

Survey on COVID-19 contact tracing in schools and preschools, Rep of Ireland

Conducted between Feb 12-14th 2021, amongst school community members across the Republic of Ireland, via a short online survey

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Executive summary

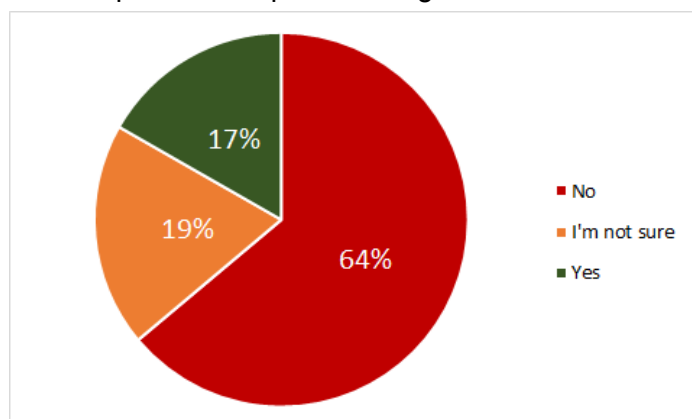
This short survey was conducted as a means to gather sentiment, in school communities across Ireland, regarding contact tracing and general handling of COVID-19 cases in schools.

The online survey was conducted over the period of Feb 12th-14th, 2021, reaching a wide-ranging group of parents, school staff, students, etc, interested in sharing their experiences.

2,870 surveys were returned, and the key results are listed in the Survey Results section. 1,110 personal experience testimonials submitted in the surveys (redacted to exclude identifiable information) are included in the appendix.

The general sense gathered from this survey, and demonstrated in the testimonials, is that school communities across Ireland do not believe that school buildings are safe for students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic (in the school year 2020/21).

As a whole, only 17% of respondents reported being confident that schools are safe:



The report writers recommend that these findings and testimonials, in combination with the Parents United Investigative 'Safety in Schools' Report, are used to inform the Dept of Education and Dept of Health leadership, as they plan the reopening of schools in the Republic of Ireland in the spring of 2021.

*"This is a silent emergency, and it requires a dynamic response.
Schools must be made safe, as a matter of urgency. Adequate space,
appropriate ventilation, mask wearing, even for older primary school children.*

Prioritisation of vaccination for teachers, at a minimum those with underlying health conditions. Robust support from adequately resourced public health consultants. Rapid antigen testing for older children and teachers. "

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-40228529.html>

Background and objectives

The Facebook (FB) group “[Alerting Parents of Outbreaks in Schools Ireland](#)” was created in August of 2020, with the purpose of informing parents of COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in schools and childcare settings across Ireland. The reason this was necessary was due to the rule that, as parents, we wouldn't be informed of COVID-19 cases in these settings, unless your child was deemed a close contact. The lack of transparency on COVID-19 cases in schools has been a stressor for all parties involved, as detailed in this investigation: [Covid in schools: Daily data on cases in schools badly needed – L'Ecrivain Reticent \(wordpress.com\)](#)

The aim of the group was to give parents and school staff with high-risk family members the chance to make an informed decision, being aware of confirmed cases in these settings, on whether to send their children into school, or to keep them home.

The group is managed by five administrators, all parents who are concerned about the safety of said school settings. We all play a very important role in the verification of cases submitted to the group, and in the collection of data.

The page has been hailed for its transparency of COVID-19 cases, and raising awareness for parents, teachers & school staff across the board. As a result, it has a huge following of over 127,500 members. We've been referenced in national newspapers and radio shows, and Dr Tony Holohan has brought us up as a source of information on RTE.

The members include parents, grandparents, school staff, HSE staff and journalists. The group is as diverse as you can imagine, with sometimes diametrically opposed goals, e.g. parents might want their children back in school, while school staff are afraid of returning back to work. Our role as admins has revolved around building a supportive community during this stressful time.

Our focus has been to guide the members towards:

- discussing issues openly,
- leaning on valid data sources and updated information, and
- accepting, more importantly, that people come to this situation from very different perspectives.

We were approached by two members of Parents United, Olive O'Connor and Deirdre Gilhawley, who are conducting an investigative report on the safety in schools in Ireland during a global pandemic. The investigative report, namely, ***'There is Nothing Positive About Positivity Rates in Schools'*** applied the principles of Public Patient Involvement (PPI).

The researchers listened, engaged, included and involved parents, guardians, caregivers, school staff, students, children and those attending schools in this project with an aim to discuss and learn of people's experiences since schools in Ireland reopened in August 2020.

Survey method

Survey type

Two versions of the online survey were built, as the earlier survey on SurveyMonkey quickly reached the maximum of responses allowed (1,000 surveys per month). A second survey was built, using the same questions and options, using Google Forms.

The survey questions and answer options were matched between both surveys, so as to reduce bias in the responses. This cloning of survey methods also allowed for an easy compilation of the responses received in both surveys, to compile the charts below.

10 questions were listed, with an optional final chance for respondents to add their personal experience of how COVID-19 cases have been handled in their school, in their own words. Full list of questions and answer options in the appendix.

Sampling

Due to time constraints, the sampling method used was a non-probability method of convenience sampling. The team sought to understand, in a quantitative and qualitative manner, the real-life experience in schools of the contact tracing policies set out by the HSE, between Sept and Dec 2020. This sampling method may lead to skewed results, but we suggest that this could constitute the preliminary stages of research in this area.

The survey was launched on Friday 12th February to all of the Alerting Parents FB group members ([Alerting parents of outbreaks in schools "Ireland 🍀" 🍀 | Facebook](#)), as the group contains a broad range of school community members across Ireland, due to its stated goals (listed in the Background section). The survey was also shared outside of the group via social media (e.g. on Twitter [Martina B #TogetherWeStandForOurSchools \(@MartinaBroe1\) / Twitter](#)), and through messaging apps by Parents United, as well as Alerting Parents, group members sharing it with other interested parties outside of the FB group.

Responses were voluntary and anonymous, submitted by group members who wanted to share their experiences regarding contact tracing in schools. Group members were also encouraged to share the survey within their school community to help parents, school staff, and students have their voices heard.

The survey was due to be open for 24 hours, but after seeing the impact of the testimonials received, response collection was extended to a total of 50 hours (until Sunday 14th Feb at midnight).

Survey results

Between both survey platforms, 2,870 surveys were returned:

- 989 surveys were entered into SurveyMonkey, and
- 1,881 surveys were completed on Google Forms

Dashboard My Surveys Plans & Pricing **UPGRADE**

COVID-19 Contact Tracing in schools and preschools - Rep. of Ireland

SUMMARY → DESIGN SURVEY → PREVIEW & SCORE → COLLECT RESPONSES → **ANALYZE RESULTS** → PRESENT RESULTS

RULES ?

+ FILTER + COMPARE + SHOW

No rules applied ?

Rules allow you to **FILTER**, **COMPARE** and **SHOW** results to see trends and patterns.

[Learn more »](#)

RESPONDENTS: 989 of 989

QUESTION SUMMARIES **INSIGHTS AND DATA TREE**

All Pages ▼

Insights

TOTAL RESPONSES 989	COMPLETION RATE ? 77%	TYPICAL TIME SPENT 2m:19s
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COVID-19 Contact Tracing in schools and preschools - Rep. of Ireland All changes saved in Drive

Questions **Responses 1,881**

1,881 responses

Not accepting responses ☐

Message for respondents

Many thanks for your support, we are now building the report based on surveys received between Feb 12-14

Summary Question Individual

Are you a
1,881 responses

Out of the 2,870 combined surveys, a small number were excluded from the results:

- 83 of the SurveyMonkey surveys didn't get past the first or second questions, and were deemed to contain too little information to be included - *marked as Incomplete*
- 4 of the Google Form surveys were submitted twice. In this case, only one of each survey response was included in the figures, while the other was *marked as Duplicate*.

Going forward, only the valid sample data from **2,783 responses** will be included below.

Survey respondents

Respondents had the option to list the county that their (child's) school is based in. 199 abstained (7% of valid sample), which gave us a chance to confirm a sample of responses coming from all 26 counties.

To ensure the survey was representative, we compared response rates by county against the total reported school enrolment figures provided by the Department of Education ([Data on Individual Schools - Department of Education and Skills](#))

Response from county	Survey count	Student count (Jun 2020)	Representation %
Carlow	43	13852	0.31%
Cavan	28	15882	0.18%
Clare	43	22073	0.19%
Cork	251	107397	0.23%
Donegal	70	31956	0.22%
Dublin	737	236815	0.31%
Galway	133	50971	0.26%
Kerry	70	27118	0.26%
Kildare	163	49612	0.33%
Kilkenny	52	19487	0.27%
Laois	40	17450	0.23%
Leitrim	7	6406	0.11%
Limerick	124	39350	0.32%
Longford	17	9438	0.18%
Louth	98	30456	0.32%
Mayo	69	24912	0.28%
Meath	168	42826	0.39%
Monaghan	30	13341	0.22%
Offaly	36	16262	0.22%
Roscommon	30	11906	0.25%
Sligo	26	12875	0.20%
Tipperary	61	32802	0.19%
Waterford	53	23974	0.22%
Westmeath	52	20008	0.26%
Wexford	86	31819	0.27%
Wicklow	97	30178	0.32%
Not listed	199	N/A	N/A
Grand Total	2783	939166	0.30%

Respondents were also asked in which capacity they were completing the survey, from options listed below. This question allowed for multiple choices, e.g. a parent who is also a school member of staff could pick two or more roles:

- Student

- Parent, guardian and/or caregiver
- *Primary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
- *Secondary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
- *Preschool* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
- Other... [free field]

These options, combined with the free field answers, meant that the surveys represented 65 distinct groups of respondents.

In order to represent these in charts, we've clustered these according to the following logic:

1. Any surveys listing one role were logged as follows
 - a. Student → **Student**
 - b. Parent, guardian and/or caregiver → **Parent**
 - c. *Primary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc → **Primary school staff**
 - d. *Secondary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc → **Secondary school staff**
 - e. *Preschool* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc → **Preschool staff**
 - f. When respondents noted that they worked in a Special school in the free field → **Special school staff**
2. If 2 or more roles were selected, they were summarised as follows:
 - a. Parent/school staff
 - b. Parent/preschool staff
 - c. Student/parent/staff
 - d. Parent/special school staff
 - e. Student/parent
 - f. Student/staff
 - g. Student/preschool staff
 - h. Primary & secondary school staff
 - i. Preschool & primary school staff

{14 of these 15 groups are represented in the testimonials received, available to read in the appendix}

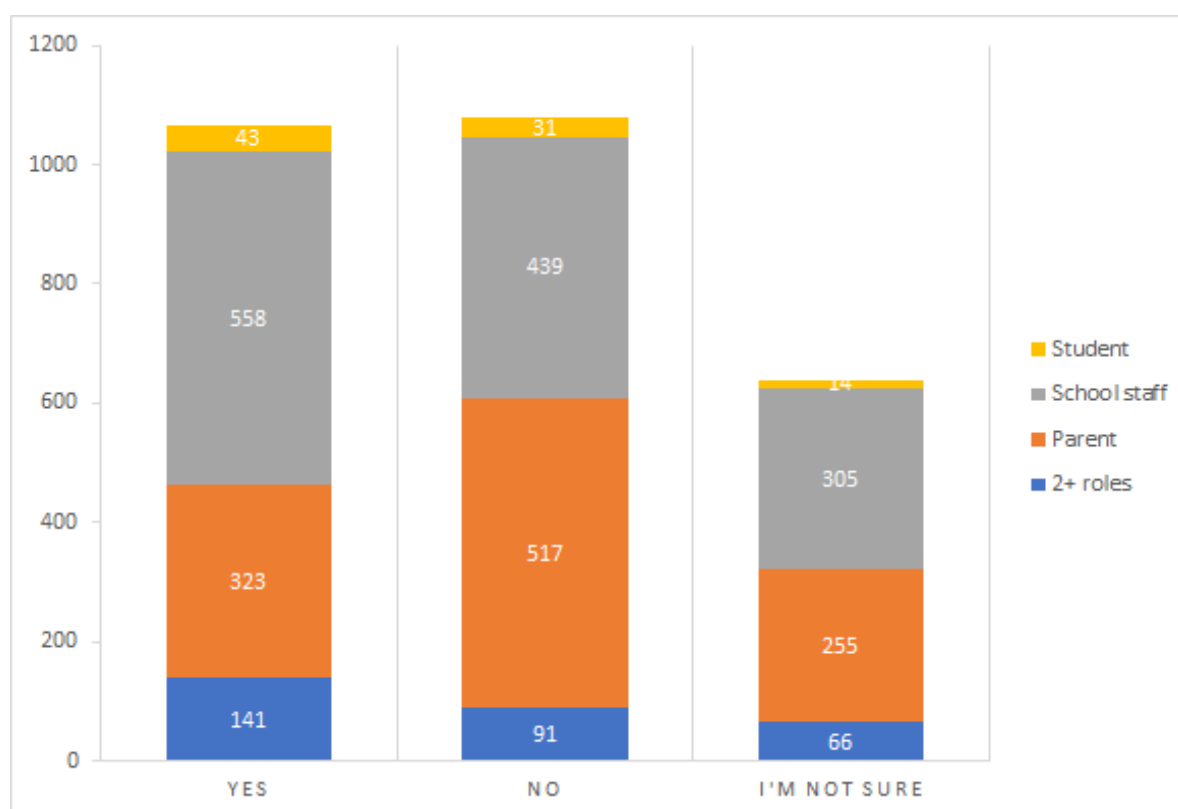
As this still constituted 15 clusters, these were further grouped as follows in the graphs:

Survey from - grouped	Survey from	Survey count
2+ roles	Parent/school staff	234
	Parent/preschool staff	47
	Student/parent/staff	4
	Parent/special school staff	4
	Student/parent	3
	Student/staff	3
	Student/preschool staff	1
	Primary & secondary school staff	1
	Preschool & primary school staff	1
2+ roles Total		298
Parent	Parent	1095
Parent Total		1095
School staff	Primary school staff	770
	Secondary school staff	416
	Preschool staff	84
	Special school staff	32
School staff Total		1302
Student	Student	88
Student Total		88
Grand Total		2783

On being a close contact

Question: Have you, or someone you live with, ever been in an enclosed space in a school (e.g. classroom), for more than 15 mins, with someone who received a positive COVID-19 test?

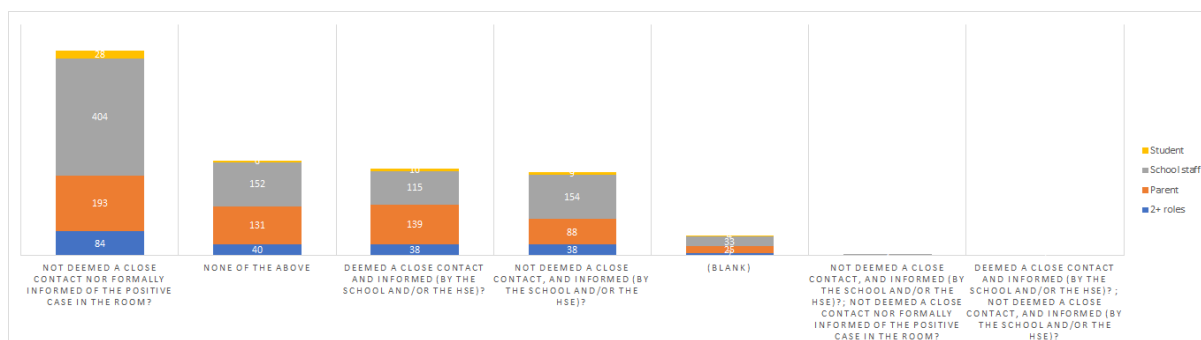
Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
Yes	141	323	558	43	1065
No	91	517	439	31	1078
I'm not sure	66	255	305	14	640
Grand Total	298	1095	1302	88	2783



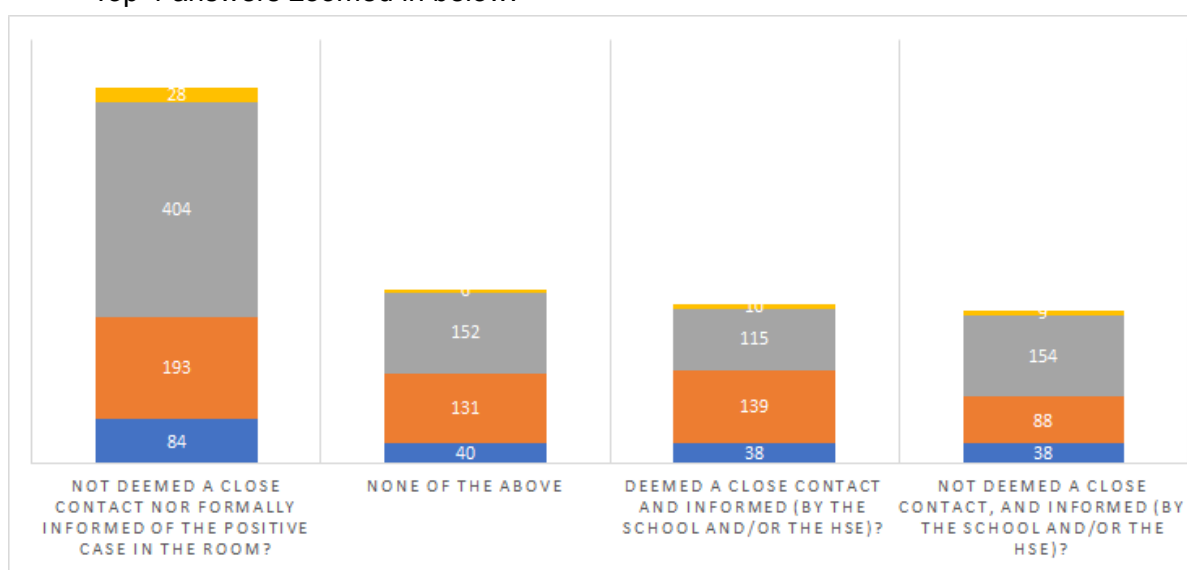
Question: If Yes or Not sure, were you

Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
not deemed a close contact nor formally informed of the positive case in the room?	84	193	404	28	709
None of the above	40	131	152	6	329
deemed a close contact and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)?	38	139	115	10	302
not deemed a close contact, and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)?	38	88	154	9	289
(blank)	7	25	33	4	69
not deemed a close contact, and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)?; not deemed a close contact nor formally informed of the positive case in the room?		2	3		5
deemed a close contact and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)? ; not deemed a close contact, and informed			2		2

(by the school and/or the HSE)?					
Grand Total	207	578	863	57	1705



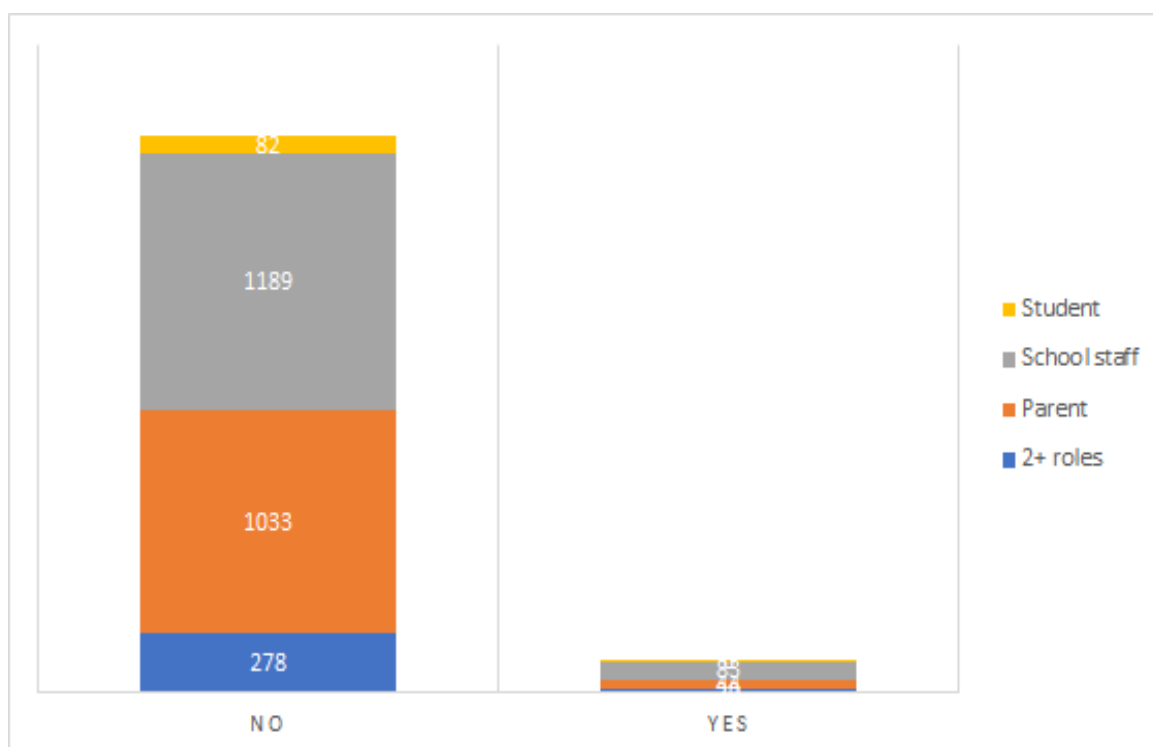
Top 4 answers zoomed in below:



On testing for COVID-19

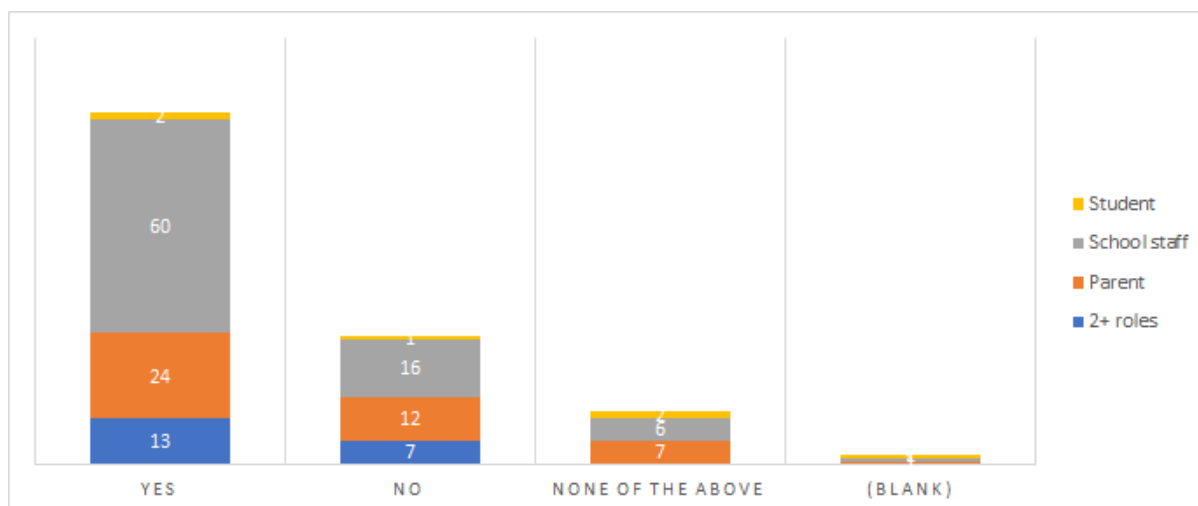
*Question: Have you, or someone you live with, ever received a positive COVID-19 test, and been symptomatic *while in school*?*

Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
No	278	1033	1189	82	2582
Yes	20	44	83	6	153
Grand Total	298	1077	1272	88	2735



Question: If Yes, during the contact tracing process, were you told that the positive test was not associated with the school, or related activities (e.g. school bus, canteen, etc)?

