



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# In-person Supplementary Programme to Support the Education or Care Needs of Pupils with Complex Needs

*COVID-19 Guidance for delivering of in-person tuition and personal care*

4 February 2021

## 1. Introduction

This *COVID-19 Guidance for provision of the in-home tuition* is designed to support parents and teachers/SNAs in putting measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The guidance reflects current Department of Health guidance on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

The Department of Health is updating information on Covid-19 on an ongoing basis. To get accurate and up to-date information please consult the HSE's website:  
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html>

Parents and teachers/SNAs must ensure that public health guidance is adhered to at all times.

Please note that if the operation of supplementary in-home tuition cannot be facilitated by you or your teacher the following options are open to you

- **Operation of In-Home Tuition via distance learning**
- **Utilise In-Home Tuition at a later period**  
For further information email [special\\_education@education.gov.ie](mailto:special_education@education.gov.ie)

**This document aims to provide details of:**

- **General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**
- **Special Educational Needs**
- **Control measures**

## 2. Brief background information on COVID-19

The virus which causes COVID-19 spread mainly through respiratory droplets generated by coughing and sneezing, and through contact with surfaces that the droplets have fallen on to. The virus can survive on surfaces at least for some hours and for up to 2 to 3 days in some cases if not removed or destroyed by cleaning or disinfection. People are most likely to spread infection around the time that they start to have symptoms. People with severe disease may be more infectious. Some people have become infected from people before those people had symptoms.

People usually become sick about five to six days after they become infected but people may become sick as early as 1 day after infection or as late as 14 days after infection.

Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease and will recover but some develop more serious illness. People at higher risk of developing more serious illness include older people, people who are immunocompromised and those with certain other medical conditions. Important symptoms of infection include fever, cough, shortness of breath and loss of sense of smell or taste.

Testing for COVID-19 is based on taking a swab from the throat and nose. Only one swab is used to collect both samples, with the throat site sampled first. Testing is agreed and arranged through the person's General Practitioner.

People with a positive COVID-19 test should self-isolate for 10 days from the date of onset of symptoms, the last 5 days of which there must be no fever. If the person had no symptoms of COVID-19 and the test result was positive, then the person should self-isolate for 10 days from the day the test was performed, the last 5 days of which should be fever free also.

Note, however, that if the person requires hospitalisation or is in a residential care facility or a nursing home, then the period of isolation is 14 days with no fever for the last 5 days of that period.

### **3. General advice to prevent the spread of the virus**

Everyone should at all times adhere to the up to date advice and instructions of the public health authorities in relation to protecting oneself and others against the risk posed by the COVID-19 virus.

Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website – <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>.

The most common respiratory symptoms of COVID-19 infection include; a high temperature, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties.

A member of the household, a teacher/SNA displaying these symptoms should immediately inform the parent/teacher/SNA, as appropriate. In-Home-based supplementary provision must not proceed if a member of the household/teacher/SNA has any of the symptoms listed below:

- ✓ High temperature
- ✓ Cough
- ✓ Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- ✓ Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

The following advice is provided to inform parents, students and teachers/SNAs **how to reduce the chance of getting infected by the coronavirus:**

### ***Wash your hands frequently***

Teachers/SNAs will need to perform hand hygiene first and last after each visit to a child's home.

Teachers/SNAs /parents should therefore ensure that there is an adequate supply of alcohol hand rub for all visits.

Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser in line with the health guidance, especially after touching another person or their personal items, after using the toilet and before eating or preparing food.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser kills viruses that may be on your hands.

## ***Face Coverings/Face Visors/Masks***

**It is a requirement for face coverings to be worn by home teachers/SNAs where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from the student, parents, or other family members.**

Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

In home tuition settings, the implementation of mandatory face-covering usage is challenging, as it is known that children will have a lower tolerance and ability to use the face covering properly, and use of face-coverings by teachers/SNAs for very young children may cause undue stress to the children.

It is not recommended that primary school aged children wear face-coverings.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Primary school children
- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

All teachers/SNAs wearing face coverings are reminded to not touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.

Information should on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings is available at

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.

Parents/ teachers/SNAs should consider having additional disposable face coverings available in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

### ***Physical distancing***

For children with special educational needs (SEN) maintaining physical distancing in many instances is not practicable. Parents whose child is availing of the in-home supplementary tuition are therefore asked to maintain an awareness of signs, symptoms or changes which might suggest illness/COVID-19 infection and, where symptoms are present, home-based tuition should not take place.

Similarly, teachers/SNAs should be aware of their responsibility not to attend to provide the in-home-based supplementary tuition if they develop signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

### ***Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth***

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.

### ***Practice respiratory hygiene***

Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. Then perform hand hygiene measures.

By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

Good hygiene practices and washing your hands properly and regularly can help stop the spread of the virus. It is, therefore, crucial that everyone in the household adhere to this advice and adopt the following practices as strictly as possible.

