharing materials or stationery, such as pens, calculators, rulers, *etc.* with other students;
- not attending school for 14 days after returning from travel out of the country in line with Government guidelines for travel;
- not attending school if displaying COVID-19 like symptoms and remaining out of school for such period as is required in accordance with HSE/GP advice
- not attending school where tested positive for COVID-19 and remaining out of school for such period as is required in accordance with HSE/GP advice
- not attending school if identified by the HSE as a person who has been in contact with another person who has contracted COVID-19 and remaining out of school for such period as is required in accordance with HSE/GP advice;
- not attending school if a member of the student's household is displaying COVID-19 symptoms and remaining out of school for such period as is required in accordance with HSE/GP advice
- telling a teacher or other member of staff where a student feels unwell at school. In that regard
  - the student will require to be collected from the school as soon as possible by a parent/guardian or a person designated by the parent/guardian for such purpose.
  - parents must ensure that the school has up-to-date contact details so that they can be contacted by the school if required.
- complying with any other such directions as advised by the DES and/or HSE and communicated to the school community.

#### 4. Failure to comply with the standards of behaviour

Failure by a student to comply with the standards of behaviour expected to help prevent the introduction and spread of COVID-19 will constitute a breach of the Code of Behaviour of Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School and s/he may be subject to sanction up to and including suspension or permanent exclusion.

Any actions or sanctions taken in respect of alleged breaches of the code of behaviour will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the school's code of behaviour, the requirements of the NEWB Guidelines on Developing a Code of Behaviour and relevant requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Sanctions will be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and context of the behaviour.

A student engaging in aggressive, threatening or unacceptable behaviour that creates or increases the risk of COVID-19 infection for staff, other students or visitors to the school may be removed from class and, if necessary, from the school premises with immediate effect, pending any further action to be taken in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

The Department of Education and Skills has directed that the school's Code of Behaviour should fully apply in relation to the COVID-19 Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of post-primary schools.

It is important to remember that **the overriding objective is to protect the health of staff and students.**

If students do not cooperate with the plan for the safe reopening of schools they are putting the school community at risk.

- As a consequence students will be sent home immediately for failing to cooperate in the following areas in OLM:
  - Late arrival to school where contact cannot be made with home.
  - Refusal to respect the entry/exit and one-way system (this includes entering via the primary school gates. This is prohibited and the Primary School Principals will inform the Principal if anyone tries to enter through those gates).
  - Refusal to wear mask/visor.
  - Arriving to school with no mask/visor.
  - Refusal to wear the correct uniform, including P.E. Uniform.
  - Refusal to hand over a mobile phone if caught in possession.
  - Bringing a bike to school.
  - Behaviour in class that increases the risk to other students or staff.
  - Refusal to engage in P.E. unless there is a medical note (note in journal will not be accepted).
  - Refusal to sanitise their work station, desk or equipment when instructed.
  - Refusal to engage in proper hand hygiene.
  - Refusal to follow supervisor's instructions around the school or in the yard.
  - Refusal to follow social distancing when asked to.
  - Any attempt to cough/sneeze/spit on purpose intended to cause panic, even in a messing capacity.
- By engaging in any of the above behaviours, students are impacting on the health and safety of the school community. None of these behaviours will be tolerated.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O'Sullivan".

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

Signed:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping, stylized lines.

Principal

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020