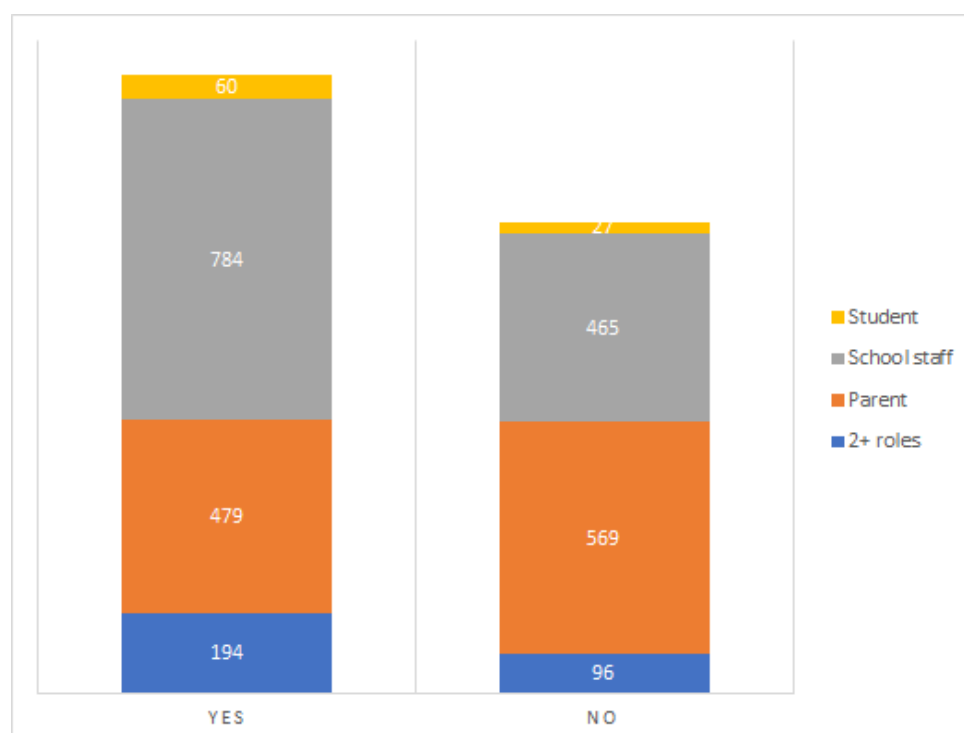
Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
Yes	13	24	60	2	99
No	7	12	16	1	36
None of the above		7	6	2	15
(blank)		1	1	1	3
Grand Total	20	44	83	6	153



On finding out informally about cases in the school community

Question: Did you find out from someone else (not through official school or HSE communication) that there was one (or more) positive case(s) in the school?

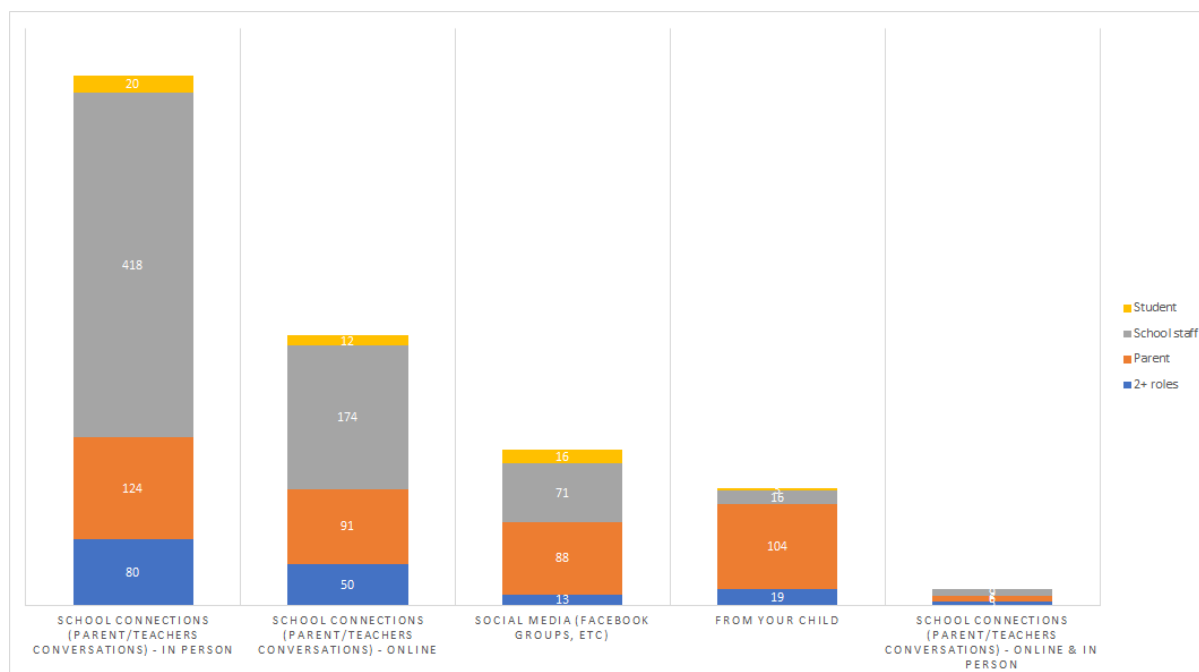
Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
Yes	194	479	784	60	1517
No	96	569	465	27	1157
Grand Total	290	1048	1249	87	2674



Question: If Yes, how did you find out about the positive case? Did you hear/read about it through:

128 answer options were listed for this question, from 1,517 responses. While a full list of these (including response counts), are noted in the appendix, the top 5 most popular answers, representing 87% of all responses, are below:

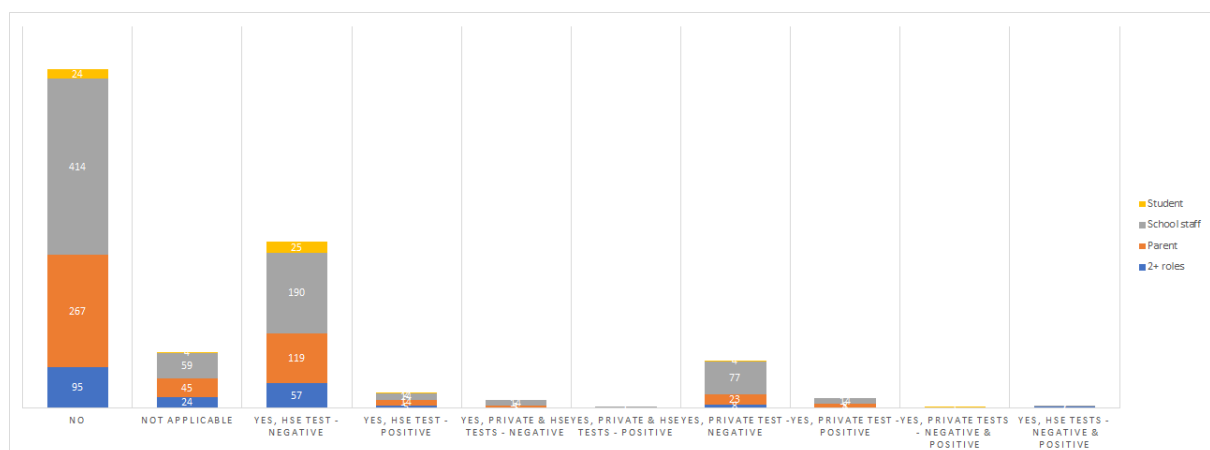
Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - in person	80	124	418	20	642
School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online	50	91	174	12	327
Social media (Facebook groups, etc)	13	88	71	16	188
From your child	19	104	16	3	142
School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online & in person	5	6	9		20
Grand Total	167	413	688	51	1319



Question: As a result, have you, or someone you live with, taken a COVID-19 test?

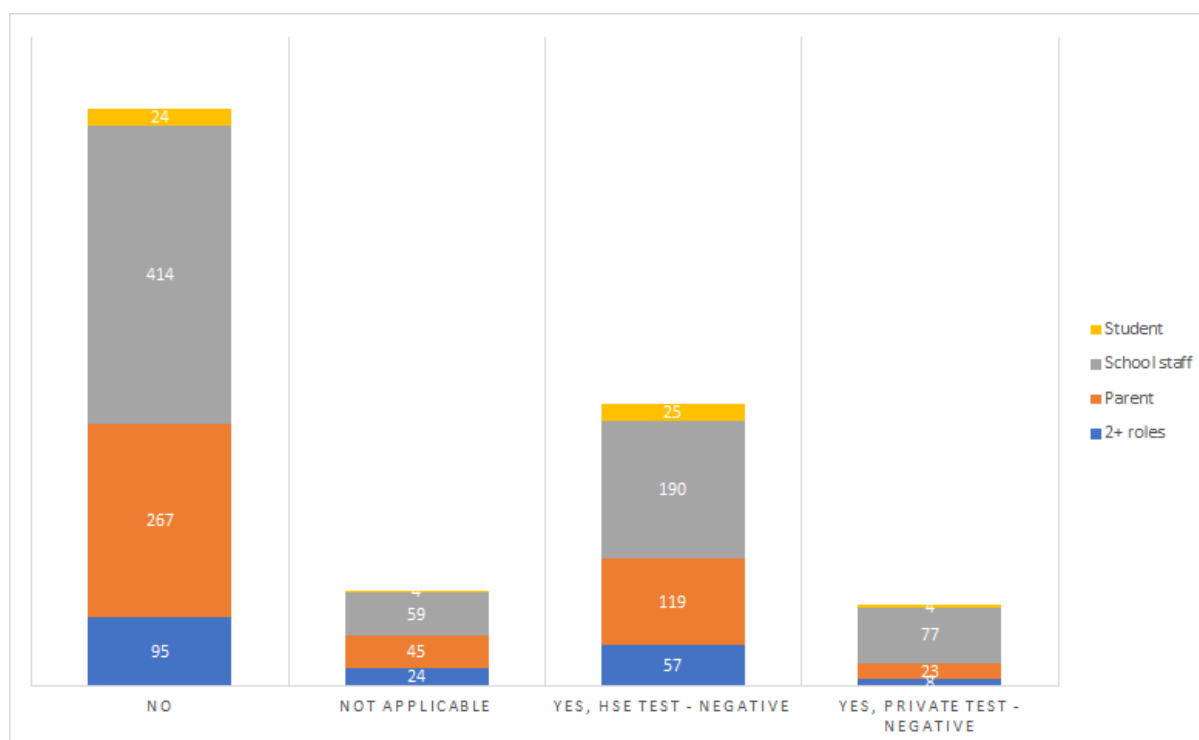
Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
No	95	267	414	24	800

Not applicable	24	45	59	4	132
Yes, HSE test - negative	57	119	190	25	391
Yes, HSE test - positive	5	14	14	2	35
Yes, private & HSE tests - negative	1	3	14		18
Yes, private & HSE tests - positive	1		1		2
Yes, private test - negative	8	23	77	4	112
Yes, private test - positive	1	8	14		23
Yes, private tests - negative & positive				1	1
Yes, HSE tests - negative & positive	2		1		3
Grand Total	194	479	784	60	1517



The top 4 answers to this question, representing 95% of respondents, were:

Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
No	95	267	414	24	800
Not applicable	24	45	59	4	132
Yes, HSE test - negative	57	119	190	25	391
Yes, private test - negative	8	23	77	4	112
Grand Total	184	454	740	57	1435

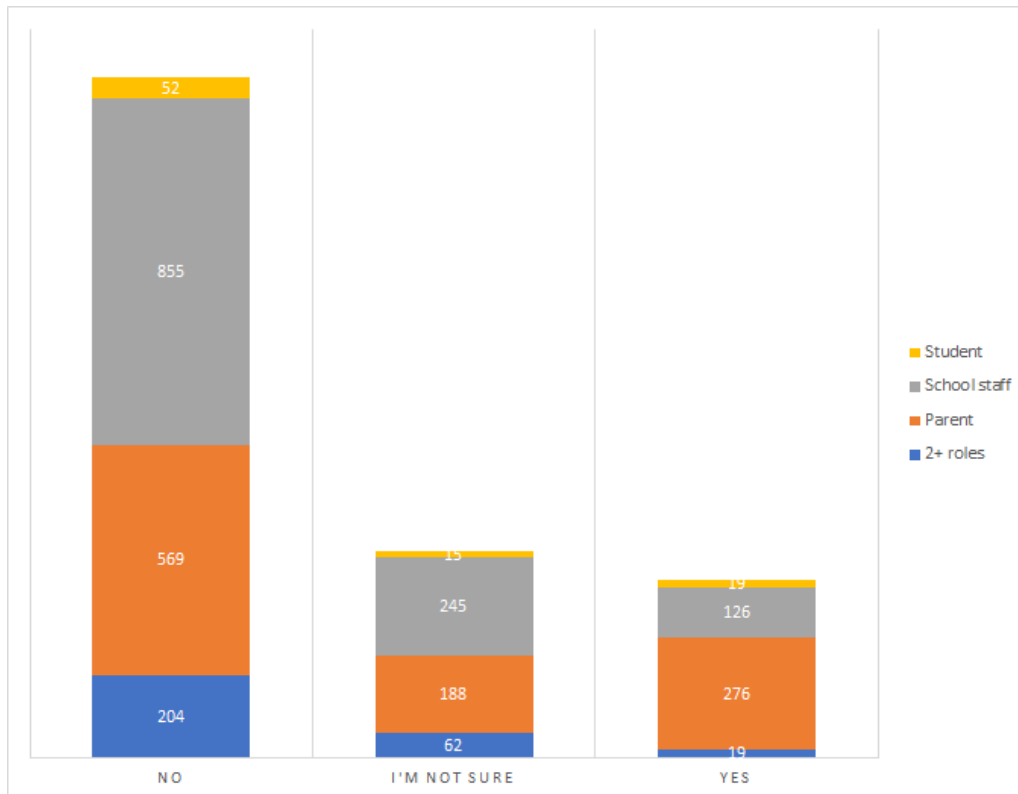


Perceived school safety during the COVID-19 pandemic

Question: Do you believe that schools are safe for students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic (in the school year 2020/21)?

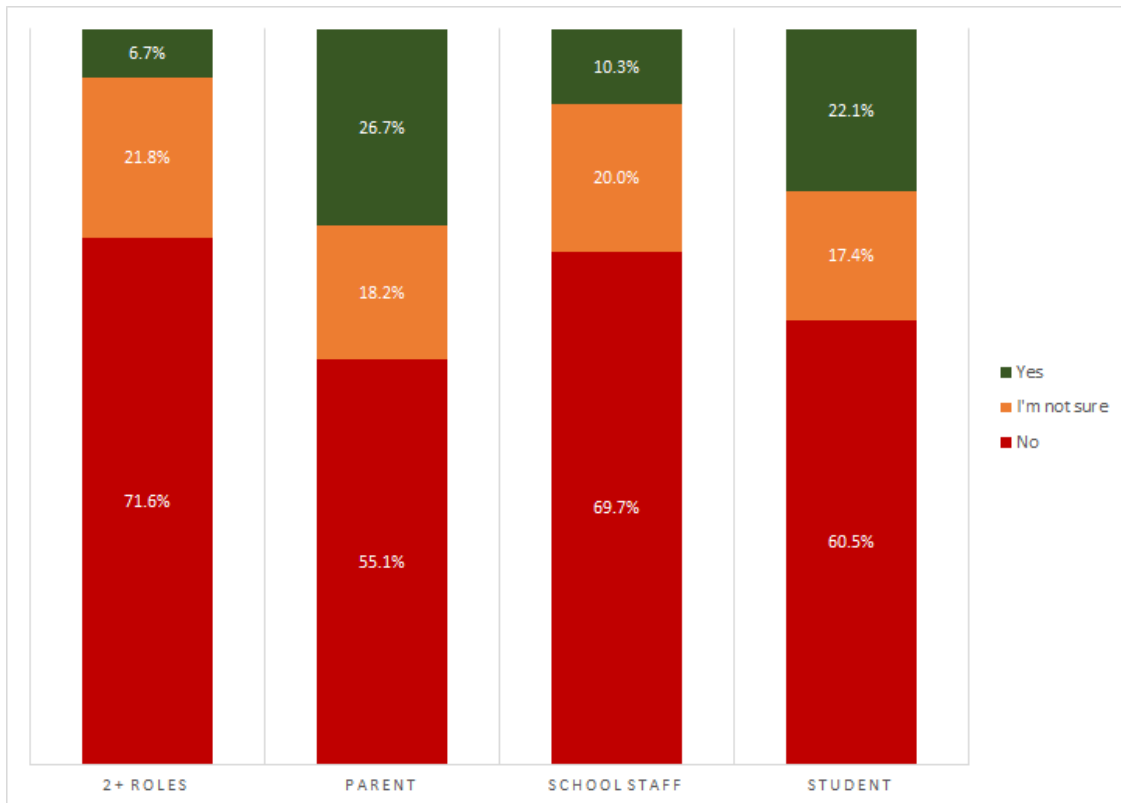
153 of the responses here were blank (5%), so they have been excluded from the graphs.

Row Labels	2+ roles	Parent	School staff	Student	Grand Total
No	204	569	855	52	1680
I'm not sure	62	188	245	15	510
Yes	19	276	126	19	440
Grand Total	285	1033	1226	86	2630



Below is a representation of how confident the different groups are about how safe schools are during the pandemic. The least confident group are those with 2 or more roles (e.g. parents who are also school staff), while the most confident are parents.

Row Labels	No	I'm not sure	Yes
2+ roles	71.6%	21.8%	6.7%
Parent	55.1%	18.2%	26.7%
School staff	69.7%	20.0%	10.3%
Student	60.5%	17.4%	22.1%
Grand Total	63.9%	19.4%	16.7%



Testimonials received - summary

Question: Please add your personal experience of how COVID-19 cases have been handled in your school

1,111 testimonials were submitted, though one stipulated it should not be published, and was redacted. These are organised in groups:

- Parent: 425
- Parent/preschool staff: 19
- Parent/school staff: 115
- Parent/special school staff: 3
- Preschool & primary school staff: 1
- Preschool staff: 28
- Primary school staff: 301
- Secondary school staff: 167
- Special school staff: 21
- Student: 23
- Student/parent: 1
- Student/parent/staff: 3
- Student/preschool staff: 1
- Student/staff: 2

As the full list spans over 100 pages, the redacted testimonials have been made available to read in the appendix section (efforts were made to redact locations, school names, and other elements which could remove anonymity, from responses).