#### **Do**

- Wash your hands properly and often
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze
- Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

**Do Not**

- Touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- Share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups, cutlery, etc.

**You should wash your hands:**

- After coughing or sneezing
- Before and after eating
- Before and after preparing food
- If you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- Before and after being on public transport
- Before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- When you arrive and leave buildings
- If your hands are dirty
- After toilet use

For advice from HSE on how to wash your hands the following link will be helpful:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

**People at very high risk (extremely vulnerable):**

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are defined as being at very high risk.

The list of people in very high risk groups include people who:

- are over 70 years of age – even if you're fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for [cancer](#)
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, [severe asthma](#), pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and [severe COPD](#)
- have a condition that means you have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are [taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections](#) (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and you are pregnant

The advice for this group is available from the HSE. It is not envisaged that anyone considered very high risk would deliver in-home supplementary tuition.

#### **4. Control Measures**

A range of essential control measures should be implemented to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 virus and to protect the safety, health and welfare of the teacher and members of the household as far as possible.

##### **General**

- Teachers/SNAs should work consistently with the same household(s)
- Teachers/SNAs should be aware of the common symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath and loss of taste/smell) and that if they have symptoms of infection including COVID-19 should not provide the service
- Families should inform the teacher/SNA as soon as possible if any member of the family has a new cough, temperature or shortness of breath

##### **Hand Hygiene**

Children who are unable to wash their hands by themselves should be assisted to clean their hands using either soap and water or a hand sanitiser.

##### **Equipment**

Some children may have care needs (physical or behavioural) which require the use of aids and appliance and/or medical equipment for example toileting aids, moving and handling equipment, respiratory equipment. Where this equipment is kept in the home, parents should ensure that it is cleaned regularly and in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

##### **Cleaning**

Regular and thorough cleaning of frequently touched surfaces should be conducted in particular, toilets, door handles, etc. Cleaning should be performed regularly and whenever facilities or surfaces are visibly dirty.

The work area which is being used for home tuition should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after use each day.

##### **Before entering the student's home:**

- The teacher/SNA should confirm that the child and members of the child's household have no symptoms of COVID-19
- The teacher/SNA should confirm that no member of the household has been asked to restrict their movements or self-isolate because of Covid-19 concerns
- The teacher/SNA should confirm to the family that they have no signs or symptoms of Covid-19 and they have not been asked to isolate or restrict their movements
- Confirm that companion animals/pets are contained securely.

##### **On arrival to student's home:**

- The teacher/SNA should perform hand hygiene with soap and water or with hand sanitiser if their hands are visibly clean on arrival and when leaving the house

- The teacher/SNA should bring a limited number of the items that they expect to use into each child's home
- The teacher/SNA should bring only the minimum necessary personal items into the child's home. Where it is necessary for the teacher/SNA to bring personal items with them, they should try to avoid using them in the child's home and minimise any contact between the child and the teacher/SNA personal items. If the teacher/SNA brings a mobile phone into the student's home, they should try to avoid using the phone during the visit and if use is unavoidable they should remember to clean the mobile after leaving the premises.

#### **During the visit:**

- The teacher/SNA should remember not to touch their face (eyes, nose or mouth) with their hands
- The teacher/SNA should try and maintain a physical distance of 2m from adults in the house where possible
- It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by home teachers/SNAs where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from the student, parents, or other family members  
Public health guidance on the use of face coverings is available at this link – <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>
- Gloves are not required and should only be worn when delivering personal care

#### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when delivering personal care**

- When teachers/SNAs are within 2m of a pupil and to whom they are delivering personal care or attention for a period of time the face covering should normally be a surgical mask. If surgical mask is not available a medical mask or cloth face covering should be used. If for any reason use of these coverings is not practical, teachers/SNAs should use a visor of a quality suitable for use in a healthcare setting. **HPSC advice is that a visor does not provide protection equivalent to a mask.**
- Mask and visors should be donned and doffed and disposed of as demonstrated in videos available at <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/pppe/> Masks should be removed and disposed of if they are wet or damaged. Masks should be removed and disposed of if going on a break or visiting the toilet.
- Gloves and aprons should only be used when delivering personal care
- If providing care that involves specific risk of exposure to blood or body fluids (oral fluids, faeces, urine) use of gloves and a disposable plastic apron is appropriate. These must be removed and disposed of safely and hand hygiene performed after caring for each individual. Note with respect to faeces and urine the risk of infection is related to other infectious organisms rather than COVID-19.
- Hand hygiene should be performed before donning and after removing gloves.
- If providing care that involves a risk of splashing of body fluids a visor is required to protect the eyes from splashing even if already wearing a surgical mask.
- Used PPE is generally discarded directly into domestic waste.
- PPE used when attending to a person with suspected COVID-19 while waiting for collection can be placed in a separate plastic bag, which is then placed in domestic waste.



**After the visit:**

- The teacher/SNA should ensure that any items that have been used by the child are appropriately cleaned and if necessary disinfected before using it in another household.