



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## Maintaining Physical Distance in the Classroom

### Checklist for Primary Schools & Special Schools

### Roadmap for the Full Return to School

6<sup>th</sup> August 2020

## **Guidance and Checklist**

In implementing the public health advice to maintain physical distancing in the classroom, primary schools and special schools should:

- Re-configure class spaces to maximise physical distancing;
- Utilise and reconfigure all available spaces in order to maximise physical distancing.

A range of Guidance documentation has been prepared by the Department to assist schools with their reopening. This includes classroom drawings to demonstrate how physical distancing can be achieved. The link to these documents is <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a128d-back-to-school/>.

The following checklist of potential actions is provided to help primary schools in this process, recognising that schools themselves are best place to decide on the appropriate configuration for their school given that each school setting is different in terms of (i) location; (ii) physical layout; (iii) available space within the school; (iv) pupil numbers; (v) class configuration and (vi) ease of potential access to space outside the school.

## **Reconfigure class spaces to maximize physical distancing**

<b>Measure</b>	
a. Any unnecessary cabinets, furniture etc. have been removed to maximise the space in the classroom	
b. Consideration given to providing a central storage area in the schools for teacher resources which can help maximise the space available within the classroom	
c. Desks and chairs in classrooms reconfigured to maximise physical distancing as best as possible (see Department's illustrative layouts which provide guidance on how best to maximise physical distancing and a similar type approach can be followed as best as possible for different sized classes and classrooms).	
d. Treat each classroom as a Class Bubble. In smaller primary schools, this may include pupils across a number of class years. The key point is to limit contact and sharing of common facilities between people in different Class Bubbles	
e. The creation of Pods within Class Bubbles is <u>an additional measure rather than an absolute requirement</u> . If it is necessary to divide a class bubble into a Pod, design the size of the Pod as small as possible as is reasonably practical in the specific classroom context. Keep a 1 metre distance between Pod within the Class Bubble, and <u>wherever possible</u> , between individuals within the Pod. (See Department's illustrative layouts)	

## **Utilise and reconfigure all available spaces in order to maximise physical distancing**

<b>Measure</b>	
a. Classes from 3 <sup>rd</sup> Class upward are allocated to the largest classrooms (as, in line with the public health advice, achieving a 1 metre distance in the classroom for Junior & Senior Infants, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> class is not a pre-requisite for re-opening a primary school for all pupils)	
b. Review utilisation of all rooms and areas within the school to maximise the opportunities within the footprint of the school building for achieving a full return to school – which is the overall national priority. This may involve utilising all available largest spaces (such as assembly area, GP Rooms. Multi-purpose rooms etc.) to accommodate larger classes.	

## **Accessing available spaces within the local Community**

If the above actions are in themselves not sufficient to maintain physical distance in the classroom in line with the *Roadmap for the Full Return to School*, **consider accessing available spaces in the local community if practicable.**

If after the implementation of all the above measures, a primary school continues to have difficulties in maintaining physical distancing in the classroom in line with the public health advice, please call our dedicated school reopening helpline on 057 9324461 or email at [reopeningschools@education.gov.ie](mailto:reopeningschools@education.gov.ie)