Appendix

Survey Questions and Options

- Are you a (please select all valid options)
 - Student
 - Parent, guardian and/or caregiver
 - *Primary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
 - *Secondary school* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
 - *Preschool* Member of staff - teacher, principal, SNA, SET, bus driver, cleaner, admin, etc
 - Other... [free field]
- (optional) Which county is your (child's) school based in? [dropdown with all 26 counties]
- Have you, or someone you live with, ever been in an enclosed space in a school (e.g. classroom), for more than 15 mins, with someone who received a positive COVID-19 test?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure
- If Yes or Not sure, were you
 - deemed a close contact and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)?
 - not deemed a close contact, and informed (by the school and/or the HSE)?
 - not deemed a close contact nor formally informed of the positive case in the room?
 - None of the above
- Have you, or someone you live with, ever received a positive COVID-19 test, and been symptomatic *while in school*?
 - Yes
 - No
- If Yes, during the contact tracing process, were you told that the positive test was not associated with the school, or related activities (e.g. school bus, canteen, etc)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - None of the above
- Did you find out from someone else (not through official school or HSE communication) that there was one (or more) positive case(s) in the school?
 - Yes
 - No
- If Yes, how did you find out about the positive case? Did you hear/read about it through:
 - School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online
 - School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - in person
 - Social media (Facebook groups, etc)
 - News media (newspapers, radio, TV...)

- From your child
- None of the above
- Other... [free field]
- As a result, have you, or someone you live with, taken a COVID-19 test?
 - No
 - Yes, private test - negative
 - Yes, private test - positive
 - Yes, HSE test - negative
 - Yes, HSE test - positive
 - Not applicable
- Do you believe that schools are safe for students and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic (in the school year 2020/21)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I'm not sure
- (optional) Please add your personal experience of how COVID-19 cases have been handled in your school
 - [free field]

Informal methods of communication used to share COVID-19 cases in schools - 1,517 responses, 128 options

- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - in person: 642
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online: 327
- ☐ Social media (Facebook groups, etc): 188
- ☐ From your child: 142
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online & in person: 20
- ☐ None of the above: 19
- ☐ (blank): 17
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - in person; Social media (Facebook groups, etc): 12
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online; Social media (Facebook groups, etc): 11
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online & in person; Social media (Facebook groups, etc): 11
- ☐ Students : 4
- ☐ News media (newspapers, radio, TV...): 3
- ☐ Students: 2
- ☐ Other students: 2
- ☐ School connection and facebook: 2
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online & in person; Social media (Facebook groups, etc); News media (newspapers, radio, TV...): 2
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - in person; News media (newspapers, radio, TV...): 2
- ☐ Students themselves informed me via email: 1
- ☐ Neighbour if infected child: 1

- ☐ A parent of my child's friend rang me to advise me that her daughter had tested positive: 1
- ☐ From my friends : 1
- ☐ From colleagues in the school: 1
- ☐ From my students who were friends with positive case: 1
- ☐ Direct communication from positive cases: 1
- ☐ From other students : 1
- ☐ Students in the class knew of the positive case of a class mate and told me: 1
- ☐ From positive student: 1
- ☐ Text message from school: 1
- ☐ From the parent of the positive child in my class: 1
- ☐ Daughter heard it through school... they weren't in her class but i would have liked to have heard from school as my daughter would be at risk: 1
- ☐ From the student and parent : 1
- ☐ Took a phone call in connection with student: 1
- ☐ From the student themselves: 1
- ☐ Other staff member: 1
- ☐ A parent told me, thinking i already knew. I did not: 1
- ☐ Parent WhatsApp group: 1
- ☐ I found out through students: 1
- ☐ A parent of a child in the room text to enquire did their child play with the child who tested positive in the room, which I wasn't informed about from management: 1
- ☐ I work in the school: 1
- ☐ A friend of a friend's child I don't think the school was informed: 1
- ☐ Informal chats with staff members. Never Principal: 1
- ☐ Through reliable parents and students and personally knowing some of the cases involved: 1
- ☐ It was another school/teacher in County that leaked positive case in our school February 2020 : 1
- ☐ Student in the class: 1
- ☐ Kids: 1
- ☐ Students in the school: 1
- ☐ Member of staff was positive. She rang me. I was never contacted by hse: 1
- ☐ Teacher told students she had tested positive and that was why she had been off school the previous 2 weeks : 1
- ☐ Mutual friend of the confirmed case and myself texted me after the parent told her as her son was friends with the positive case: 1
- ☐ Whatsapp class parents group: 1
- ☐ My child heard it from another child: 1
- ☐ Family member friendly with the parents of the student in question: 1
- ☐ My child in secondary school received a message from student in class who tested positive. When these TY students approached school they were told not to talk about it!!!: 1
- ☐ Prefer not to say: 1
- ☐ My daughter heard it directly from some of the infected pupils: 1
- ☐ My niece: 1
- ☐ My friend's child who is in my child's class tested positive : 1
- ☐ From staff member: 1

- ☐ My son found out online from his friends : 1
- ☐ I heard it from the mother of child who tested positive on the phone: 1
- ☐ My son heard about it: 1
- ☐ Village gossip 2 weeks later confronted teacher in q and she admitted she had hse told her not to tell school. But she advised her buddies who all got tested leaving the rest of us at risk: 1
- ☐ My wife is in the PTA. The principal mentioned during a PTA Zoom meeting there had been a case in the school. : 1
- ☐ Patents group on fb: 1
- ☐ A staff member : 1
- ☐ Our principal informed us because there were several rumours (she confirmed that they were true but she only knew because the children's parents had informed her, not the HSE): 1
- ☐ Alerting parents of cases: 1
- ☐ From the student via email: 1
- ☐ Notification from the school: 1
- ☐ An other person who lived beside child: 1
- ☐ Other parents : 1
- ☐ Student : 1
- ☐ Other parents in class informed me: 1
- ☐ Student informed me first then told by school days later but not formally told that the case was in my classroom just that there was a case in the school : 1
- ☐ Over the phone from a third party: 1
- ☐ Students chatting on Snapchat : 1
- ☐ Parent I met in the shop. : 1
- ☐ Students themselves: 1
- ☐ Parent notified us of their child's positive result. : 1
- ☐ Teacher in the school : 1
- ☐ Parent told me: 1
- ☐ The students themselves told me when they returned after covid: 1
- ☐ Phone call from a neighbour of the positive child - she had been out of school for 2 weeks already due to her brother, and then her mum, testing positive. She tested positive on her 2nd or 3rd test: 1
- ☐ We were told of positive cases but not the class or year group. We were kept totally in the dark. The absences were through the roof with students isolating/ testing positive but we were never given the full picture due to privacy.: 1
- ☐ Phonecall: 1
- ☐ Daughter was told by students that were also in company of positive case from the Friday till Monday attending school on the Monday, that a particular classmate was positive and still attended school until next day. Also at least 8 students in different years were known to have covid (confirmed by talking to teachers) and only 1(partial) class received text from school about 1 student and no communication about positive student in daughters class or any of the other positive cases: 1
- ☐ Positive case told her close friend group, one of which was my daughter: 1
- ☐ Talking with friends IN school: 1
- ☐ Principal informed us: 1
- ☐ Principal: 1
- ☐ Pupil: 1

- ☐ Family contacted me directly: 1
- ☐ Pupils in school: 1
- ☐ Student in school who had it: 1
- ☐ Rang to see if child was ok after absence of 4 days : 1
- ☐ From other school workers: 1
- ☐ Bus Escort: 1
- ☐ From a colleague : 1
- ☐ By fellow staff members : 1
- ☐ Im a staff member in an early years service i was informed by the manager: 1
- ☐ Child came in 3 weeks later and told us he had it we asked and asked the principal as there were other siblings in the school no contact from hse still waiting to hear ha: 1
- ☐ School whats app group: 1
- ☐ School connections (parent/teachers conversations) - online & in person; News media (newspapers, radio, TV...): 1
- ☐ From students in my class: 1
- ☐ Child in class tested positive and informed her friends bu text: 1
- ☐ Friend: 1
- ☐ Child was told by friends of the case: 1
- ☐ Children in my class told me (the teacher): 1
- ☐ Children in the class told me x is absent as they have Covid. Then x told me on their return.: 1
- ☐ Vigilant parents my twins in the room with a positive child. Hse told manager to only pick 8 names to put forward which included 4 staff and 3 of their own kids and not advise all parents at creche.: 1
- ☐ A neighbour who is daughter was in the class of a friend who is family were close contacts of a positive case.: 1
- ☐ Parent of positive case told all parents of said child's pod: 1
- ☐ Colleagues in the room I work in (new job in creche): 1
- ☐ From other students in the class: 1
- ☐ School connections, phone calls/texts: 1
- ☐ I was teacher of class, tested positive, as did my sna and 5 children in my class whom were all asymptomatic that's the scariest lart for me: 1
- ☐ School secretary: 1
- ☐ School communication: 1
- ☐ Small community : 1
- ☐ Twice through the covid positive person, once through another member of staff: 1
- ☐ Covid-positive person informed me themselves: 1
- ☐ Friends: 1
- ☐ Social media (Facebook groups, etc); News media (newspapers, radio, TV...): 1
- ☐ From students: 1
- ☐ Sons friend told him: 1
- ☐ Neighbour whos not in same school but kids are on same football team: 1
- ☐ Son's friends: 1
- ☐ Staff chat : 1

Contact tracing survey testimonials - 12-14 Feb 2021

Question - (optional) Please add your personal experience of how COVID-19 cases have been handled in your school

Response count per respondent group:

Parent	425
Parent/preschool staff	19
Parent/school staff	115
Parent/special school staff	3
Preschool & primary school staff	1
Preschool staff	28
Primary school staff	301
Secondary school staff	167
Special school staff	21
Student	23
Student/parent	1
Student/parent/staff	3
Student/preschool staff	1
Student/staff	2
Grand Total	1110

Parents

From a parent: 'Have had no communication from school about covid 19'

From a parent: 'My daughters' secondary school actively discouraged discussion of positive cases within the school. The only reason we know is because the students themselves made their covid positive test results known'

From a parent: 'No information given to class where positive case was detected. Children & Parents having to find out from other parents or WhatsApp group. School stated GDPR as reason for not informing parents of pos cases in they're child's class. Had to contact doctor and make up symptoms to be tested.'

From a parent: 'Numbers were high and not been said by Hse'

From a parent: 'The school give out very little info, my [redacted] school has had numerous positive for covid, the best friends of the positive case were in school in my [redacted] class the next day, they were deemed not close contacts '

From a parent: 'They have been cases confirmed by students and parents I personally know but we were not informed by the school as this was against government rules'

From a parent: 'We were informed of cases on two occasions. On the first one, we were told the class year and action taken (class were out of school for two weeks). In the second, however, we were not told of the year involved or action taken. It was left to my imagination as to whether my [redacted] had been in contact with the case or not, which was stressful. We had already picked up a viral infection from my [redacted] in our house in late September and all had to isolate and be tested. I took my children out of school early at [redacted] so that we could have 14 days of restricted movements before visiting family, without risking their health. I was disappointed the DES did not close schools early. I feel the whole system lacks transparency and masks and proper ventilation should be in place before children return. Also children suffer from long Covid and are twice as likely as an adult in the house to introduce Covid to the household. We need honesty and transparency to trust DES and the contact tracing system.'

From a parent: 'In my [redacted] school they have not done 2metre as school old and there opening the windows in freezing temperatures and not letting them wear their jackets, it's not good enough'

From a parent: 'School was great but hse never organised a test after confirming [redacted] was a close contact, 3 calls to hse live and told it would be sorted..it wasn't..eventually had to go to gp to organise test. Thankfully negative'

From a parent: 'I don't have a problem with the school but my [redacted] travels on a packed bus everyday with 3 different secondary schools on it. Only about 4 kids on the whole bus wear masks. They are not allocated seats or even made to stay seated on the journey. I feel we were lied to last September to make us send our kids back and promised safe transport at 50 percent and allocated seats. I have not heard of one case where the children on the bus were deemed as close contacts and I know my [redacted] travelled with kids who had a

positive case in their family. My [redacted] won't be returning until either 0 cases or proper transport arranged and schools should be allowed to demand negative test results for any child with symptoms before allowing them back to school'

From a parent: 'I feel that parents are not being told about all covid cases in the school. [county redacted] had a very high rate of covid and the school my child attends has over 600 students. To date we have only been told about 5 cases of covid for the entire school. This I find difficult to believe. The school did inform us of the cases by text. '

From a parent: 'I think they have done there very best in a very difficult environment. They have no controll over what happens after school has finished so can not always stop the virus from entering the school. In my opinion the goverment left them swinging. It is a disgrace to endanger teachers, students and the greater community in this way. The goverment should be held accountable for there actions.'

From a parent: 'School informed me my child was a close contact entire class had to restrict movements for 2 weeks start of [month redacted]. Never heard from school how many subsequent cases arose from the initial first case. Heard from other people 6 further students tested positive.'

From a parent: 'There has not been a huge amount of communication over positive cases. Which therefore result in the student being stressed then the parent. All we ask is for trust and openness but we haven't not felt that at all. '

From a parent: 'Think my school is superb, the problem is expecting schools to be able to open during a highly contagious virus outbreak. We'll wait for vaccination. '

From a parent: 'We were informed about the case in the class all identified close contacts came back negative'

From a parent: 'Have to say in both primary and secondary school my children attend very vigilant, the primary school in particular. My child sent home for runny nose and coughed twice in class, Dr recommended he test as he wouldn't be able return to school, I had restricted all immediate family movement as per guidelines at the time, and wanted test as he has enlarged spleen, low immune system but isn't considered at risk by doctor, negative result. Pod wasn't sent home, I looked for the test, no contact tracing etc. (last September) '

From a parent: 'I know for a fact there have been numerous cases related to the school but the students had been out the required days before so it was never brought to our attention. We were however advised of cases on [redacted] eve. '

From a parent: 'Our primary school have had no cases the secondary school had 2 and we were informed before my teenager knew so I think they are doing a pretty good job'

From a parent: 'Received a text to say there was a positive case but not a close contact. Student was in my [redacted] class and he had lunch with her'

From a parent: 'We were informed of 1 case in our school. By the time we received the official notification we knew that 2 other students and 1 member of staff were positive cases

and a number of staff were self isolating. We never received any further information beyond the initial case.'

From a parent: 'Good'

From a parent: 'GDPR is less important than something that can harm or even kill. The HSE has failed to inform schools and caused a needless school outbreak, which has left lasting affects to families I know who have caught it from a preventable outbreak. "Schools are safe" is the mantra, when we already know that is not the case. The one positive is I believe the school staff and board of management are doing everything they can, despite failures in support from government, department, and the HSE. I'm frankly quite angry at how badly mishandled this has all been.'

From a parent: 'I dont believe that they are doing any contact tracing other than when a significant outbreak has occurred in a school'

From a parent: 'I dont trust the school as teachers dont use mask '

From a parent: 'I know of at least 4 families in my [redacted] class where their child had tested positive. In each of these cases they were regarded as a household transmission and the school were never officially informed. The parents did tell the school themselves but no action was deemed necessary by the HSE. The preschool nearby ended up being closed a few weeks later due to a number of cases presenting there.'

From a parent: 'I think [redacted] preschool we have is very small, everyone is pretty open and honest so to an extent I feel safe in the country school'

From a parent: 'I think they have done their best.'

From a parent: 'I would feel safer if I knew cases were being honestly reported and the community informed. We are told immediately about nits in the classroom so I cannot fathom the secrecy. It should then be up to the family to make a decision based on their own circumstances. There should be no stigma, just choice whether to attend or not. My child would probably continue to attend but without the stress of being unsure / guilty / worried / anxious / rumour. '

From a parent: 'Minimal information, close contacts definition in school different to the rest of the community considering all these children in crowded classrooms with poor ventilation. A child in one of my children's classes was informed by a text from a friend that he was a close contact but remained in the school for the rest of the day!!!!'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] school handled it brilliantly all years separate pods only one case or maybe a close contact not sure exact details as not my [redacted] year . A few girls were absent for 2 weeks and friends on social media said self isolating but maybe just hearsay or (teenage drama) '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] a first class student was sent home from school in [month redacted] because somebody in his class tested positive and the whole class were deemed close contact. When they started the testing there was more then 15 kids tested positive. 3 weeks off school and the school completely hid it. '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] school in [redacted] is not safe loads of cases which haven't been announced or anything they are squeezed into a small room all day when on lunch none of they kids have masks and they all grouped up like 10-15 maybe more'

From a parent: 'Not enough focus on ventilation.'

From a parent: 'Not informed'

From a parent: 'Notified by contact tracing that child was a close contact 12 days after exposure. No notification from school. I initiated contact with school to confirm that the contact had taken place in school. Parents of children outside of the pod were not made aware that their children were casual contacts'

From a parent: 'Primary School was fantastic,, did a wonderful, compassionate and understanding job. Their hands are tied by government and law about informing. I completely support my school. It is down to society to respect the guidelines. School however cannot restrict the distancing as they are too small for the no of students. The other school another child attends is less proactive. No physical distancing. Appalling that wearing a mask all day is regarded as "non contact" in a tracing situation.'

From a parent: 'School closed of it's own accord when 3 cases got confirmed, hse didnt see reason to close it, it's a special school'

From a parent: 'Schools are doing an excellent job... the issue is the community where the parents and their children are mixing in close contact with many groups through social gatherings. Then the children come into school and risk begins where they may spread it. Of course they equally could spread it out of school with their friends too - so is it school or other transmission then? Point is, schools can't be blamed for spreading it when they implement all relative precautions, but if the community won't follow guidelines then the system breaks down. Schools are safe once everyone follows the C19 guidelines, but when you have people arranging fake dental trips to go so Spain then the risk will always be there in the community and therefore the schools, as people like this have complete disregard for the actions required to stem the virus and therefore will have no interest in trying to eliminate within their community. Schools need to reopen and managed on a case by case basis and regionally based in number of c19 cases in that area. Trying to link cases in schools as if the schools are ground zero is not correct and the tracing to identify the source is key to prove schools are safe and out school like many others in the country are proof of this as they have had zero Covid cases... Why, because the community around the school is following guidelines and reducing the risk of kids catching it and bringing it to school.'

From a parent: 'Terrible'

From a parent: 'Very well very professional'

From a parent: 'We have home schooled our [redacted] primary children since last September. Our only [redacted] child has been at school as [redacted]. His school has taken covid very seriously and has kept parents informed of cases at all times. Our primary school has been very slow in communication and very slack in covid safety measures. We were not impressed with the primary school. '

From a parent: 'While I urgently want schools to open up ASAP, I believe principal / vice p should have the authority to remove a covid positive student from school. My [redacted] was sitting in a packed class with a covid + student. He Only stayed out our a couple of days. HSE should be given full authority to inform schopl/workplace etc. '

From a parent: 'Yes have children in both primary and secondary schools. Both schools have had no cases of covid. Both schools are strict with hand hygiene and social distancing. Communication was excellent from both schools with weekly updates re status of schools'

From a parent: 'A child in my boys' class was a close contact of a positive covid case, this child was isolating for two weeks, I only found out about it through a friend of mine. School never mentioned anything.'

From a parent: 'All in secret'

From a parent: 'Excellently so far- Principal phoning entire class, without breaching gdpr when there was a case in the class ahead of sending out HSE letter.'

From a parent: 'I think they've been slow in letting parents know of a positive case. Not happy that people (parents and/ or students) with compromised immune systems are not informed, as soon as the school become aware, of even a suspected case. I have a compromised immune system (cancer patient), I rang to let the school know and was told that neither my [redacted] nor I could be told of any possible covid case in the school until the entire school body was told and that the case had to be confirmed to them by the HSE.'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] is in preschool in the ecce year and the staff do not wear face coverings during the day. I find this unbelievable and apparently when they go back in March there will be no change. So unfortunately I can't send her back as I think with the new variants around it's too risky. There are [redacted] teachers in her pod and [redacted] kids and I think that is too much. There should be smaller pods and face coverings worn.'

From a parent: 'So far so good'

From a parent: 'The children with special needs have gone [redacted] in a bus which is not socially distanced. [redacted] coaches and others, often without masks have been tutoring in school. What requirements have there been for staff to compel them to comply with guidelines outside of school hours? I worry my grandchild might bring COVID 19 home to his vulnerable parent.'

From a parent: 'The whole world knew by March 2020 that this was a dangerously infectious virus, and we knew that in-person gatherings were dangerous. Nothing has changed since then. The government decision to use children as Guinea Pigs was not acceptable to me. I am paying thousands of euros to cope with the complete lack of educational resources in Ireland now. I will never be compensated. My child will be set back years in her education now. But we are healthy and alive.'

From a parent: 'Very well handled. Very safe'

From a parent: 'We received a letter (online) from the school stating that there was a positive case in the school but not which year was affected. A few weeks later we received

another letter to say there were further cases in the school but again not the year or years affected.'

From a parent: 'Cases are only reported to the parents who have kids at that table the rest of the class are not informed or deemed contacts(primary). In secondary there have been cases within kids classes and no one else in class were contacts and only find out when kids are telling each other that they have covid'

From a parent: 'Disgraceful to tell 16 year olds not to tell their parents and to lie to them. Totally unethical and disgusting '

From a parent: 'I don't believe they are safe if we are not informed of cases within the school. Ie parent tested positive, [redacted] kids in various classes in the school. Only close contacts of the parents child contacted. Many siblings affect many other children, ie the whole school. Small community, [redacted] kids in school. Maybe [redacted] families altogether, 1 child gets it, everyone is at risk.'

