SICKNESS POLICY

Introduction

The school has a duty of care to all its pupils and members of staff. This policy aims to set out procedures to be followed when children become unwell, to ensure that they are well cared for and that, where the cause is of an infectious nature, others are not exposed needlessly.

Parents are asked **not** to send their child/ren to school if any of the following apply:

- The child is showing any symptoms of Covid 19 (see below for more information on the symptoms)
- The child has a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or more
- The child does not feel well enough to participate in the normal programme of curriculum activities.
- The child requires more care than the classroom team is able to provide without affecting the health, safety and schoolwork of the other pupils.
- If antibiotics are prescribed for a contagious illness or infection, the child should not attend school until 24 hours after treatment has begun and must be showing signs of improvement.
- If headlice or ringworm is noticed, the child may not come to school until treatment has begun.
- If a child has been sent to school and is clearly unwell, as described above, a parent or guardian will be asked to collect him/ her from school as soon as possible.

Parents/Caregivers must be contactable at all times and must be available to collect their child immediately if called.
Please provide an alternative contact for instances where no parent/caregiver is contactable.

Pupil Absence – Informing the bus escort

If a pupil becomes ill overnight or at the weekend and is unable to attend on the next school day, the parent/ guardian should contact the bus escort so the school bus need not come unnecessarily to the house. The evening before a pupil returns to school, the parent/ guardian should phone the bus escort to ensure their son/ daughter is collected in the morning.

Pupil Absence – Informing the school

As well as contacting the bus escort, the parent/ guardian must also contact the school office, stating the reason for the child's absence. Ring the school on 01 6856498and leave a voicemail if the phone is unanswered.

This is very important for the following reasons:

- If a child has an illness which is recognised by HSE as an infectious disease, staff, other parents/guardians or the authorities may need to be notified. It is vital that information about an infectious disease is passed to the school as soon as possible.
- The National Educational Welfare Board requires the reason for absence to be recorded
- Child absences may affect how staff members are assigned during the school day.

Covid-19

As of 6th October 2023 no further directive have been issued to schools or Board's of Management surrounding COVID-19 or the appearance of symptoms. Therefore, previous measure are still in place should a student or staff member arrive in school displaying symptoms, and the following procedures are the followed;
If a staff member/ pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while at work in Stepping Stones the following procedures to be implemented:
- If the person with the suspected case if a pupil, the parents/ carer should be contacted immediately.
- If a student or staff member has tested positive for Covid, he/she needs to:
  Stay at home for 5 days
  Avoid contact with other people

Students **should not** attend school if:
- They are showing any signs of Covid 19
- They have a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or more

COVID-19 is an illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus.
Common symptoms of coronavirus include:
- a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
- a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.
Getting an early diagnosis from your GP means you can get the help you need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

Each member in the school community (staff, students, the BOM, parents, clinicians etc.) has an important role to play in slowing and avoiding the transmission of Covid-19.

Please see: https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/if-you-have-covid-19/adults/

If a staff member begins to become unwell in school, they should immediately wear a face covering if they are not already wearing one and go home. If the staff member is too unwell to travel home immediately they will go to the designated isolation room via the designated route until they can be collected.

If a student begins to feel unwell or appears to present with Covid-19 symptoms during school hours they will:
- Go to the isolation room under guidance of the class teacher.
- Staff will attempt maintain a distance of 2 metres from the individual who is unwell in so far as possible and will wear PPE as outlined in the Department's guidelines regarding a suspected case.
- Parent/guardians will be contacted immediately by the class teacher or school administrator to come to the school to collect their child.

https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/preventing-the-spread/child-returning-to-school-or-childcare/

For more information on what to do if your child presents with Covid 19 symptoms please log onto:
https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html

Staff members with symptoms of Covid 19 should test immediately. If they have a positive antigen result they need to send a photo of this to the school administrator and log it on the HSE website. Once it is logged on the HSE website a text message will be generated which also needs to be sent to the school administrator in order to apply for Covid leave.

In addition, staff should familiarise themselves with other preventative measures (including but not limited to hand hygiene etiquette) prior to returning to work.. All staff should practice these measures at all times while at work.

Hay Fever

Symptoms of hay fever include sneezing, eye itching, itchy ear and tickly throat. It can be really easy to mistake hay fever and some of the symptoms of Covid-19, especially when we are all very aware, and being very careful. This list below will help you to spot the key differences between Hay fever and COVID-19.

Hay fever symptoms

Hay fever does not cause a high temperature

If you have any of the following, this is likely to be seasonal hay fever:

- **Runny or blocked nose Sneezing and coughing**

- **Sore eyes**

- **Itchy throat, mouth, nose & ears itchy, red, watering eyes**

- **Reduced sense of smell**

- **Pain around temples & forehead**

- **Headache**

- **Earache**

- **Feeling tired**

- **If you have asthma, symptoms also include a tight feeling in chest, shortness of breath and wheeze and cough**

Allergy symptoms will be milder and can change throughout the day as pollen levels can be higher in the afternoon or evening. Wet weather may give you mild symptoms

Symptoms of Covid-19

If you have any of the following symptoms, then this is more likely to be symptoms of Covid-19:

- **A high temperature - this means hot to touch on your chest or back.**

- **A new persistent cough - this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours.**

- **If you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual.**

- **Loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed**

- **you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.**

- **Headache**

- **Shortness of breath**

- **Sore throat**

- **Aches and pains**

- **Tiredness**

- **Diarrhoea**

- **Some people have reported nausea and a runny nose, but this is rare.**

If a student has symptoms of Covid but is reported by his parents to suffer from Hay fever, the school would need a letter from the doctor stating that he suffers from Hay fever and how their hay fever symptoms would typically present. The school would also require a negative antigen test in order to stay in school.

If the class teacher feels that the students symptoms are getting worse throughout the day and the student is not able to attend to the normal program of daily activities, the students parents will be called to collect them.

High temperature:

A normal temperature is between 36 and 36.8 degrees Celsius. Any temperature of 38 degrees Celsius of above is considered high.

- Temperature will be taken if staff suspect the pupil is unwell.
- If a student presents with a high temperature in school a second temperature will be taken within 20mins after the first.
- the students' parents will be called and asked to collect them
- They cannot return to school until they are 24 hours symptom free (i.e. no temperature for 24 hours)
- If a high temperature is accompanied with any other symptom they cannot return to school until they are 48 hours symptom free (i.e. no temperature for 48 hours and/ or 48 hours after last symptom.)

Other illnesses

In order to maintain a healthy environment within Stepping Stones, we would ask that any child feeling unwell, (e.g. bad coughs, colds, flu, etc) not be sent to school until they are feeling better.

Gastroenteritis is highly infectious and can spread rapidly across the school. We ask that children are kept at home until 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting/diarrhoea.

Any child who has contracted any form of contagious virus, (e.g., chicken pox, German measles, rashes, etc.) must not be sent to school until seen by their G.P. and given a clean bill of health.

For the health and safety of the children, antibiotics cannot be administered in school by any staff member.

The BOM requires absolute adherence to this policy by the entire school community.

If there are queries regarding the above policy, please contact The Board of Management. Otherwise, we would be obliged if you would sign below in acceptance of the above.

_____

I/We, the parents/guardians of _____ agree to abide by the Stepping Stones School Rules as outlined above.

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian   Date

_____   _____

Parent/Guardian   Date