To inform teaching and learning and identify pupils for additional support, teachers should make use of:

- Teacher observation
- Questioning
- Pupil conferencing
- Teacher-designed tasks
- Reports from parents
- The views of pupils

For most pupils, priority needs emerging from the period of remote learning will be addressed at the Classroom Support Stage of the Continuum of Support through carefully monitored and differentiated learning activities and targeted team-teaching. SETs should collaborate with class teachers to adjust and reprioritise their timetables to ensure support is targeted at pupils with greatest need.

Screening and/or diagnostic tests to identify the needs of pupils who require more intensive and individualised support at the School Support Stage should only be carried out when the pupils have had adequate time to settle back to school routine.

Where possible, engage with teachers and SNAs who delivered the in-person supplementary programme to gather appropriate information about the needs / progress of relevant pupils.

Practical supports and guidance for special education teaching are available from the National Council for Special Education at: https://ncse.ie/online-resources
Returning to school
Guidance for teaching and learning
3rd class - 6th class
March 2021

Promoting safe working and learning environments


Reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 within the school by:

- Promoting awareness of symptoms for all school personnel, pupils, families and visitors
- Advising teachers and staff not to attend work and to self-isolate if unwell or identified as a close contact
- Thoroughly cleaning frequently used surfaces such as table-tops, door handles and frequently used items such as concrete materials and digital devices
- Restricting the number of visitors to the school to essential visits that have been pre-planned
- Creating / reinforcing pod and bubble systems to avoid unnecessary interaction between pupils
- Continuing to remind parents not to send their children to school if they or other household members have suspected/confirmed COVID-19
- Continuing to promote good hygiene, face coverings where needed, and respiratory etiquette with reminders throughout the school
- Carefully managing shared spaces such as staffrooms and corridors, and reminding staff and pupils of social distancing requirements
- Being vigilant and promoting social distancing at arrival and pick-up times and discouraging the congregation of pupils / parents at the school gates at any stage during the day.

Digital technologies

Digital skills acquired as a result of remote learning experiences should continue to be developed and enhanced as pupils return to school.

- Use digital portfolios developed during school closures to provide constructive feedback for improving learning outcomes for pupils, and to support self-assessment strategies
- Maximise opportunities to develop digital skills to enable pupils to use the features of online platforms to their full potential
- Create opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively on digital tasks which involve locating, selecting and critically analysing relevant information and then creating, sharing and discussing their work
- Continue to use digital technology to support partnership and communication about learning between the school and the home
- Consider using digital recordings of learning materials, including songs, rhymes, poems, phrases and reading samples to encourage and facilitate learning at home

Further support at: pdst.ie/DistanceLearning/DigTech

Frequently asked questions

- How should special education teachers best organise support for pupils with SEN?
  SETs should provide support for those with greatest need, including those who have emerging needs arising from school closures, and make optimal use of the available space and teaching resources, while adhering to all social distancing and hygiene requirements.
- How can the performance strand of the music curriculum be safely progressed?
  Singing and playing wind instruments (including tin whistle and recorder) in the classroom should be avoided. It can take place outside, weather permitting, when pupils are socially distanced from each other.
- Can external coaches support learning in PE?
  The use of an external coach or tutor is at the discretion of the board of management, who must satisfy itself that these visitors are Garda vetted, adhere to public health advice, are trained by their governing bodies with regard to COVID-19 and fully implement the school’s COVID-19 response plan.
- How should break and lunch times be managed?
  Pupils should remain in bubble structures, separate from other bubbles. Schools should be very vigilant in this regard. If necessary, breaktimes should be staggered to support this.
- Can student teachers continue to work with classes?
  Yes, subject to board approval. They should follow the same health and safety guidance as all school staff.