From a parent: 'My child has regularly arrived home with stories of kids in his secondary school with covid, but only those sitting next to the student contacted. Also kids arriving to national school with flu like symptoms and sick. My [redacted] year old had a friend who came to school unwell with flu like symptoms and also got sick that afternoon. All covid symptoms. Parents both work so ignored rules and allowed to ignore (as parents are teachers) I do not want schools to open until sept. 10% of covid kids go on to develop long covid. NO one is discussing this. It is a huge risk. We need a suppression strategy between now and Sept. Gov needs to put safety plans in place for Sept. The gov should not put the mental health of the few over the public health of the many. Long covid is an unknown and should not be risked. 30% of people infected with spanish flu went on to develop parkinsons disease and as Dr Scally said recently, we know covid effects the brain, do we wait 20 or 30 years to realise the impact? I do not want schools to open.'

From a parent: 'My child in 3rd class has had 3 positive cases in the class. School has only informed parents of 1 of those cases. Other 2 I definitely know about as both parents told me personally themselves '

From a parent: 'Too much cover up Not enough openness Close contacts not informed Too much secrecy '

From a parent: 'Covid has been handled fantastic in my kids school. We have had no cases in the school and only one child's parent has had covid. With this parents permission the school informed all parents of this case.'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] year old twins boy & girl in [redacted] year & same class, [redacted] friend who she hangs out with, eats lunch & in the same class tested positive but principal said she wasn't close contact & must have been on the perimeter (his words) my [redacted] sits beside the girl who was positive for double [redacted] but no mention about that because the principal said they were wearing face masks, no formal notification from the school or hse about it, [redacted] other friend tested positive & she named my [redacted] as a close contact to the hse, she was invited her for a test, thankfully it was negative, not a week went by where my twins weren't telling me someone in their school had COVID but the

school doesn't notify parents or the parents association, schools are playing down the number of cases"

From a parent: '4 cases in the class, notified of one case. Child never deemed a close contact as didn't sit next to the 4 cases.'

From a parent: 'Absolutely ridiculous no sense made around the close contact thing ! Like all schools really! Schools really had no choice but to go with the senseless guidelines! So I can't blame the schools '

From a parent: 'Any time a class is closed or a pod sent home there is no mention of to the rest of the school ie school email, we get emails about everything else but when there's a case in the school nothing and this adds to the panic at the gate or in msg groups when parents are trying to find out what class so they know if they have to get tested or not, as HSE aren't contacting everyone from the class just the pod/bubble which is ridiculous as the kids all mix in the school yard for break. As for it not being considered a school contact that may be the fact for one of the group but the rest it is school contracted so save the kids the heartache and keep the schools closed for another while longer.'

From a parent: 'Both schools handled to the best of their ability. Very hard for student and teachers '

From a parent: 'Brilliantly'

From a parent: 'Cases were handled brilliantly in my children's schools. Communication very clear and calm. '

From a parent: 'Depends on the school. One school fully informs of cases in school regardless of class or year. Other school has not sent any texts yet a number of cases in school. They don't know who they mix with on the way to school or outside in general. '

From a parent: 'Disgracefully really disappointed with the way they handled a case in my [redacted] class , one of many cases been hidden in the school '

From a parent: 'Everyone in the classroom must be treated as a close contact, sent for a test and told to self isolate for 14d, per ECDC guidelines. Quick antigen tests must be introduced, for all kids/teachers to be mass tested regularly. And anyone with a positive antigen test must then be sent for PCR test. Stricter guidelines with regards to activities that MUST NOT take place in classrooms must be issued (no singing, no assemblies (even with distancing, they cannot happen), no exercise indoors, etc...). Return to schools, when case numbers are below 100 per day, should be for half classes, half days, with strictly no food break, kids & teachers to wear surgical grade face coverings (that do not get removed anytime on school grounds), and ventilation. '"

From a parent: 'Excellent in my school '

From a parent: 'Feel that in the school it was well controlled and cumminication from the school was good. The teacher was positive (sympthmatic), whole class was deemed a close contact. 3 from the class were positive, all asymptomatic and in separate pods. '

From a parent: 'First case the school didn't "tell". Second case they did inform the entire school community. However, that grew into a cluster but the school nor hse never informed us even though we had a child in a class with a sibling in the affected class which had a lot of cases (i heard 8 last, not counting siblings and parents who also subsequently tested positive). '

From a parent: 'Formal announcement from the school stating that there had been a positive case in the school. Informed that close contacts would be contacted directly by HSE. Worried because my child doesn't notice anything but when asked only half her class had been present in one particular week. Not knowing if my child was in a room with a positive Covid case was extremely worrying. I feel that as a parent I should be informed of something that could affect my child's health. If it was chickenpox I would be told.'

From a parent: 'Generally well but found out positive case in the class as the child in question messaged her friends in class to let them know. Were told by school 2 days later. Other cases only the year was told. Same with both schools my children attend. '

From a parent: 'Handled horrifically because the schools were forced to keep all the Covid cases quiet. If they didn't keep the secret, they would have been in big trouble with the department of education. A principal told me they had to maintain the silence because they could lose funding if they spoke ut. The only way parents could find out about cases in school was through each other. We told each other of the cases we knew of. It shouldn't have been like that. We should have been told officially and immediately. Some of us have seriously ill family members. **Our kids were in constant fear of bring Covid home. They should have been allowed to do online learning instead if having to risk their lives (and our lives, by default) in those unsafe conditions - without soical distancing, spending hours cramped in without ventilation - no wonder there was so much transmissioon in schools.** Norma Foley tried to cover up all the Covid cases. This led to further transmission. She should be sued for making our kids risk their lives (and our lives too). It's a scandal what went on from Setember to [redacted] nd we won't stand for it any more. No way. We're letting our kids stay at home from now on, no matter what they promise. Home is realy safe. Schools are really dangerous. Fact!''

From a parent: **'Handled well but no consideration by department of education around children at high risk, they have been completely written out of all discourse'**

From a parent: 'I believe that if numbers are low in the community, schools are safe. As numbers rise in the community the school becomes unsafe and thwrefore should close. '

From a parent: 'I didn't hear of any cases in my [redacted] school (she's in 4th year). Heard of 2 cases in my [redacted] school but not in his year. (he's 1st year). Cases in his school dealt with quickly & with no fuss. Felt both my children were safe in school'

From a parent: 'I don't believe we have been kept informed at all from the school or the hse. My stepson has heard of several cases in his year /class yet we have received one email from the school of a case (which was diagnosed over the **[redacted]** break) '

From a parent: 'I feel annoyed that a lot of schools are getting a lot of back lash, schools have worked very hard to make sure it's safe, I think there is a lot of scaremongering from

this group. I feel that my [redacted] school is very safe and it's up to every parent if they want to send their kids to school and I think if parents do they shouldn't be attacked over it. '

From a parent: 'I feel schools are doing their best but unfortunately rely on parents/guardians to be honest with them. I collected my child one morning as when I got home from school my older [redacted] was unwell and was sent for a test. I took my [redacted] home as soon as I realised and receptionist told me a lot of children out getting tests. My [redacted] test was negative which I emailed the copy of into school before bringing my [redacted] back. I got a lovely email back from [redacted] thanking me for this and got the underlying feeling that they weren't always being given clear messages and facts like I had given. I'm concerned now as my [redacted] due to have a [redacted] done in hospital in [redacted] not too sure how many needed but after keeping her clear and safe don't want to now send her back to pick up an infection '

From a parent: 'I have [redacted] in 3 separate schools and special needs child in a 4th school. You had no option for positive cases in the school and we were told by the school. This is what happened for us and all schools were fantastic at communicating'

From a parent: 'I have heard from a parent that their partner tested positive so they kept their child out of school but didn't let the school know their child had tested positive (during school term). Which means the school couldn't make a decision on steps they needed to take to inform teachers, pupils or parents.'

From a parent: 'I see teachers and principals are trying very hard to keep everything as professional as they can but at the same time they have no support from government and they are left without any information what's going to happen next, they only receive info from social media like everyone else. That's disappointing to both teachers and students as well. '

From a parent: 'I think it was safe in August-December but we regularly heard if cases online and not from the school they kept us and staff totally in the dark. Our school has 1000 plus kids who at lunchtime have no where to go and stand outside masks off just waiting for lunch time to end and with the new variant this is way too dangerous for transmission.'

From a parent: 'I think that our school has handled covid very well.. .as far as I know we've had no cases in the school...however I do believe that the criteria for close contacts in school is ridiculous ..in fact if a case is reported in a class the whole class should be notified & tested & then teachers & parents would have greater faith in the process. The process before [redacted] just led to distrust in the whole system '

From a parent: 'I think that schools need to look at bringing them back gradually. 50% in one day and the other 50% in the next day. Online teaching during this second lockdown has been much better. The teachers in our school have been doing great. '

From a parent: 'If numbers were lower I would say yes but I would have real concerns for the pupils at every level, the teaching staff and if there was an increase in cases as a result of them opening.'

From a parent: 'If the government can repeatedly sit in a convention centre for public health reasons well then classrooms are certainly not safe. Biggest class sizes in Europe. That says it all. '

From a parent: 'If things are as bad as they say there should be no movement at all and schools and essential shops would be closed. So either they open everything up and live with covid like we live with the flu or we go into lockdown for the rest of our lives. '

From a parent: 'It's being handled great there has being no cases at all in my children school I feel they are doing a great job and I feel there safer in school '

From a parent: 'Junior school no information passed on to parents its all gossip between the parents or if we see a class missing we can assume they are isolating. Senior school i don't think are informing parents of cases at all there are 300 girls in the school and we're in an area with one of the highest levels in [county redacted] and school told us of 1 case and wouldn't even tell us what class it was in'

From a parent: 'Minimum regard for guidelines '

From a parent: 'My child tested positive and everyone else in the household tested negative, meaning it must have been contracted in school. As far as I know this was considered community transmission by hse but I heard through other parents that there were other cases in the school.'

From a parent: 'My child tested positive as they were ill. Found out that three kids in her class has tested positive the week before and no commication from the school or parents. I posted an anon post on a FB group only to find out that 10 other pupils also tested positive. Our school is yet to acknowledge this. It makes me so mad. My child was very ill for two weeks '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] contacted COVID 19 in school in [month redacted] as the child he sat beside was a positive case. His whole family tested positive. It took 7 days before I was informed his pod was in contact with a positive case. I got an email and then a phone call from the school. 3 days later my [redacted] got a test and was positive. All the other children where allowed back to class the following day after we where told. The classroom wasn't deep cleaned. The [redacted] that works with my [redacted] was back in school the following day. She was working with other children. The teacher was still in class teaching the rest of the class. I rang the school the following morning when I got the results to inform them my [redacted] was positive. This was day 11 since my [redacted] was in contact with the child who was positive. All the other children went to class as normal until 11 am on the Friday. I heard through parents that there was 3 positive in his pod and another positive case in another pod .Parents got a call to come and collect all children at 11 am. The whole class ,teacher ,and Sna had to go for testing then .I think it was disgraceful if the class had of shut on the Monday when [redacted] knew there was a positive case in the class. It could have been contained. It ended up [redacted] kids in one class was positive. My family was 17 days in isolation. The school never told us how many positive cases where in the class. My [redacted] is in 6th class. The contact tracing had collapsed that weekend I had to ring HSE all weekend to get a test for myself , husband, and [redacted] . We finally got a test the following Tuesday . We were all negative thank god. '

From a parent: 'No cases in the school population'

From a parent: 'No supposed cases however I know of two boys that tested positive but school were not informed afaik. '

From a parent: 'Not being transparent enough about many cases because of ever changing rules of timeframes and what determines a close contact etc'

From a parent: 'Not enough information given by the school. The usual not our place to let anyone know about confirmed cases , that is the HSE's responsibility. Absolutely ridiculous the way a close contact is decided. Each class lasts 40-45 minutes so if 1 person is positive the whole class are close contacts. How can there be different time frames and structures in place in schools for identifying a close contact in comparison to a work place ie office, kitchen, warehouse etc. '

From a parent: 'Not told my principal, and staff member told me that they weren't even told either.'

From a parent: 'Older [redacted] school have been open and informing. Though the first case my [redacted] told me about it before the school had got in touch. My younger [redacted] school has a LONG way to go on the learning curve'

From a parent: 'One case in my [redacted] class. The whole class had to isolate for 2 weeks and have a covid test. It was the only case in the whole school and it was well managed. '

From a parent: 'Only 1 reported case of coronavirus. Email to parents of classes effected. Children had been at home for x5 days when positive test arrived. Told all this. Privacy of child/family maintained . School was calm place. And attendance remained high through the timeframe. Very happy with school/teachers handling of covid '''

From a parent: 'Only 2 cases in our primary school and procedures etc have been followed very well, think socially kids need to be back to school. '

From a parent: 'Only a couple of cases and they were brought into the school from homes.'

From a parent: 'Our child's Class Teacher was (unknowingly) positive and so all 27 children were later tested by the HSE - not one of the 27 was found positive. I believe that the measures the school, the teacher, and the children had been taking were effective in protecting them (all aged 11-12 years). I was very impressed and thankful of course. However, at this time, I do not believe it is worth the risk of allowing the schools to reopen - primarily because some of the homes the children are coming from are unsafe with adults not adhering to safely protocols. I don't believe the teachers and support staff should be asked to risk their own health to care for our children when it is "our responsibility" as parents to care for our own children. '

From a parent: 'Our primary school has been lucky not to have any cases recorded '

From a parent: 'Our primary schools closed the class when positive detected and the students only returned after 14 days. No spread after first case. This happened on a couple

of occasions and halted the spread. I think this is safest way, keep class home and any siblings of original case'

From a parent: 'Our school did an amazing job and have no issues going forward trust them 100%'

From a parent: 'Our school is doing all it can but at the end of the day there are 30+ in a small space for 5+ hours a day and that's not safe'

From a parent: 'Preschool outbreak didn't get informed by the hse until 1 week after my child had been in contact with positive child . '

From a parent: 'school has communicated when a case has occurred in the 'school community'. However, it's hard to know what the true unofficial situations are. Principal has been on top of keeping school as safe as they can - imho they have been excellent - lots of reminders and enforcement about the simple things like about mask wearing. My worry is that the entire environment isn't safe and also worry about the reliance on other children to isolate when they should etc - some people don't care which worries me.'

From a parent: 'School have been extremely transparent and follow protocol. Based In [county redacted] and have had few cases less than 5 incidents. After school handled a case very poorly. No experience as to what to do and very little transparency. '

From a parent: 'Schools are regulated places but community transmission and case numbers (averaging 1000 per day) are too high for all school children and staff to return'

From a parent: 'Schools are safe. Keep them open'

From a parent: 'Schools themselves are safe places in my experience. Vast majority of cases associate with children are caught outside of schools, in household. Again in vast majority of cases there is little transmission within schools.'

From a parent: 'The cases have not been disclosed in a way that made me feel comfortable about the safety of my children or my own safety'

From a parent: 'The primary are only informing the pods but secondary and sending out the hse letter, I dont think they are safe as its rampant at the minute and only gonna get worse when they go back'

From a parent: 'The school has handled it the best they could given teachers and students not provided with sufficient PPE, Also out of their control Not enough space for recommend social distancing?. The gatherings in local shops and outside school grounds at lunchtime ect is never going to work. As for the lack of transparency and honesty from our government surrounding the case numbers in schools and other information on their website doesn't help. '

From a parent: 'The school has handled them well, notifying everyone in the affected class, so parents don't need to worry that information relevant to their child's safety is being withheld. But the school is limited by the fact that the HSE uses a definition of 'close contact' in schools that's based completely on wishful thinking and ignores science and the ECDC

guidelines. As long as the HSE keeps claiming that a child can sit 1m from a positive Covid case for six hours a day, unmasked, and not be a close contact, schools can't be safe - especially with the new, more contagious variant. The HSE's dishonest and disingenuous 'school walls are magic' policy is a recipe for outbreaks.'

From a parent: 'The school informed of the 1st case and none after that. From another parent I found out of another case but who knows how many more were there. My [redacted] got a cold or perhaps flu so he did have a test and kept him off school for 2 weeks anyway. He was negative. '

From a parent: 'The school tracing & communication system is flawed due to HSE and DoE guidelines '

From a parent: 'There have been many cases in our school but none in my school children's classes. We recieved no notifications about any of these. My preschool child class had a child with covid and no one was alerted to it until the school was contacted by the HSE 9 days after contact, all children and staff were deemed close contacts and were tested. Although best practices were carried out by both school and HSE in this situation I was and still am alarmed by the lenght of time in taken to alert 9 days is a long time.'

From a parent: 'There have been none'

From a parent: 'There is a complete disregard for global guidelines: everyone in the same enclosed space as a covid positive person MUST be treated as a direct contact, sent for a test AND told to self isolate for 14 days. There must also be complete transparency of cases; treated in the same manner as lice or chicken pox eg there has been a case of [...] in your child's class; please await test appointment and self isolate : nothing more; nothing less!'

From a parent: 'There was a case in one of the classes of students older than my child, around [redacted] of last year. The school sent out an email only telling us there had been a positive test, but it was my child who discovered, through talking to classmates, which year the positive test was in. As far as I'm aware, all students continued attending classes as normal. I absolutely do NOT want children going back to school right now. Many, mine included, have to take public transport there and back. Before the current lockdown, the buses were often filled to capacity, well beyond the 50% they were supposed to take. '

From a parent: 'There was a positive case in my child's class in September. The whole class has been tested and quarantined. No other positive case. HSE and school were excellent dealing with it and I assume the school procedures worked since no one else got it'

From a parent: 'They don't tell us anything and it's very frightening'

From a parent: 'Very good'

From a parent: 'Very well'

From a parent: 'Very well from what I can see. Never heard of any Covid cases in the school except for one which I only knew about from the Facebook page I'm on ~Alerting parents...."

From a parent: 'Very well informed'

From a parent: 'Very well.'

From a parent: 'Very well. Smaller groups of children on break. Teachers wearing masks.'

From a parent: 'Was multiple cases in my [redacted] primary school this year. The school was aware but nobody was informed. A family sent their children to school even though they all had covid and that was not common knowledge for all parents that the children that, that family sent in was COVID Positive. Same occurrence happened with an [redacted] being covid positive and even though the school was aware, NOBODY was informed.'

From a parent: 'Was multiple cases in my sisters primary school this year. The school was aware but nobody was informed. A family sent their children to school even though they all had covid and that was not common knowledge for all parents that the children that, that family sent in was COVID Positive. Same occurrence happened with an SNA being covid positive and even though the school was aware, NOBODY was informed.'

From a parent: 'We got an email to come to collect our child as the school had been informed of a positive test in the class and everyone was a close contact. I was across the other side of [redacted]. My friend called to let me know as my email hadn't come through. Everyone in the class had to go for a test. Then I got a call from contact tracing and it turns out my [redacted] wasn't even in school with this specific child for 2 weeks. She had been tested unnecessarily. I had called the school asking about this, and the hse about her being a close contact before she went to get the test and they said she was.'

From a parent: 'We had none'

From a parent: 'We havnt been contacted by the school when there was cases but when I found out I kept my child home'

From a parent: '33 kids in 1 class, no toilet in the class only shared toilets between a few classes, no hot water, kids sitting close together and freezing cold because windows are open all day.'

From a parent: '33 kids in one class, no toilet in the class, kids close together and freezing cold because windows open all day long'

From a parent: 'Geographical area needs.be assessed for endemecity. Schools closing down for too long. Exceptionally poor support at primary school level for homeschool.'"

From a parent: 'Handled perfectly and very efficiently in my case. [redacted] is in [redacted] class Primary. Principle was very proactive in telling ys. The rest of the class were not officially told though. I don't agree with this. People should know & assess their own risk from there.'

From a parent: 'Handled very well, no extra cases. Staff and students are doing a fantastic job'

From a parent: 'Hidden and claim no cases even though I know there have been cases from other parents telling me.'

From a parent: 'I feel the schools have handled them with how the HSE advised them but I do not feel like the advice or help the HSE gives the schools is useful! I would feel better if kids returned on a part time basis in smaller classes'

From a parent: 'I found out about a case through a facebook group and a couple of weeks later we were informed of one case in the school no mention of what year or class. My child is in second class in a bouble. I'm imune suppressed and at high risk. I cannot make informed decisions because of lack of information and communication between the school and students parents. We need more information to be shared about cases to protect the school community better.'

From a parent: 'I have a [redacted] in secondary and a [redacted] in primary and another [redacted] who is a childcare worker, my [redacted] says he feels unsafe in school cause others classes mix at break time with them and no one says anything, my [redacted] in primary feels save in school , my [redacted] in who works in a crèche is nervous every day, they had a outbreak just before [redacted] and she tested positive all because everyone was mixing with no masks..thankfully it did not spread in our home, she has been told she's immune until March 12th and that If there's another case in the crèche she would not be a close contact even if it's a child she minds, which I do not trust...'

From a parent: 'I know that 2 teacher and at least one student tested positive in my [redacted] primary school and nobody was notified. Parents should be informed of all cases (patient should be anonymous) to make their own decision. The school conceals the information and they don't know if other students have vulnerable people at home.'

From a parent: 'I think over 15 years have a higher rate of transmission, and bringing it home, secondary schools are not open about the cases in the school, junior schools should be open'

From a parent: 'It's been frightening. At time Ive been informed of positive cases in a family home through other parents and the school haven't been informed. Our school is very good at letting us know if a concern is in our child's class. I do not feel safe sending my children back to school while this pandemic is on.'

From a parent: 'Locally school handles covid as directed however, in no other workplace are 30 individuals allowed in the same small space for 120 mins'

From a parent: 'My child's mental health is suffering and I'm more concerned with that than covid in the school setting'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] was beside a covid positive girl for all classes but was not counted as a close contact as they had masks on. Each class was 1 hour long'

From a parent: 'my [redacted] school had a hse test just before they closed at [redacted]...and their results were exceptional....principal has been fantastic going beyond and over all measures...keeps all us parents updated with multiple emails daily..fortunately no cases in the school but the hard work he and fellow teachers put into the care of our kids is absoloutly amazing.on the down side my child needs to be be back in school..just for her mental health... ''

From a parent: 'No official communication from the school, I've found out through my child. They were informed by their tutor. The tutor believed it was important that we know. No names or class given.'

From a parent: 'None in my child's school'

From a parent: 'Not sure'

From a parent: 'Not sure .'

From a parent: 'Our schools have been brilliant. Two cases in secondary, only one in primary. They are very cautious and on top of safety protocols. Grateful!'

From a parent: 'Positive confirmed case not notified to year group for 10 days after parents rang school. They said they were waiting for HSE to contact them.'

From a parent: 'Schools have been excellent. Schools need to restart. Teachers-all and students (Sec) need to wear PPE. Continue to maintain bubbles in primary school. Keep all non essential business shut (Hair nails pubs restaurants bookies leisure swimming pools shopping centres church's and no gatherings etc until after Easter) but open the schools.'

From a parent: 'Secondary school has had several cases and principal told my husband they have been advised not to release the information to anyone not deemed a close contact. One of my [redacted] spent several classes with someone who later tested positive but wasn't deemed a close contact and I only found out through a parent. My husband is high risk so it's very worrying for us.'

From a parent: 'Secretive I'm not sure if the school were told about the cases but I know of 2'

From a parent: 'So far so good despite the lack of information and support from the department of Education and our government. It's a total lack of duty of care to the students and teachers and other employees! They should be ashamed of themselves. We have heard horror stories from other family members with kids in other schools. Everyone should wear a mask , Wash hands and parents should be keeping their distance outside the schools . This is not the case and kids need to be kept inside and not be socialising with their friends outside or inside houses.'

From a parent: 'Teachers should be classed as close contacts of someone in their class is positive. All in the class should be informed'

From a parent: 'The school dealt with it very well. The only thing I found worrying was once the HSE are involved the school are left in the dark as to test dates who went for test and results. Also the worrying thing is the parents of the child were positive for covid but still sent the child into school . Very worrying'

From a parent: 'There has been 1 case in 4 months in a school of 400 pupils. All school was notified, class sent home. It came from home and didn't spread to anyone else. Schools are safe. This survey is so blatantly biased to your page's ridiculous agenda to keep schools shut. None of you are qualified to make the comments you make. Meanwhile children with special needs like my own who can't learn remotely are being denied an education.'"

From a parent: 'Too many cases in the schools before the [redacted] break. Although the school are doing all they can the virus spreads to easily in close environments'

From a parent: 'Very good. Class sent home, classroom deep cleaned, close contacts contacted by hse'

From a parent: 'Very professional and open.'

From a parent: 'Very well handled in my [redacted] class although we heard of subsequent cases in the school through word of mouth, each class informed individually.'

From a parent: 'We had a cluster in September, our principal handled it really well. Kept us all informed of any updates etc. We always had a good supply of PPE. The dept of ed and the HSE are another story! Very slow with advice and assistance...'

From a parent: 'We had one case in my [redacted] school and one case in my [redacted] school. All parents in the school were advised and the class of the close contact were at home for 2 weeks. Everyone in class tested and no other positive cases in the school.'

From a parent: 'We were notified about the first case but not about the second (as nobody was deemed to be a close contact). I found out because I'm friends with the parents of the child in question'

From a parent: 'With secrecy which I don't understand.'

From a parent: 'Won't ever be notified again, as lunch times are 15 mins so will never be considered a close contact again cause of the 15 min rule'

From a parent: 'Yes they're safe when community levels are low'

From a parent: 'Covid outbreak was dealt with very effectively in my child's school. Appropriate steps were taking as fast as they could be and outbreak was confined to one room only '

From a parent: 'Handled well'

From a parent: 'Have heard of cases in school, but not officially '

From a parent: 'Just shy of 300 pupils in school. Principal sent twice weekly reminder of symptoms. I was very impressed with how it was handled. '

From a parent: 'My 2 schools have been fantastic.. it's parents spreading rumour and hearsay that's the problem.. '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] school has around 600 kids and in his classroom there are 26 children socially distanced by just about a metre. Other classrooms have 15, nearly half the amount. This is just not good enough. Return to school needs to happen when the numbers are right down and on a phased and alternate basis. That's what Norma Bates (sorry! Foley) should look at. '

From a parent: 'No social distancing. Varying levels of mask wearing. Hygiene standards have dropped'

From a parent: 'No transparency. In any other setting my child would have been deemed a close contact.'

From a parent: 'Terrible. A teacher tested positive in the pre school thats connected to our primary school. Thankfully no cases transmitted into the primary. However every other school in the area told each parent that the case was in the preschool and to be vigilant etc. But our school that is connected didnt mention one thing to any of the parents. In my [redacted] class alone two students had siblings in the preschool who had been in contact with the positive case. Nothing ever issued to parents on the protocol if a positive case was in the school. We were only informed on how they were going to keep it a no covid zone, which as we know is not possible. I think the principal just wants to pretend she has the "perfect" school.'

From a parent: 'We are in a small country school. A confirmed case confirmed. Hse deemed no close contacts. Later over 10 confirmed case's in room. Some parents grandparents later all tested positive. As a parent of a child with underlined medical condition. We very never informed about the case from the school.'

From a parent: 'We have only been officially informed of 2 cases in school while we have heard through the kids of a lot more. The way close contacts are defined in school means most not deemed to be a close contact. Feel its very cloak and dagger and not very open. '

From a parent: 'We were informed there was a positive case in the class. But I was not told the infected child was in my child's pod. I understand that confidentiality is important but I believe if the positive case is within the pod. Parents of children in the pod should know. '

From a parent: 'Brilliantly'

From a parent: 'Children/families aren't informing the school principles with any covid cases'

From a parent: 'Excellent Covid 19 procedures in place. I have [redacted] secondary school students attending the school. Approximately 350 students in total. I do appreciate that it must be difficult in larger schools, we have had no cases as a result of attending school.'

From a parent: 'Handled really well by the school not the hse'

From a parent: 'I am happy for both of my children to return to school as soon as possible.'

From a parent: 'I think is is crazy to say that schools are safe when there are high numbers of cases in the community. You can't gather large numbers of people in any building and expect cases not to spread if someone has covid.'

From a parent: 'I think the schools have acted accordingly and have done a great job. But it is time for kids to go back to school.'

From a parent: 'No information'

From a parent: 'No issue with it , schools should be essential service'

From a parent: 'One of my [redacted] teachers told the class that she tested positive when she returned to work , I was disgusted that we as parents were not informed so we could take extra precautions with our children'

From a parent: 'There was only 1 case in our primary school and no cases in our secondary school, I feel the schools have done so much in making sure everyone is safe and secure in school settings.'

From a parent: 'We have been informed when children have been close contacts. And school was very helpful when our [redacted] tested positive. Schools are not safer than most places but they are more necessary than most. I am happy with how our school handled the first positive case in my [redacted] class. We got an email and a phonecall from the principle on the Saturday afternoon and then the entire class had a test on Monday morning. I do not see who more the school or the HSE could have done.'

From a parent: 'All very secretive'

From a parent: 'Message sent out to all parents. Only two separate cases up to date, quite happy with school's performance and handling of same. They're very open and supportive all the way. '

From a parent: 'No cases of Covid-19 in my [redacted] school.'

From a parent: 'To many people from to many different houses all in 1 place '

From a parent: 'I am dealing 2 schools and they seem to have been trying to hide any cases.'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] [redacted] was tested twice due to 2 outbreaks in community and exposure from classroom setting. Regardless of where CV19 originates it is the close classroom Setting that is the issue. The school wants it kept quiet.'

From a parent: 'absolutely fantastic only 1 case caught from an aunt and not brought into the school, amazing the amount of work done by the school to prepare for tge kids coming back last September '

From a parent: 'All cars in the school have been dealt with very well in the school with communication given to relevant parents quickly and thoroughly.'

From a parent: 'Also case of me telling school that [redacted] positive and as it turns out would have been contagious at least on last day of school before [redacted] holidays. I emailed head and teacher - no response at all from either to me or school. I told parents I knew personally and asked them to share the news. I know they got email as teacher mentioned it recently '

From a parent: 'Complete denial! Following the HSE instructions to the letter and saying "it's nothing to do with us, it's down to the HSE to contact people".'

From a parent: 'I know there are cases in the primary schools near me, where cases were neither made known nor fully reported. Parents agreed to keep it quiet'

From a parent: 'I think more has to be done with contact tracing including teachers and sna's as I don't think it was dealt with properly '

From a parent: 'I think our schools are doing a stellar job, being as forthcoming and as honest, as contractually aloud, my problem is not with schools.. it is with dishonesty within the hse, the govt, the overall handling of cases and abismil contact tracing done, I do NOT trust contact tracing, that is why I don't have faith in schools opening safely.. if there's a case... close the class for 14days.. at least, class reopens after a negative test on the 10th day..... '

From a parent: 'I'm aware of 2 positive cases in my child's secondary school, neither were in **[redacted]** year group. The children were aware before we got notification by the school, however with social media this is to be expected. One family member was in **[redacted]** class and was back in school one week after we were notified of the case. I'm unsure of when the case was diagnosed so I'm not sure if the 14 day quarantine was meet at this stage. We were not notified as parents. This left my **[redacted]** anxious but at the same time we are not aware of any further cases as a result. My **[redacted]** reported that safe 2m distancing was not maintained at lunchtimes when they had to remove masks to eat. During premocks in November her year group did not have access to the lecture hall which had been designated their indoor area to eat. As a result they had to eat lunch in their locker area which was tightly packed.'"

From a parent: 'In my child school they have never said what year or class the positive test came from. Or which teacher. '

From a parent: 'Our school were very late to be informed by the HSE us parents knew 4 days before HSE confirmation to the school. By parent group WhatsApp. Many people could have been saved from infection and being close contacts if the process worked in real time. '

From a parent: 'Some people don't isolate with symptoms or when they are close contact of positive case. It's hard to know where is safe. '

From a parent: 'The school my **[redacted]** attends has been excellent. They have managed everything so well both in school & now online'

From a parent: 'The school sent out notices stating that there was a positive case in the school, but not which year or class. I think I ought to be informed if there is a positive case in my child's class or year as **[redacted]** could be at the far end of the room and still be infected depending on the air currents in the room. I kept my child home on the last day as I was nervous with the rise in cases and the shocking attitude of HSE advice to schools re close contacts and the despicable treatment of a primary school where Covid was rampant. It should be my choice to keep my child home if I do not accept the safety standards in the school. There has been no reduction in class size and the children are sharing desks with a partition so I know there is not even 1metre let alone 2m between pupils.'

From a parent: 'There have been two cases. We were informed and told that those deemed close contacts were informed. I don't know to this day if it was staff members or parents or pupils, which is good and proper handling. Privacy very much respected.'

From a parent: 'There is too many children in my child class.'

From a parent: 'There was one confirmed case in my [redacted] year and the school announced it on our iclass app, via text and through the school website and requested all second years stay home until deemed safe to return . They were open and transparent. I have a child in primary and another in secondary. Schools are doing the best they can, and distance learning is working well this time around. I think we should wait until at least after Easter hols before considering bringing all classes back. '

From a parent: 'Very well. Two separate of kids infected by parents (health workers). Contained quickly. No further transmission. '

From a parent: 'We've been told that there have been zero cases since March 2020 which I don't believe is true. The school have said they'll do what the HSE requires of them and that they "haven't been told" there's been any cases or outbreaks. I believe this is down to what close contacts were deemed to be and the over use of "community transmission" rather than school transmission. A number of students were "missing" from classes for days/weeks. Some students told my kids that they'd had covid tests because their parents had been sick so they had to be absent for a while. A number of teachers have since told students over Zoom to be careful and that Covid isn't nice and that they had it themselves at [redacted]. These teachers would have been in school up until the break, 2 of them were absent on the last two days before the [redacted] holidays so if you presume this was when they started to feel sick, then got a test and were confirmed positive by [redacted] day that means they were contagious in school for the last week. Yet no information from the school came to us and I'd guess that "no close contacts" were identified as being necessary to call because it was the [redacted] holidays. All those kids could have been asymptomatic and seeing people over [redacted]. The whole thing has been a pharse and our kids used as guinea pigs. I wrote to the Ministers office in Sept, Oct and Nov and they gave me figures of kids and school transmission that was literally a quarter of what your page gathered. Identifying what a close contact really is is essential here. The school also said in Sept that they were told by the Department that they weren't allowed to send work home for a child or allow them any remote learning unless they had a doctors certificate saying they had a serious illness and couldn't physically attend school. Who's idea was this? **To punish kids that were too scared of a deadly virus to go to school by withholding their education from them?!**

From a parent: 'Badly'

From a parent: 'Child in class bubble but only those on the table were considered contacts, even though no social distancing. We were informed [redacted] eve, I had to inform other parents in class group as they were planning on visiting vulnerable grandparents. Thankfully we had cancelled our plans to travel to see family.'

From a parent: 'I'm not aware of any covid cases in my [redacted] school'

From a parent: 'Mostly okay but schools never usually have soap in bathrooms, paper towels before covid. Since there is improvement in hygienic but not enough hand sanitizer topped up or basic sense. If you go to the toilet and you are in secondary school there is a rush to make class or get detention so it can lead to not cleaning properly. In primary I think if kids can be asked to bring in little hand gels and asked ever 30 minutes to use them in class would be useful. Surface sprays given to teachers to use sporadically through the day. Some schools will struggle to have adequate hygiene as well on their budget. As a parent with [redacted] children I've always found it annoying to be informed by other parents and not the school about children out sick with illness due to that protection. One day in 6th class my [redacted] had been out for 3 weeks due to a virus leading her to trigger ulcerative colitis and was hospitalised. On going back in I took her off an hour early for an appointment. At the same time I saw parent of child telling secretary child had chickenpox and it was then shingles but better now and looked forward to being back. Just before my [redacted] came down from second floor on stairs the man's [redacted] appeared. Rash all over her lips due to shingles highly infectious as rash had bursted blisters so to shout at [redacted] not to come down. Said to him you're still infectious at that stage. He said she was sick and better looking forward to being back its only a few days before doctors said it's completely gone. I said the school should be telling me if my [redacted] is in school with someone with a contagious disease. If she got chicken pox it would scar her lungs and given her immune system is very low at that time could kill her. Parents need to be kept informed so that they can make their own decisions as to whether the person in class is a danger to them at that time'

From a parent: 'Quite well I think but very secretive'

From a parent: 'Secret'

From a parent: 'Very well, whole school informed as soon as they receive confirmation of a case with info on class affected'

From a parent: 'We were cocooning. None of us left the house except for my 8 year old [redacted] who went to school on [month redacted] 1st he had a temperature and sore throat. I had him tested on the Monday. Positive result on Tuesday. I told HSE he had only been to school and we were cocooning. They told me there was no way he caught it in school and he must have got it elsewhere. (we had not left the house since July). I called the school but they couldn't do anything until the HSE called. Classes continued all week. HSE only called the school on Friday afternoon. 4 days later. The principal couldn't do anything until the HSE called. Meanwhile my husband and youngest [redacted] were tested on Saturday. Both negative. HSE sent my appointment to the wrong mobile and the refused to reschedule my test. I came down very unwell the following Tuesday (9 days after my [redacted] showed symptoms). I went to my gp and demanded a test and it came back the following day positive. My [redacted] was sick for 4 weeks as was I. HSE said I couldn't have caught it off him as he's a child. But I was isolating with him and minding him, so it makes sense. He became very unwell so I brought him to [redacted] hospital. I covered us both up with masks and went to kids A&E and said "we both have Covid and my [redacted] is very sick. Receptionist told us to take a seat in the public waiting area. I pointed out again we are both positive Covid and she again insisted we sit in the waiting area. We sat in the busy waiting room for 40mins with sick kids walking past us and sitting in the same room. My story

is much longer and detailed with the multiple fuck ups. I'm could then go on to how my mum had a heart attack a few weeks ago went into hospital then caught Covid from another patient and died within 5 days. She would be still alive if she hadn't gone into hospital. I'm happy to keep my kids at home until this all over. I don't them back in an environment were they can catch it again. I don't think I will survive the next dose of it."

From a parent: 'I have read bad reports of how covid had been handled in schools across Ireland and I honestly thought that either national or secondary school that my children attend was one these then I would say its not safe but when a confirmed case arouse in secondary school the school took action before hse sent home all students to quarantine till a test time date came in from hse and when hse suggested that my other children were fine to attend national school me and our national school principal both said no . They were not going to atte til there sibling was deemed negative so all in all I have to say we've been very lucky how our schools locally have handled covid, one issue I did have was how cold students our in school and my youngest contracted pneumonia because of this and was covid negative. But school in my area have dealt with this exceptionally well '

From a parent: 'I honestly think if we do this lockdown properly and not send our children back too soon we won't have to go into another lockdown again '

From a parent: 'No contact from school of confirmed cases it's unfair and unacceptable and puts my 3 children at risk'

From a parent: 'No of positive cases withheld from parents , I send an email requesting the school to update parents , at this stage there was 15 positive cases , not confirmed by school . We got an update but not numbers. My child was sitting beside the 1st positive case and was not considered a close contact. 4 others in his main class were also positive cases along with 2/3 in his other classes . How we know this is because the kids talk to each other. A school cannot be considered safe, if they are not honest with parents and hiding the facts. '"

From a parent: 'School doing their best . HSE being ridiculous.'

From a parent: 'Thankfully there have been no covid cases in my children s school as far as I am. Aware '

From a parent: 'We just received a text from our secondary school when there was a positive case in the school. We only received that one text and nothing extra when we found out from sources outside the school that additional cases were in the school. This isn't good enough information. We as parents should know what classes at least where there were positive cases. '

From a parent: 'Should be full disclosure of cases and no secrecy. Only "pods" being told and the kids are all out on playground with other classes on break.'

From a parent: 'Terrible did not get notified until over a week after exposure and 6days from them knowing of positive case. False letter forwarded from HSE with wrong dates for isolation period and poor communication'

From a parent: 'Handled brilliantly, teachers know how to keep the kids safe and they should be all allowed to return to protect our young minds mental health.'

From a parent: 'I have to say my [redacted] school was covid free until [redacted] week but was so scary sending my [redacted] as I've copd and other health issues also my [redacted] suffers with ashma and can only wear face sheild so he's actually putting himself in danger and he could also be putting me in danger as a one parent family it's so so worrying'

From a parent: 'Quite well. There were cases in other classes but no transmission and those classes were closed. Would have liked more info on classes.'

From a parent: 'The children need more space in the class rooms and they also need to stay apart whilst in the playground stay in their own pods no mixing . In our school it has done there utmost to keep it safe for children and staff'

From a parent: 'When diagnosed positive along with my partner and 5 children . I was the one to inform the relevent schools (3 in total) none of whom had been informed by HSE contract tracing.'

From a parent: '10 cases in my child's class, a week before contact tracing/HSE contact. Recorded as "community transmission". Other positive cases in at least two other classes at the school that I know of from the same time. I do not believe the measures in place are enough, or that schools are safe. '

From a parent: 'Badly and secretly'

From a parent: 'Children that tested positive in my [redacted] secondary school just required the students sitting around the positive person to self isolate and none of the other student's parents were informed which was not good enough. '

From a parent: 'Education is crucial. There is no 100% safe environment but the expert public health advice is that schools are safe and the small risk outweighs the massive benefits. People who dont believe schools are safe should keep their children at home.'

From a parent: 'For me school is not safe during covid 19 we have to keep our baby and children safe with us at home than going in community and bring covid 19 home.'

From a parent: 'I'm not sure when I heard about d case I took my child out of school and he hasn't been back since [month redacted]'

From a parent: 'Many cases in my [redacted] class/school that wasn't reported to parents for days after case/cases were given positive result'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] is LC we are concerned the full curriculum isnt covered, they are not prepared and have the stress of contracting the virus. Im am worried if they go back that [redacted]'d pick up covid just b4 exams and no allowance made for that. Also if exams go ahead without testing to ensure they are covid free including supervisors of exams... that within the first few days they contract covid & cant complete their exams'

From a parent: 'Our National school has been fantastic. They have gone over and beyond since last March. As a nurse working on the front line I feel teachers need proper PPE, one mask and one bottle of hand sanitizer last September is an insult. Teachers need to be vaccinated ASAP. I also wish our Nurses Union was as strong as teachers Unions'

From a parent: 'Our school have been fantastic, communication has been high, cases low and school transmission non existent The children need to get back to school at this point.'

From a parent: 'Pity good, but love to see masks are introduced for primary school students'

From a parent: 'Really well the school has been fantastic. I was glad that the schools closed when cases are high in jan but looking forward to schools opening again '

From a parent: 'School handled Covid cases very well. The issue for me was the procedures to follow for who was and was not a close contact. Totally incorrect. I believe the school management should have had the power to determine this, not the HSE! '

From a parent: 'School handled ok but HSE tracing was a disaster.'

From a parent: 'Since September there has only been 2 know cases in my [redacted] school not sure how things will go with the new strain '

From a parent: 'The school has handled it well. '

From a parent: 'The schools have done their best under the situation, no child has been seriously ill in either of my kids schools or any one I know, nor have I heard of a teacher been seriously ill yet, if there are any cases of serious illness in schools from covid it must be rare. All our children can get very sick in a normal year from bugs and virus's, covid hasn't effected children enough that we must live in fear. If we feared every danger that could happen to us in life every day, where and what would we achieve '

From a parent: 'They are doing their upmost and following protocol but with over 1200 Pupils very difficult to know history of movement etc outside the school''

From a parent: 'We had numerous cases of kids in secondary school, attending school, tested positive but were told our kids would be fine because the cases were picked up at a football match!!! But they still came to school while waiting for results...'

From a parent: '28 students in a class. Families are not following the rules outside of school and all mixing with other households. Primary school children are not wearing masks so have no protection. ''

From a parent: 'Good'

From a parent: 'None in school'

From a parent: 'School doing a wonderful job. As soon as case found whole class sent home and tested.'''

From a parent: 'We haven't been informed of all cases in our school'

From a parent: 'Daughter was deemed close contact as pupil in her class tested positive. However my other [redacted] sat beside a girl who's parents & siblings had tested positive. Parents had to inform the Principal and request pupil complete quarantine period. Parents had decided to send child to school despite 3 members of family being positive. Child had tested negative but did not quarantine. My [redacted] was not eligible for testing as pupil concerned was asymptotic. Classrooms are over sized and crowded. They are not safe! '"

From a parent: 'Handled well '

From a parent: 'Case almost every day for 2 weeks. School closed and re opened. Information from school very vague eg 'positive case in school community' this is a special needs school with two separate buildings and contains kids from 5 to 18 years old. It was impossible to ascertain the individual risk. '

From a parent: 'Full transparency is needed for parents, teachers and all school staff, the schools should communicate that they will inform all of any confirmed cases, we need to put our trust in the schools and have full transparency. No gdpr breaches are needed for this, just general info given. In addition if a child has been at school during their infectious period the entire class and teacher/snas etc for the class should be instructed to restrict their movements. Yes this will be a nuisance for everyone but all we want is our children protected as best as possible. '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] friend had several family members test positive. They were in a group who ate together. The group stayed home from school until her friend was in the clear.'

From a parent: 'No contact tracing. Not the fault of the schools. Took weeks for HSE to make any contact '

From a parent: 'No parents informed of any cases in the school unless directly affected within a class. '

From a parent: 'Not happy with it at all'

From a parent: 'Only informed of a single close contact case. First case was in another classroom. Were told to limit contacts only. Then 1 child was a contact but other child could go to school. Fortunately the school closed but only because staff were sick so no staff to open. From discussions with other parents we discovered more than [redacted] students were positive (small country school less than [redacted] students) and [redacted] teachers. We believe cases were reported as social/family cases instead of from school. '

From a parent: 'Parents still letting there kids go on the street when there close contact & positive cases'

From a parent: 'Poorly is the short answer although the school did the best they could. Hse guidelines are not clear or concise and constantly change'

From a parent: 'School very secretive even when I was aware of positive case was just told what the use recommended but that they couldn't confirm or deny if there was a confirmed case'

From a parent: 'Some of the cases have been hidden from us. They seem to be looking for an out in telling us about cases. The less cases they need to disclose the better it looks for the school.'

From a parent: 'Very secretive, and it was like a plague through a very small school that was hushed hush.. The spread went from child to family to extended family and each extended family were tested through GPS but All came from the school... It was very stigmatised. I could go on.. '

From a parent: '2 cases I know of have never been reported outside of the school, no close contacts alerted'

From a parent: 'All parents of the school were informed whenever there was a case in the school.'

From a parent: 'Excellent. We have had 2 cases and both were handled immensely'

From a parent: 'I have been informed by email from the school and HSE when cases have been confirmed in the school'

From a parent: 'Son is in secondary school, he told us of kids kissing each other on school grounds to see if they could spread virus. My [redacted] was also a close contact but not advised he was one. My [redacted] is in primary school. She has been in 10 different class room pods since sept, they mix with anyone and everyone at lunch time and entering and leaving school grounds. Its not good enough'

From a parent: '1 case in 2 schools since last Sept, 10 lads stayed out for required time.'

From a parent: 'A child in my [redacted] class tested positive, we were told to keep my [redacted] out of school along with his class but yet it was perfectly safe for other 2 children to attend school. I kept my other 2 children off school until my [redacted] had had his covid test as he was deemed a close contact and he got a negative. '

From a parent: 'Everyone in my household, my partner and my mother work in front line jobs with hse, my mother gets tested every week from work, has got 1st part of vaccine, my partner works with IT and security within hospitals and clinics, they have followed all guidelines during covid, I worked 1st part during covid also

frontline work, have 2 kids [redacted], and am currently [redacted]. Our primary school is so small in numbers 20 and there is more than enough space in school to spread kids around, the school done really well with dealing with covid, kids had there own bubbles to play with on break, the school bus was my main worry because the same bus is used for secondary schools to. The school made sure hand sanitiser was set in place for kids with sensitive skin also. Kids need normality back so much, have handled covid so well, our school is lucky than most because of the numbers been so small. (I think government should look at numbers and outbreaks in areas, and make conscious choices on whether its safe to open schools or not) our school has done good and our cleaner and hired help for cleaning has done amazing.'

From a parent: 'In primary school handled very well all in class tested .in secondary school little information & no testing despite it being in class '

From a parent: 'It was heard first in the area that some pupils were positive, but it took several days before school informed parents,, but not sure if pupils parents/guardians were late in informing the school, hence the slow reaction '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] secondary school had 2 cases in September and an email was sent home as soon as first case was confirmed, the fact that there was a possible 2nd case was mentioned, when the 2nd case was confirmed another email was sent home. When there was a rumour about a 3rd case in the school, on a Facebook page, another email was sent home confirming that there was only 2 cases in the school.'

From a parent: 'Our school was [redacted] BNS and principal wanted to close but hse and doe went against its decision. Cases were out of control. Kids getting it from home though and spreading in class. My [redacted] is out of school since 27th Nov and needs to get back to education and friends safely'

From a parent: 'Our school was closed by the principal and went against the inspectorate wishes. My [redacted] has 31 in his class 6 came back positive and four asymptomatic.'

From a parent: 'Schools have never been safe from Covid'

From a parent: 'Schools very safe & great control measures in place.. '

From a parent: 'Thankfully as a small country school we have had no cases. '

From a parent: 'There were 2 positive cases in my [redacted] year (Leaving Cert). She was sitting beside 1 of these positive cases when he was informed he was a close contact and he had to go home and be tested. When he then tested positive, my [redacted] was not deemed a close contact by the HSE even though she had been sitting beside him in class for an hour. As a result of these 2 positive cases half of the year were deemed close contacts (1 class not wearing masks) and had to self isolate and be tested. While they were off school the other half of the year had to go in to school even though teachers couldn't move forward with classwork as half the students were off school. In my opinion, the whole year should have been sent home and taught remotely for the 2 weeks.'"

From a parent: 'They took the precautions and everything was fine in the school and no cases. I would feel very comfortable with my [redacted] going back to school'

From a parent: 'Was a teacher with confirmed case. School contacted us straight away to inform us even though my child had not been in contact with case. Kept us up to date and told us they understood if we did not feel safe sending child to school'

From a parent: 'Handled well in primary. Whole class told not to come in and informed on ap but nothing from secondary school at all when there was a positive case'

From a parent: 'I believe the schools are doing the very best they can, but they have been silenced and hamstrung by the departments of Education and Health. It is the government who cannot be trusted and who have spread this mistrust throughout society. The definitions

for close contacts etc keep being changed and this just increases the worry, and the concerns.'

From a parent: 'If someone could reach out to me here .we were told that there was a case in our school a staff member tested positive and hse never got in contact with parents or children who were deemed close contact by an Sna in school.principal blames hse fir not contacting her she refused to take calls from worried and stress out parents so we put in a complaint to board of management and all avenues were exhausted here .As they continually blames hse .So we wrote in a letter of complaint to them and I now have it in writing that there was no case of Covid recorded by them .'

From a parent: 'Kept quiet. We were not told of any cases. When there was actually loads of confirmed cases. I Did not feel safe at all with my [redacted] in school. I am high risk so it was very stressful. I took her out for the month of [month redacted] as there was so many cases in our school and village. She sits beside one guy in one of her subjects. He turned out covid positive. We heard absolutely nothing from hse or school. Only for his mum informed me I would never have found out. That was the day I made decision to take her out. While I understand it is very hard on the children especially teenagers been stuck at home, I hope the schools do not open again untill cases drop totally and most of the population has been vaccinated . My child is a 5th year in secondary school. Thanks for all the work you guys are doing '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] year old is a close contact. Positive case was a child in the same room whose parents sent him to creche while waiting on the results. Letter from the HSE was clear but the call with HSE provided a different guidance and different dates. 2 tests were scheduled for our [redacted] year old. First one done, waiting on results and second one on a week later. Guidance from the HSE should be stricter as his 6 to sister was not required to self isolate unless she has symptoms which doesnt make sense. We all are all self isolating just in case and hopefully negative. '

From a parent: 'No clear reporting, had to look for details of positive cases in the school. '

From a parent: 'No information given to parents'

From a parent: 'No SD , no proper ventilation, no reduction in numbers or class sizes in school , no reduction of numbers / class years on the school grounds , no sending close contacts or Class year home after a case was identified. '

From a parent: 'Only had one, our school had been doing brilliantly all year. The one case happened just a day or two before school was to finish for [redacted]; no one arrived the next day so school pretty much finished early.'

From a parent: 'Our school is fantastic. There is no need for it to be shut!'

From a parent: 'Personally my child's school handled it very well. The positive case was from a child who's parents had been out every weekend in different pubs and then held birthday celebrations in a pub & hotel and this caused the positive cases, that led to the school child bringing it into the classroom. While pubs/restaurants, hotel and house visits are not possible

schools are safe. When these places open, wreckless parents will bring covid home to their kids who unfortunately will bring it into the classrooms.'

From a parent: 'Schools need timely contact tracing advise 7!days a week. Children need to be educated pending on incidence in the locality. Primary school on line education is below standard. Cannot continue. Teachers should have been more accessible via on.line platforms. Unions are destroying their reputable name - looking for payrises whilst at home.'

From a parent: 'Started off well but standards have been slipping'

From a parent: 'The kids who tested positive in the school, were out for 2 weeks. However none of the classmates were classed as close contacts. Only the children who ate lunch outdoors with the positive cases were close contacts, even though the positive cases sat in a room with 31 other students, with only a metre between desks . There was no bubbles in the class, they share a locker room with another 150 students and change classrooms every 40 minutes.'

From a parent: 'The school is not allowing any student attend if they have a sniffle. If the student sneezes they are sent home. Even been the children of a close contact negative case, the hse advised they were allowed to attend school, yet when I phoned the school as advised by thsle hse , the school did not allow them return for 5 days... even tho I was working as normal. The figures from schools are not correct, especially as not all classes are full and even with a sneeze their sent home. '

From a parent: 'Their has been very little positive within our school and they've been very open and honest about cases that they have come across. However I do worry that if it's not safe for people to sit in a hairdressers or pub or even a shopping centre how can it be safe for my children and the teachers to be sitting in a small room for hours...'

From a parent: 'We are not always being told directly by the school of positive cases. We are finding out from neighbours, friends or social media.'

From a parent: 'We had 1 covid case through our school, it was handled very well. My [redacted] was covid postive due to this 1 case, no other cases followed. Very mild symptoms, she had a hospital stay for influenza, covid was much much milder in this case. I believe there is huge fear generated and the majority of people and children recover extremely well from this virus. I have absolutely no fear for my 3 children attending school. '

From a parent: 'We informed the school a pupil in our [redacted] class tested positive and had to test our [redacted] private because school or hse did not deem him close contact because he did not sit in his pod even though they are lunch together and were on yard with no masks together ðŸ™ƒ'

From a parent: 'A group of mothers went overnight to a hotel .the positive case SENT her [redacted] who was telling kids online on his playstation the night before that he had also tested positive to school so as not to be singled out .the other mammys went quiet on the what'sapp group's..following day kid never showed up and The kids were talking in class and mentioned to teacher about covid.HSE informed the school day laterNOT the parent.'

From a parent: 'Both my [redacted] schools have handled the situation extremely well. They kept clear communication at all times and there's been 2 confirmed cases in both schools.'

From a parent: 'Children in my [redacted] class but my [redacted] was not deemed a close contact...she sits directly behind this child. Nothing received from school or hse'

From a parent: 'Different rules from NEFET advise. Not safe as no proper social distancing'

From a parent: 'I think our schools are doing their best to control the problem with Pods etc...I think the problem is in the wider community.'

From a parent: 'I think they have been handily very efficiently'

From a parent: 'It very clean and hand gel everywhere'

From a parent: 'My child's school has been amazing'

From a parent: 'None in our school'

From a parent: 'Not told that someone in my child's class who they sat next to for an hr was COVID positive. Kept them out of school for 10 days to be on the safe side and they were marked as absent that goes on their school record which I think is terrible. Only friends they spend their lunchtime outside with are classed as close contacts which is so wrong. Also it's all kept hush hush just not on, I have a vulnerable member in my family and a leaving cert student and junior cert student. The stress in our house is off the scale and no support from the school what do ever.'

From a parent: 'School days divide in rotas'

From a parent: 'Very goid'

From a parent: 'Very well'

From a parent: 'I think if cases are low in the community surrounding the school they are a bit safer but I think if a child tests positive the whole class should be sent home for 2 weeks and any associated siblings not just pods. Also children in school should have rapid testing. There was a case in one of my children's schools. The child tested positive but none of their family tested positive. The school didn't tell parents because as far as I know the hse didn't confirm the case to them so the school didn't have any contact tracing done. A mother of a friend of the child rang hse to see if her child should be tested as they play together at school and eat lunch etc they are in 6th class so would sit chatting at times too and hse said no not a close contact no test needed. Luckily there were no further cases so unless it was a false positive. Child's symptoms were tummy pains and temp.'

From a parent: 'I was informed by a parent that her [redacted] was a close contact of a child who had tested positive so she removed her child from school for 2 weeks. I did the same. We were subsequently advised there had been a case in 2nd year at school and hse deemed there were no close contacts. This was in addition to other cases in other years that we were never informed about but we were aware of through other parents who had siblings in other years.'

From a parent: 'Local schools have been excellent. Creche in local area allowed employee back to work after short holiday. Covid closed the creche just before [redacted]. A lot of infections from that 1case'

From a parent: 'The school aren't making parents aware there was a break out in the local creche which caters for before and after school kids and creche had to close as a result there was a number of children in my [redacted] class of being tested and other classes which turned out positive and as it was day or 2 before [redacted] holidays the school never ever made parents aware that there was positive cases '

From a parent: 'Case in [redacted] class deemed not a close contact and safe to attend school. Turned out he was OK however feel the whole thing was dealt with wrong and for peace of mind should have been referred for a covid test just to stop him from worrying'

From a parent: 'Atrocious. Lies, cover ups. No transparency. Because my [redacted] hadn't been in contact with the positive case 48hrs prior we weren't deemed close contact and weren't told. We heard from my child & then a neighbour confirmed and so we got a test which was positive. We were then told we didn't catch the virus from school!!! We certainly did and my husband still suffers 3 months on. He can no longer go cycling or jogging as is out of breath. He works from home. The only contact we had was from this positive school case albeit 3 - 4 days previous. But they said it had to be 48hrs prior - this makes no sense. The virus incubates for much longer than 48hrs & so this child was spreading it in school for about a week prior to becoming a confirmed case.'

From a parent: 'Dept of Health pressurising Depts Public Health and HPSC to categorise school cases as community acquired cases. No data on source of infection as this would require genomic sequencing of the virus for all cases which only happens for a tiny % of cases detected.'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] was close contact at school. Contacted by principal asap with information. Then contacted by contact tracing and test was arranged. I was very impressed with the way the situation was dealt with. No one who was a close contact of the confirmed case was positive for Covid.'

From a parent: 'Our school had a huge outbreak at the start of [month redacted]. There are less than 100 pupils . We were never informed of the total amount of cases in the school . My 2 kids were originally close contacts , their brother in a different class wasnt originally considered a close contact and was advised by hse that he could go to school , he was asymptomatic and positive, so they were just lucky the school had to be closed down because they'd no teachers that weren't close contacts otherwise he could have infected more people in his class '

From a parent: 'Positive cases were communicated via SMS/website, year group was not communicated'

From a parent: 'My experience to date with my child's school has been very positive. I believe their hands are tied at times. The problem I have found is the reckless and inconsiderate behaviour of some of the parents with regard to flouting guidelines and thus resulting in some positive cases coming into the schools.'

From a parent: 'If there is a case only close contacts are been told '

From a parent: 'Primary and Secondary schools have responded well but it's not really the point, children should not be in school during a pandemic of an airborne virus, it does not prevent them catching it and this constant push to get children back into a dangerous environment, potentially lethal for them or their families, is reckless. They can redo school or classes, that can be fixed - you cannot fix death or serious illness. '

From a parent: 'No cases in my [redacted] school'

From a parent: 'We didn't know for over a week that my [redacted] was a close contact. So he only had to quarantine for a week and the first week he was attending school as normal. His brother who is also in the school didn't have to stay at home even though my close contact [redacted] still hadn't received his test results. I kept him at home anyway just in case.'

From a parent: 'I find it very frustrating when an individual is attending school & heading for a covid19 test the following day. We need better communication from our schools. This "data protection" response to any questions asked. It's s***e, some of us are high risk.'

From a parent: 'I think schools should have been closed on a case by case basis. Not a blanket closure '

From a parent: 'We are in a pandemic, handled as well as possible in the circumstances- really wish parents would follow the guidelines provided by HSE- if they actually did ,schools would have been much safer- cases brought into the schools by children and teachers exposed to COVID by carelessness in their homes and communities- shocked by some of the behaviours of some of my ~educated' friends- rules and guidelines appear to be for others ! Disgraceful that schools are closed and children suffer as a consequence of selfish adult behaviour and that includes self indulgent grandparents - really hope we have learnt from the horror repercussions of adult behaviour over [redacted]!'

From a parent: 'We haven't had any cases in the school at all thank god and actually have had v few cases in the locality'

From a parent: 'School engaged in a manner as. to aggressively cover up and deny positive covid outbreaks '

From a parent: 'We are based in [redacted] and when the kids were in School the numbers were extremely low, however if the numbers were high in our area/County I would be saying they were not safe. The national school are handling it very well but my [redacted] tells me that his school (secondary) are not allowing them clean tables/chairs after moving rooms.'

From a parent: 'Cases there were happening in school came from kids on private school buses where some kids were not wearing masks and buses were not allowing for not social distancing'

From a parent: 'Fine'

From a parent: 'No information of shared cases from school. Not informed even if they had cases. As deem a private matter. I think as parent we should be for health and safety reson. '

From a parent: 'Our school notified us immediately upon notification they received from HSE and the following morning we were contacted by the school vice principal to tell us my [redacted] was deemed a close contact and we needed to collect him straight away and that he would have to be tested and the HSE would be in contact , two days later he was tested even though I had explained to contact tracer he has Cystic Fibrosis. These were two days of absolute hell.'

From a parent: 'Have not had any'

From a parent: 'Not told if there is cases or not'

From a parent: 'School is 100% compliant. 1 case in the PLC section of the school none in the main body of the school'

From a parent: 'Thankfully there have been no cases in the school and I believe our school will handle it safely'

From a parent: 'Under handling and covered up'

From a parent: 'We only had 1 case that we were made aware of. Heard it from another parent on Facebook before school sent out email confirming it. ''

From a parent: 'We were informed by school on a Tuesday night that all class should remain at home until further notice. Then on Thursday which was 6 days after last contact (previous friday) with positive case we were informed by HSE that our child was deemed a close contact and required a test even though 3 teachers were absent from the Monday obviously in self isolation so they were informed way before the parents. The HSE informed us of one positive case in childs classroom but later correspondence from school indicated that there was a number of positive cases within the school community. To this day we still don't know how many cases were in the school or if there was transmission within the school.'

From a parent: 'From the school side of it. There was no close contact's concidered. There were case's that we weren't informed of. We removed our child for safety reasons on both occasions. '

From a parent: 'I think the fact that classes of 30 students in close proximity & breathing in the same air are not considered a close contact is very wrong. My [redacted] would tell me about kids positive in secondary school. Even with the so called pods in the classes they are still close enough to others to pass it on. In my [redacted] primary school we got a text from the school to say there was a case in his class but he wasn't deemed a close contact.'"

From a parent: 'My [redacted] is in 6th year and a girl sitting next to her for 3 classes a day tested positive I was never notified by the school that this girl was in my [redacted] year let alone her class,just that there was a case in the school,I took opo on myself to isolate away from my family and friends.This isn't right we should know when our children are close contacts '

From a parent: 'The lack of information given other than confirmation of a case causes great worry and unrest amongst parents and students alike. '

From a parent: 'There was a positive case in my [redacted] class after midterm but thankfully I kept my [redacted] home after midterm break as my gut instinct told me school at that time was not safe for him to go back, school informed me of the case in my [redacted] class after i had messaged the teacher to ask what class the case was in, I decided to keep my [redacted] out indefinitely after that and the school kept phoning pressuring me to send him in!!!! saying school was safe, the measures they had in place were working etc..... I am at the stage now that I will not be sending him back until the new school term in September, he is thriving at home with the one on one time he needed with his school work.'

From a parent: 'I think it should be left for the parents to decide if they deem their child a close contact or not ! All parents should be notified ASAP about a positive case in the school and we should be told what class it is in so we can decide wether we want to restrict our child's movements until we get W test for them . Just because our child might not sit beside the infected child does not mean there's no way they have it , if they are in a room with a positive case then they should be deemed a close contact !'

From a parent: 'Absolutely no information provided by the school about any positive cases. Although two students from one of my childrens class had to be tested and isolate for two weeks. I have no real idea if they were or were not positive as there was zero communication from the school. Very bad form leaving people to speculate and guess if its a safe environment. '

From a parent: 'Don't think schools are a safe environment but it's totally necessary to be there, for education and mental health. My child is struggling with home learning and having big problems with the social isolation '

From a parent: 'I think schools are safe only if covid is not brought into school. We've had 2 headline outbreaks in our small (less than 80 pupils) national school, from September to November. So if you can't control spreading life in school, obviously social distancing is an issue. Could understudy it was just a single case within the school, but 2 outbreaks!'

From a parent: 'My [redacted] children had covid and so did 1 and my husband. We got it from my husbands factory 2 children were a symptomatic and two were sick. So that meant in the primary school 1 child was considered infectious while in school. To be on the safe side the school tested the three classes. I rang the school and told but there was a few days of a time lapse I also put it up in a what's app group of the child showing symptoms because her symptoms were identical to mine before she tested positive when I already had.'

From a parent: 'My child's teacher was isolating as she was a close contact but we weren't told about it. I only found out accidentally. Also at the time when nephew suggested level 5 we kept our child home. It was after that that we received a message from school informing about a case. I felt relieved that my child wasn't in school during that time.'

From a parent: 'Very well'

From a parent: 'We have had 0 cases of Covid in our School. That includes 250 plus students teachers etc. As with numerous schools around our area they had no zero covid outbreaks. But still we are in a situation where our children are out of school again. The covid numbers are coming down and the rate is low in our area. If operated in the correct way schools are SAFE. Schools need to get be opened again ASAP!!! '

From a parent: 'We were not informed at first, it was announced to the students over the tannoy, we were only informed by the HSE and school when my boys were close contacts, one in his classroom and then both of them on the school bus. It was day 7 when we were informed of the bus close contact, so they had been in school all that time and at home with their sisters who attend a different school. '

From a parent: 'My [redacted] has been in preschool/crèche since End of June. They are a large preschool with 20+ staff.... not one case of COVID in the school among kids or teachers. Because the owner, staff and parents are so careful. Unlike primary & secondary schools they continue to work through this lockdown, through huge volumes of cases in the country, still no COVID in the crèche. I believe if all schools took this strict approach then they would be safe enough to open. There would still be risk but there always is in these settings, even before covid.'

From a parent: 'They shouldn't go back until cases are below 100.'

From a parent: 'Both my children have severe asthma. Both got sick before [redacted]. We knew one in their class was out waiting for covid testing after parent got it. We asked 4 times to be referred for resting and refused each time.'

From a parent: 'I believe schools are safer because in our school (primary) every child has to have temperature checked every morning and they are not allowed to attend if unwell in any way. They also have very strict hygiene rules and children are constantly encouraged to wash hands or use disinfectant. The pods seemed to have worked well, too. Children are not the problem. Adults ignoring basic rules are a bigger cause of hotspots and spikes in case numbers. As much as I would like to blame politicians, no politician can make a person adapt personal responsibility if that person does not understand what personal responsibility means and how their actions are affecting others in society. '

From a parent: 'I heard nothing until I saw official letter on your page. None of the parents in the class did except the positive case. No one deemed close contacts despite the fact it was a teacher and no pods in school'

From a parent: 'My children are in very large secondary schools. Less than 10 cases between the schools'

From a parent: 'Our schools have been excellent, constant up to date reports and 2 cases last year in a school of almost 1,000. The problem isn't with schools, students have been great and the teachers have been amazing.'

From a parent: 'Secondary school experience: Close contacts sent home but only those who lunched with the positive case with masks off. Those sitting near the case <2M not deemed close contacts & left in school as masks worn in class. Parents not been told unless their

child was a 'close contact'. A communication did go out on the school app saying what year the positive was in but not what class. Thankfully no experience of cases in younger child's primary school. '"

From a parent: 'The 2 schools our [redacted] children go to have handled things well. One is a boarding school in [redacted], so it's amazing it was kept out. There were eventually cases in the schools, (one being a student who went to school the day after getting a Covid test as a close contact, hanging around friends and carrying on as normal, riding the bus home and testing positive. The whole year was sent home and the bus shut down for 2 wks) In both schools, we were kept informed with letters sent home in a timely manner. '

From a parent: 'The school itself did the best it could I feel. But the decision by government to start opening them again is a different story the school's opening has a big effect on those that can't or who chose it's not safe yet to go back. It's a terrifying prospect of going against the grain and choosing not to send them back. Personally there is not enough support for those who won't send them back they have just assumed everyone will come back when they say and that's not fair either. Everyone can't wait for schools to open myself included but not until it's safe to do so and the pressure to send them back is already a big cause for concern here I just we had more choice in either direction we choose to go.'

From a parent: 'There have been 3 cases in the school. The first was deemed in the community but no more information was given. The other 2 were in the school but we weren't told which class. In all of the cases there were deemed to be no close or casual contacts by the HSE and no students were asked to self isolate. I do know if students who had to self isolate as they were close contacts and my [redacted] had a negative test as she was symptomatic but no one was advise of these officially.'

From a parent: 'Very good procedures in place following DES Covid guidelines'

From a parent: 'Whilst the school has informed parents eventually, of a covid case in the school, the information is very slow to filter through. Not enough kid's or teachers are officially considered a close contact, when they clearly are. We need to know exactly the year the student is in and if the child was in school immediately prior to becoming covid positive. Not enough is being done though school is trying it's best, and some teacher's are lax on insisting on more thorough hygiene from the kid's. One teacher told my [redacted] it was ok cause u can't catch covid in school ðŸ˜‚, '

From a parent: 'I am a teacher and parentvof 5 kids. Both creche and school were advises by hse to not alarm and basically keep it hush hush....'

From a parent: 'I do not feel safe sending my child back to school anytime soon. It is tough homeschooling but at least I know we are at home safe'

From a parent: 'Both of my children's schools have been exceptionally responsive, with no cases in my [redacted] secondary and only two cases in my son's. But this is because the schools have been so strict in monitoring and keeping bubbles separate and minimising all contact. However, we'd reached the decision ourselves over [redacted] not to send the kids back because we felt that the government response was inadequate.'

From a parent: 'Both secondary and primary school my kids attend have had 1 positive case each. Both schools dealt with it very effectively and thankfully all close contacts received negative results. Neither of the schools could've done more than they did. I have great confidence in both schools, thankfully '

From a parent: 'Excellent handling in both our primary and secondary school '

From a parent: 'Extremely well. Notified straight away by the school even though it was not in our class either time. '

From a parent: 'Handled very well , my [redacted] tested positive. I am a frontline healthcare worker , school put everyone he had been in class with out and done online school with them for the 2 weeks isolation period'

From a parent: 'How can 5 pupils out of 20 be classed as close contacts when they are all breathing the same air . Until close contacts in school are treated and classed the same as close contacts in the wider community schools cannot be called safe . There can't be 1 rule for schools and 1 rule for the rest of the country '

From a parent: 'I deal with two schools one is very open about covid but unless the hse deem your child as a close contact you are told of a case not what year etc your child often gets that information from hear say. The other school I have seen on Facebook before my child receives an email and only before the [redacted] holidays were texts sent to parents teens don't always check the school email. I also know of 100% positive cases in teachers that have been with children and none of that's reported. Also can't understand how if a pupil has it no teachers are absent in the days after. Delays in contact tracing and who is deemed a close contact is what makes schools unsafe. If a case is in a classroom all children should be sent home and any teacher who has been in contact. Masks are not worn at break time and students mix as normal. Also my [redacted] in 2nd year feels I tell her the dangers but school don't make a big deal bout it. But it is effecting my teenagers education and that is my biggest worry also mental health teens/children these days won't be very sociable '

From a parent: 'I don't know of any cases in our school, but I think that may be blissful ignorance. There was talking of people being diagnosed on the weekend 'not in school'. We certainly weren't informed. Our school has taken measures to create social distancing, keeps windows open (freezing kids not allowed hats). I don't know how the teachers were feeling about it though. '

From a parent: 'I don't think having 20-30 kid's in one classroom is safe. They should do a class in morning for half of the students and half in the afternoon to limit contacts'

From a parent: 'I was only notified if the positive case was in one of my children's year groups. '

From a parent: 'I'm not aware of any COVID cases at either of my kids schools '

From a parent: 'In some respects it's been handled very well (pods system, hygiene, etc) In others it hasn't. Students of all ages mix on the bus, unmasked, and then go to their separate classes. Defeats the purpose of pod systems. We had one positive case in the

class across the hall. Only 2 classes in that building. Shared toilets, external doors, etc. Our class was not counted as close contacts but we kept our child out for a week until the rest of the close contacts tested negative. If that student had taken the bus or had siblings in other classes it could've spread much faster.'

From a parent: 'My boys secondary school have claimed to only have one case, in a school of 1k I'm terribly dubious to believe this but I don't feel safe with my kids in school one bit, don't trust the contact tracing at all.'

From a parent: 'No cases.'

From a parent: 'No contact from school. No idea how many cases. Not concerned'

From a parent: 'Person in same class but not in pod tested positive. Sits less than 1 meter away. Not deemed close contact because of mask wearing and my child tested positive but deemed community transmission at contact tracing stage.'

From a parent: 'Very badly handled by the HSE. On failing to contact the HSE over 2 days, after a parent informed the school of their child's positive test result, the School discovered at 7pm that most staff and 6th yr students had received a text message to go for a Covid Test. The School did not hear this from the HSE but from staff and students. The School was not able to open the following day as there weren't enough staff available and was frantically trying to contact parents, the school did not open fully for a week approx. Very stressful. My child received a text message out of the blue that she was going for a Covid Test, as she has mental health issues this did not go down well, especially as she has been so careful. We discovered through friends on social media that she had sat beside the confirmed case in a Maths class but she was never officially informed. The return to school was also a shambles, some students (my child included) were told they could return after self isolation of 2 weeks, others less, and still others that they needed another negative test before they could go to school. The school were never asked for the seating plan of students so this information seems to have been decided at random. It doesn't instill confidence in the HSE.'

From a parent: 'Very professional. Teachers wear masks. Kids masks. Transport monitored. Hand sanitizer. School are safe '

From a parent: 'We have never been made aware of any cases. Feel like things are kept very quiet'

From a parent: 'Well'

From a parent: 'It was handled very well. The classes affected were sent home for two weeks and all students received several tests, to ensure that they were negative before returning to school. The communication from the school was quick.'

From a parent: 'My son is [redacted] and has special needs. He is in leaving cert applied and due to do his exams in June. He would probably be hospitalised if he becomes a covid positive case. If that happens and I am not allowed in with him the result would be dreadful for him as he has never been hospitalised without me staying with him. He wouldn't cope with it. The longer he goes without being vaccinated the higher the risk to him. The remote

learning is the best for him as he is at home and only my husband has left the house since December to go to work and get the shopping. Our two [redacted] also have stayed at home. I feel if the schools are to open that all staff and at least the children with special needs (but would prefer all children) should be vaccinated. There is no point in vaccinating one without the other as there is no way of knowing if vaccinated people are carriers.'

From a parent: 'We are not told anything, my child's friend tested positive, his parents contacted me, the hse did not, we decided to self isolate as we're meant to spend [redacted] day with my elderly parents. We got a phone call from his parents on [redacted] eve'

Parents, who are also preschool staff

From a parent/preschool staff: 'A child in my [redacted] class was positive he sits at the table behind the child but not in the child's pod so was not deemed a close contact nor was the teacher. I work in a preschool and a child's parent tested positive after the child had been in preschool all week, luckily the child tested negative but we weren't informed by the parent about the situation until after the child tested negative we were just told the Friday that the child wouldn't be in as they were sick but they weren't sick they were being tested so the parent then text to say the child's father was positive but the child was negative so we weren't deemed close contacts or tested'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Excellent in both my kids two schools and also the creche I work in. Everyone following guidelines and excellent cleaning regimes'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'I'm very confused as to how the HSE determines who is a close contact. It appears to vary from school to school and it doesn't reassure me that the process is working as well as it could.'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Positive case in class, a student. Nobody deemed close contact in the classroom. Another case where school was not contacted by hse for 3 days after student tested positive. Again, nobody deemed close contacts'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Well'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'I don't know how they were handled because we were never given information about them, except for the first case in my [redacted] primary school. Never heard anything when there was a case in my other [redacted] secondary school'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'No face mask provided. Students were taking theirs off and gathering in big groups outside of the school. Many 6th years got it at a party.'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Although we are all missing the interaction with our peers it's just not safe with the numbers so high. Some days are extremely hard as it is without the added pressure of the departments handling of the whole process. As a SNA I missed the children greatly but because I am also a mammy I have to prioritise my children and family first so i have been unable to return to work just yet. I look forward to a safe and reasonable return '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'It is too difficult to adequately social distance with children and touch points are everywhere '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Not allowed to use the toilet at all, still moving from class to class for every class. Both my children are very anxious as I have one in junior cert and one in leaving cert. '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Handled great in our school but I think it's pot luck cause school two mins down the road had a outbreak with nearly half of students testing positive and only over 100 in the school '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'I'm sorry I'm not of much use. My kids go to the local country primary school and I work in the [redacted] beside the school. There has been plenty of tests and one parent tested positive but no children or teachers from either school have. I still don't want my kids back to school yet and myself at work. Not until it's safe '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Contract tracing glacially slow'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'The school sent an email and just said what class but I think sibling classes should be added so people can decide themselves whether to keep their kids out if they were in contact with a sibling to someone who tested positive.'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Luckily haven't had in it our schools. But after [redacted] we all tested positive from a close contact, we had very mild symptoms, no temp, cough for a day, a headache that lasted 3 weeks was only thing, kids no symptoms. If it wasn't for lockdown I would have went to work where I could have infected 14 kids, [redacted] in primary and another in preschool would have infected their friends etc, this is why I'm not sure it is fully safe, as how many are walking around thinking they run down or have a cold and are spreading it. '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Lucky enough no cases in my job(preschool) and only a very few numbers in children's school which have been handled well'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'There have been no cases in my [redacted] preschool.'

From a parent/preschool staff: 'Currently 2 pods within my preschool are closed. 3 positive cases '

From a parent/preschool staff: 'We had a positive case in our upstairs preschool. We shut down immediately and informed the HSE after this fact. All children details that were deemed close contacts were communicated to the HSE and then all received a test 5/8 days later. My own [redacted] was one of the children who was sent for a test, he was negative thankfully. The HSE Covid tracing team contacted me afterwards to make sure my [redacted] had been tested and all was well. Our experience was a positive one and thankfully we never had anymore cases. '

Parents, who are also school staff

From a parent/school staff: 'COVID transmission is inevitable in schools as it is not possible to effectively implement safety measures . Large class sizes , social gatherings , no PPE and poor ventilation are some of the factors that contribute to this . Authorities are in denial and COVID cases are covered up in order to save face . Our schools are our communities so when numbers are present in our community they automatically present in our school communities. It is infuriating and disrespectful to school staff to manipulate the truth in order to hide the harsh reality . Schools are NOT safe places , children are NOT immune . In my experience , children were more often than not asymptomatic and passed it onto grandparents , parents, teachers and carers who inevitably picked up more serious cases of COVID 19 . Also in my experience , cases in schools were covered up , and teachers were not informed when they were close contacts . Every effort was made by government to mislead and to falsely claim that schools were safe when in fact they never were . Why should teachers be protected less . There is now an expectation that teachers go back to the very same work environments , unchanged , unmodified and with the very same risk of transmission as before . If you must maintain a 2m social distance , remain within 5Km of your home , and forfeit visits with close relatives , then it is misleading to invite a whole school community to come together where none of these rules can possibly be implemented.'

From a parent/school staff: 'My [redacted] was a close contact and a test was arranged on day 14 of his isolation. We were not contacted until late on day 13 by the hse to be told he was a close contact'

From a parent/school staff: 'With complete privacy. I was in rooms with 25+ and kids returned after illness telling me miss, I had covid when I was absent in Sept, Oct, Nov etc. Was never informed by management. My own [redacted] is in fifth year same school and there were 6 cases in her year group. School continued as normal for fifth years. An absolute disgrace. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Thankfully we havent had any positive cases that i know of in my school or my daughters'

From a parent/school staff: 'I am a primary school teacher. I teach a junior class and have 33 children in my class. There is no room to socially distance pods in my classroom but I do my best and the windows and doors are left open all of the time. Before [redacted] 2 children in my class tested positive. I was told by my principal that someone in the school had tested positive but he said he couldn't say what class they were in but he advised me to be very vigilant of symptoms myself and to get tested at the 1st sign. I asked him outright if the child was in my class he said he couldn't say but indicated strongly that it was. A few days later we had another positive case in the class, I was never informed by the principal but learned from a colleague who lives locally. In the 10 days following this, 9 children from my class were sent home feeling unwell, high temps, coughs, sore throat etc. I was never told if any of them were tested. Every one of these children had recorded a temp of over 38degrees while in my class, we have thermometers in the class. I cannot express how afraid and worried I was coming into work during that time. I felt like I'd just been thrown to the wolves. Covid was spreading through my tiny,packed, barely ventilated classroom and no one cared,

not my principal, not the department, certainly not Norma or the government. To then see the hate and vitriol directed at teachers after [redacted] was for me shocking, upsetting but unfortunately not surprising. The general public have no idea what it is actually like in school, they believe the propaganda and best case scenarios thrown out by Norma and the government. We are told get on with it like the nurses and doctors and shop workers, these workers are doing an amazing job but none of them are being asked to share a room with 33 others for 6 hours a day with no social distancing and only your own mask for protection and neither should they be because it's not safe. We are doing our best in school, all we want is a safe place for us to work and the children to learn but if the community isn't safe than schools aren't safe, end of.'

From a parent/school staff: 'I am a teacher. Another teacher in my school tested positive and I and a number of other teachers were close contacts according to the HSE hotline but the CE of the ETB we work for said we should all come in to work until the HSE officially texted us. The HSE never contacted us because this was the week their contact tracing broke down. The teacher who was positive told us all on the Saturday but it wasn't until the official announcement on the Wednesday from the HSE that our school would let the teachers isolate and go for a test. We were told if we stayed home we would have our pay stopped. That means all of those teachers were in school teaching and mixing for three whole days knowing they were close contacts of a positive case. All of our own children were also in their respective schools in different communities that whole time as well. Meanwhile, the teacher who tested positive had 3 students who had tested positive before she did but the HSE said she couldn't have contracted the virus from them because they were all wearing masks and she only had them in the classroom for 40 minutes 5 classes a week. The HSE deemed all 3 students and their teacher as community transmission.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Public health I feel don't want to alarm parents by mass testing in schools. These cases then become community transmissions. Feel as a teacher let down by the system and as a parent nervous re my children being exposed to the virus and not being made aware of it.'

From a parent/school staff: 'As a parent I'm grateful to the principal of my children's school that he has always let parents be aware of possible cases in my children's pods so we could be aware. As a teacher I have never been told why children were absent from my class due to GDPR, even parents wouldn't let me know if their child had been tested. I hope this changes if we are to go back soon. ''

From a parent/school staff: 'Pressure had to be put on public health by the school in order for them to take seriously the concerns the school had. PH seemed no close contacts but following request from school and BOM Ph discovered 2 classes were deemed close contact with 7 positive cases confirmed thereafter. School also was expected to do all the contact tracing. Not good enough from PH...'

From a parent/school staff: 'Both mine and my child's school have been excellent. my school has spared no expense in sanitisers and other cleaning equipment. the mask wearing is 100% and everyone in the community has bought into it. I worry more about the travelling to and from school...I often see parents collecting their own child and others in cars with no masks...2/3/4 households mixing. my child's school has had 6 cases...none transmitted

within the school (all connected to one large traveller outbreak in the local community). they are fully committed to safety and we cannot enter the site without masks.'"

From a parent/school staff: 'Definition of close contact in school is ridiculous and v unsafe.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Dept of Ed have done nothing to help schools. Schools opened and stayed open until December due to staff and students working hard. We as teachers have never received PPE, I supply my own and even if dept supplies it I'm not sure I'd trust the quality. Dept of Ed have no mitigation plans. They need masks for primary schools, improved ventilation, smaller classes and proper contact tracing. What happen to reduction on school transportation. Parents/ teachers are not being given the info they need to make informed decisions on protecting their children. My [redacted] class had a case and the principal was amazing. School was informed at 9 and we had all my [redacted] class out of the school by 10 even though HSE didn't contract trace until the next day. In my school their have been cases and we were never informed. I saw it on social media. The numbers are not low enough for our precious children to go back. Even if I have to return to secondary school I will be choosing to keep my own children out until I am comfortable with the numbers(I kept them out just before October mid term and [redacted] as the numbers rose) I feel I have some hope in protecting myself....Ffp2 mask, doubling masking, eating lunch in my car etc.... but my primary school children have no protection.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Handled well as we can in our school. We need parents to be honest and do right thing. Sometimes doesn't happen. Child sent in when member of household tested as close contact. Children came in with symptoms numerous times cough, sore throat, temp, diarrhea stomach bug....'

From a parent/school staff: 'Have been told nothing heard un tge local community there was covid cases. Denied by the school quoting gdpr school secretary has since confirmed same '

From a parent/school staff: 'I believe transmission is low in schools but equally they are being very conservative about close contacts so asymptomatic spread is unknown. Difficulty is that schools being open is used as an excuse to sanction playdates/ sleepovers etc.'

From a parent/school staff: 'I'm a primary teacher and we have had kids in school while their parents are at home waiting for results. I'm not happy that the hse don't deem this a notifiable disease, we are like sitting ducks in school, 14 of my [redacted] class and his teacher tested positive when a family knowingly sent 3 positive kids into school. Pods and children were called for tests and we had to wait almost 2 weeks for the final decision to shut and for entire school to be tested. Meanwhile I was meant to send my kids in while it was rampant. Could just as easily happen again which is maddening. That family's right to privacy came before my family's right to safety. The school has since added a section to their school behavior policy stating that family's must notify the school if test positive. I worry that might not stand up under scrutiny though. I don't feel safe in school. But I want to be back, with a bit more honesty from Des and proper testing of whole class when there is a case. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Not aware of any cases '

From a parent/school staff: 'Pupil from a bus tested positive as an asymptomatic close contact of another positive case on the bus, my child sat beside this person in school for 5x1hr classes for two days while contact tracing evaluated the bus situation and tested close contacts, subsequently she tested positive, I was never contacted by anyone but contacted gp who said he believed my child needed a test.'

From a parent/school staff: 'School I work in failed Covid inspection re Covid directives but as school couldn't accommodate changes none were made. Rooms suitable for 24 students have 30+ students in numerous classes. No transparency for students or staff if positive cases in the school, which causes increased anxiety & stress for all involved. Teenagers can not & are not social distancing'

From a parent/school staff: 'School tries its best. Departments of Ed and Health are very bad. Their rules are not safe. All in schools should wear masks. Need at least 2m social distancing between everyone (so whole class can't be in. 35 too many). Need proper ventilation systems. Need testing of EVERYONE in the entire school if a case.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Schools have done all they can but hse have been slow with results and complacent as school mine are going had positive case before mid term but deemed safe by hse as said student was absent before test but other cases after. I personally felt totally u secure as I felt hse and government will do anything to keep schools open regardless of health risks. I can personally say that my children and myself do not mix with anyone outside our house as my husband is health care worker and the only way we will get this virus is through his work or school.'"

From a parent/school staff: 'Teachers are not safe in pp. Students gathering in groups and out at night together. Not enough space for social distancing in schools. Cosmetic not approved masks being badly worn by students.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Tick Box exercise. Exit & Entrance to school but students can enter whichever. All year groups mixing at break time. Cleaning done but not enough. Students with symptoms not isolated. The list is endless '"

From a parent/school staff: 'Totally safe. These surveys are a clear attempt to undermine efforts to get kids back to school where they should be. The people carrying out this survey should be ashamed. '

From a parent/school staff: 'We had a teacher test positive on a Monday and no one in the school was classed as a close contact and the HSE did not contact the school. We had an outbreak of at least 5 cases in one classroom. HSE only informed us of 2 cases altogether. The whole class was tested and deemed a close contact as face shields and not masks were being used by the staff who was positive. Only reason they tested everyone was because of the shields. '"

From a parent/school staff: '2 positive cases in ASD class I work in which weren't reported to the school at all, just told by parents. In my own children's creche/playschool they had an outbreak and closed for 14 days. From my personal experience school isn't safe and I have applied for unpaid and parental leave to take me to after Easter hols. '

From a parent/school staff: 'I as a classroom teacher contracted Covid in school. I didn't answer yes to Q5 as I wasn't symptomatic in school'

From a parent/school staff: 'It was disgraceful. Child was positive. 30 pupils plus two adults in a room 25 square metres and it took one full hour of arguing and insisting by school principal and LWR to have four children in immediate vicinity of case zero tested plus teacher, SNA and SET. We were told that n/c child a symptomatic she could not have passed it on in classroom, therefore there was no need to test. We were told a mask protected adult staff - not that they were protecting everyone else, we were also told not to worry about children being on top of each other and stuck in each other's faces in school yard b/c after all that was outside and virus wouldn't transmit. It was the most horrific experience we as a school staff went through. Due to parental concerns we had 30% attendance at school that week whereas had they allowed us to send all in that classroom for testing it would have left the rest of the school population confident enough to come to school. This also happened the weekend contact tracing collapsed and all involved had after three days of worry go to their own gp's to organise testing. One child with no transport was never tested b/c hse couldn't get to her at home! Just horrendous time! '

From a parent/school staff: 'No formal information.. no close contacts etc '

From a parent/school staff: 'Very little contact from HSE. Parents not informing schools that their children were tested positive or that they were isolating. Also parents refusing to get tested when symptomatic but continuing to send their children to school. Two positive cases in one class and half the class sent home but not the teacher who was sitting in the same half of the room as those who were deemed close contacts. Positive case in another class and nobody sent home. Positive case in a third class and the learning support teacher deemed a close contact (only spent 5 mins with child) yet class teacher who was with the child all day wasn't deemed a close contact. No consistency in the rules at all'

From a parent/school staff: 'I think it has been handled well apart from the contact tracing, teachers should be classes as close contacts'

From a parent/school staff: 'As a teacher I was not formally informed of a case in a class I work with and had to work with the class for a day despite management knowing there was a confirmed case in the class. I was told by the case's sibling's preschool teacher that the family had all tested positive and when I approached our school management team I was told parents would not be told and that I was not to tell the other adult working in the room with me until hse made formal contact. Total contrast to my own child's school who informed us, while maintaining confidence of case involved, that there was a confirmation of a positive case and that all affected had been contacted. Much better and created sense of trust and respect. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Children are not separated by 2 meters. The pods are a joke, each pod is not separated by 2 meters. And children in pods are on top of one another. Children coughing not being sent home. No temperature checks by school. Ventilation is poor. Poor supervision of children who share food and pencils, plate each other's hair etc. Not strong enough enforcement of rules at break time. Or outside the school building where children gather in circles. Classrooms are freezing. Teacher only wears mask if walking around room, not at top of class. Covid cases in school have been considered community

transmission, school not even notified. Even though the people involved say they have seen no one else and are convinced they picked it up in school. You should be searching for asymptomatic cases in the schools.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Close contacts are not being followed up, it is impossible to ventilate schools or socially distance, once schools are open there is huge churn within society- families think it's fine to have parties, sleepovers and visits. Non-Irish families do not watch the RTE news so they just hear ' Level 3, we can do what we want, level 5 but the kids are at school, it can't be too serious, we can do what we want''

From a parent/school staff: 'Contact tracing needs to be undertaken the same as outside of schools for schools to re open safely '

From a parent/school staff: 'In one case the staff found out from parents who told us that the school / HSE had informed them of cases and school management said nothing. We looked like idiots denying it. They knew by our reactions we had no idea there were cases. Cases that have occurred after that have been frustrating waiting on guidance from contact tracing, only to be told that adults and children aren't close contacts, in classes such as junior infants, where there is no social distancing.'"

From a parent/school staff: 'in one class with positive result the class teacher or SET teacher was not deemed close contact and only one pod sent home, kids share toilets, sinks and the classroom (prefab) is so small that some kids in different pods are closer together than kids in actual pod yet only one pod is sent home. Staff were terrified, we were told there was a case but weren't told what class it was in and then the teachers were mixing with other teachers in the staff room. '

From a parent/school staff: 'In our school (where I am a teacher) we had 2 cases in junior infants. A week later the class teacher was approached by the principal and told there was two cases in the class. While she was not technically allowed to tell the teacher, she felt it was not right that they had not been contacted by the hse. It took 10 days from when the first child tested positive and 8 from when the second tested positive (as a result of a play date they both attended.....) before the teacher or the parents of any of the children were contacted. The teacher tested positive in the meantime. This happened a week before [redacted]. The children in the class were not contacted until after [redacted] and so would likely have been mixing with family over the [redacted] period. '

From a parent/school staff: 'In the very beginning we were told of 2 positive cases in the school community and were kept informed about students who were self isolating due to having been deemed close contacts. Then the sharing of information dried up and teaching staff had to find out from students who had tested positive in classrooms. Several times I was within a metre of someone who tested positive but wasn't informed due to us wearing masks. The masks many students wear are totally inadequate and offer little protection. They are generally one layer masks bought in budget shops like Dealz. The lack of information and the misinformation about cases in schools is scared and quite frankly all wrong. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Lots of secrecy'

From a parent/school staff: 'Nobody was informed that the child in our classroom tested positive for Covid. This is just not good enough. We're then told that our children were not close contacts when they were sitting next to the positive child.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Not great. I got it in school because I wasn't anywhere else, but principal determined school is safe so told me I was vulnerable and must've picked it up in shops - I only shop online....'

From a parent/school staff: 'Only had one case a few days before [redacted], found out on Social Media. Since then though hearing of many families testing positive so god help us going back.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Principal informs class teacher, support teacher and SNA if there is a case in their class. Other staff informed informally. Not allowed to discuss case any further eg asking if any other kids tested were positive. Parents of pod for testing told, no communication to wider parent body.'

From a parent/school staff: 'School being very vigilant and trying their best. Hse not so vigilant, "risk assessment" when positive case detected amongst staff consists of 30 second phone call "was positive case wearing mask?" If yes then told no close contacts. If child is positive then we have to rely on the parents informing us, usually school only informed after the fact on child's return to school as if the child was not in school for 2 days before positive result then the school does not factor in to hses "contact tracing" or so called "risk assessment "'

From a parent/school staff: 'School informed me of a case in my [redacted] class. No return contact from public health to the school for 42 hrs after they had been informed by the principal. Total of 44 hrs before we were informed our [redacted] was a close contact. Got a test appt for 4 days later (6 days after last exposure). Most parents organised tests through gps. One child received positive result 3 hrs after finally being informed by PH that she was a close contact. Thankfully her mom had got a test through her gp. But as it was a private referral it was not put down as a school case.'

From a parent/school staff: 'There were a few positive cases in the school I work in. Some of which we were not informed of (cases amongst teachers & pupils). The principal informed us of one positive case in the school. The staff were not informed what year, class or whether any of the staff were in the same classroom as the child. It's a secondary school and we all wear masks for most of the day. Classes are one hour long and SNA's sit close to the children for an hour at a time. Teachers have the luxury of sitting behind a Perspex screen for most of the classes and being over 2m away from the children. Pupils in the classroom are not 1m apart in most classrooms.'

From a parent/school staff: 'We were never told anything '

From a parent/school staff: 'While everything has been done to implement sanitising stations etc we are relying on everyone to be open and transparent. Students regularly come to School with symptoms, sometimes parents do not want to take them Home. Students can be absent for a period of time but the school isn't notified of covid cases as it depends on when they were tested. If they are asymptomatic they pass on the virus and then family

members can become ill but it is never recorded as a school case. On paper it looks like we had few if any cases but the number is far higher. We simply are not being told about them'

From a parent/school staff: 'Cases covered up in my school, children's school forced to close before [redacted]'

From a parent/school staff: 'Positive cases have been all hushed up'

From a parent/school staff: 'School have been brilliant. Let down by the department of education and the hse. Work with 6 special needs children, social distancing virtually impossible, asked the question, "if one of our students tests positive, what will happen" Were told, according to the HSE guidelines, we wouldn't be close contacts of the children in our care!! So not to worry, it wouldn't affect us!! 6 hours together!'

From a parent/school staff: 'We are not informed'

From a parent/school staff: '2 of my children were in a class with a positive case but neither were deemed to be close contacts. This was very distressing as I am a cancer sufferer and also have another child who is immunosuppressed'

From a parent/school staff: 'Disgraceful. The fact that school staff are not entitled to be informed if there is a case in your very own classroom is scandalous. No PPE gear supplied (until now for SNAs) and really no respect for schools.'

From a parent/school staff: 'True numbers of cases were hidden. School cases were put down as community transmission to keep the schools open at all costs!!!!'

From a parent/school staff: 'School, in case of my classroom, had to beg parent to allow them to let other parents know of positive test. Parent gave conflicting information to other parents (who then informed me and other teachers) and principal (who contacted parent to ask if the rumour was true) and the HSE (based on what contact tracer told principal she had been told. No-one in classroom was deemed a close contact, not even the bubble. My GP insisted I be tested to be safe which is what I did, HSE did not want me (or anyone else) tested. Luckily I, and other kids whose parents insisted they be tested (some lied about symptoms to get a test), were negative. I very strict on social distancing in class and do not always children to be close even outside. I take my class out at a different time to other class breaks at my insistence - thereby missing most of my own break. We all wear our coats as doors and windows always open and we are always freezing. In my [redacted] crèche they have had to send at least three kids home after parents awaiting tests have sent their kids in and one child whose parent was positive was sent in.'"

From a parent/school staff: 'A student tested positive. Staff were not informed and the teacher, SNA and SNAs wife became infected. This was early [month redacted] and the SNA and his wife have not yet recovered '

From a parent/school staff: 'I am very fortunate that my schools management have taken on the huge responsibility of trying to keep our school community safe trying to fill the gaping holes left by ineffective, non-existent contact tracing, trying to act in all our the best interest not the best interest of 'joe public and media fueled bias' as our Govt have been trying to do.'

The new variants now haunting us have moved all the goal posts and I am sadly very confident that very shortly after opening the schools they will be forced to close them again. I only pray that no one becomes too seriously ill as a result of this experiment. Go gcoimeadfaidh Dia slán sinn go léir.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Kids not close contacts on a mini bus with a positive driver for an hour each way. I give up.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Safety dependent on numbers....Siblings of close contacts should not be allowed attend until negative test obtained ...Schools are controlled but once open this does not justify play dates birthday parties etc . Very hard on those who follow p health advice when peers dont'

From a parent/school staff: 'The school have never contacted me about a child's case in my school. This because of the guidelines as issued to them and GDPR rights of parents who having sent a child to school while waiting for a result decided that they did not want it known that their child was in fact a positive case.....10 days before Santa was due to come down the chimney to this class of small children at the Dept of Education stood by and did nothing. We as parents have never been officially notified of this case or the subsequent cases. They should hang their heads in shame at their treatment of these children as they are complicit in so many families having to self isolate at [redacted].'

From a parent/school staff: 'Work in a school office.. there has been 3 cases in the school where close contacts were informed by the hse. Parents of students who weren't deemed close contacts but who would have sat in close enough to the positive case student would have rang the office with concerns..principal would advise parents to seek advice from their gp. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Excellent'

From a parent/school staff: '2 cases in my [redacted] primary school. First time whole class and teacher were close contacts. Second time a small group of students were close contacts. Very frustrating and unfair on the school staff and pupils'

From a parent/school staff: 'Cases in my school have been kept very quiet. Only those who needed to know were informed. I feel that siblings of children who are awaiting a result, should also be kept at home. '

From a parent/school staff: 'I am a parent and a teacher. My [redacted] school have had no cases that we are aware of. However her class in particular have students who come to school vomiting etc on an ongoing basis and as such I have no trust in these same parents doing the right thing regarding covid. This is 2nd class so unmasked etc. I see these same children out playing on the road we live on unsupervised with other children currently while this is forbidden. Therefore if my child were to return to school I know her number of contacts would be considerably higher than they should. I myself am a pp teacher we have had no cases in term 1 however we have had teachers with family members being tested due to being close contacts and having symptoms told they must come to school when they rang in to explain the situation. Thus putting us all at risk. Our school is a small deis band 1 school in a highly disadvantaged area. We are lucky in the area that the people don't really move

outside it, so as a result covid wasn't around before [redacted]. The situation has changed dramatically. We have a lot of members of the travelling community who are currently experiencing outbreaks and outbreaks within the area as well as 2 publicly reported outbreaks in the early start playschool. I would not feel safe to go to work myself at the moment for this reason. I pay my childminder now as I am still being paid although she is not minding my child if I return to school she will mind my child. I will not send her back under these circumstances. I strongly feel there should not be a date put on return it should be when numbers reach x level schools can safely open. Mental health does not trump physical health in my mind. Where or how will the mental health of these children be if a close family member dies of covid heaven forbid it's them who passes it on. My 7 year old is conscious of this and I have never spoken to her about it. That to my mind is the only important factor right now.. ""

From a parent/school staff: 'The school I teach in had approx 25 cases. 2 members of staff explicitly told they didn't catch it in school. Hse were shocked at amount of pupils who tested positive and still cant explain how approx 17 children seated randomly across 2 classrooms contracted the virus. Hse didnt advise their siblings to self isolate therefore covid spread from 2 classes to 5 classes and school eventually closed.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Contact tracing and identification of close contacts is utterly suspect. Embarrassing if not so serious.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Its not black and white. Schools are as safe or otherwise as anywhere else in society. Children and most teachers are in a safer age cohort. The real problem is children bringing home while parents believe 'schools are safe' and therefore their children are safe. Schools need to be open but parents need to understand the risks.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Ridiculous'

From a parent/school staff: 'I don't believe that schools are spreading the virus more than the community spread. Numbers in September/October were low in Community so now when the community spread is high, schools are potentially going to reflect that'

From a parent/school staff: 'Teachers have been purchasing their own masks. Children are not required to wear a mask. Most classrooms are not large enough to allow for social distancing. Adequate ventilation is impossible during the winter months. SNAs are only being supplied surgical masks for dealing with personal care with pupils who may have additional needs. Teachers have been told they may get one if they make a request but it's not a requirement. Deep cleaning of primary school is not being done and teachers have been cleaning in between lessons or at break times. The child in question who had covid remained out of school for the term of self isolation and parents who had been notified of the case chose whether or not to send their child to that classroom. A certain percentage stayed at home.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Children cant wear masks. Children forget social distancing and covering their coughs etc. Ventilation and Co2 levels have not been properly assessed. A large classroom i work in has only one window the size of a standard kitchen press door. Humidifiers are not in use. Long covid in kids is only starting to be acknowledged. Carpooling temptations to give lifts. Masks are not high grade masks. Children with sensory

needs at risk due to putting items in their mouths and licking things. SNAs are particularly at risk for obvious reasons. '

From a parent/school staff: 'No cases yet in our school. Found some pupils were close contact or waiting for test result or family members were waiting for test result but still sent into school!! Other issue one parent is positive send kids to school as felt safer for them away from house with Covid! One child being tested but siblings go into school. People are not doing exactly as protocols and we cannot control this. This makes schools unsafe with 30 households 6hrs in one room. '

From a parent/school staff: 'No onus on parents to get a Covid test for symptomatic students and also no onus on parents to tell the school or give a doctors note....really makes keeping schools safe extremely difficult. We had a child before [redacted] (special class) who was extremely sick (with many Covid symptoms) in school (refused to collect from school, keep home, get tested) for the two weeks before [redacted] and was in school, mom refused to get him a test, 5 children and their families subsequently contracted Covid within the next two weeks during the [redacted] holidays...'

From a parent/school staff: 'Not enough information all around. In relation to working in schools no clear set in stone info. Too many gray areas and not enough commutation or power to enforce guidelines.'

From a parent/school staff: 'School has been fantastic. Principal and LWR extremely professional, feel very safe. The school is immaculate, and the students have been very cooperative. I personally would feel safe returning to work in MY school, but am aware from colleagues in other schools it is most definitely not the same in their schools.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Secondary school. All very secretive. A whole class sent home as close contacts but not the teachers. Mask wearing very poor. Desks are not 1 metre apart etc etc lots of positive cases. Primary school excellent. Communication is brilliant without naming names. Calm no panic about suspected cases. Shows it can be done. Fortunately there has been no positive cases in the primary. '''

From a parent/school staff: 'Face shields need to be banned as they are deemed useless. 1m distance between students is not enough. It needs to be 2m minimum. '

From a parent/school staff: 'No cases in school - closest has been parents of children tested positive but children were kept home '

From a parent/school staff: 'I'm a teacher in secondary school. We had a person in school test positive and although they were in school for two days before being tested there was not a single person contacted or identified as a close contact. This was around the same time we were advised to keep close contact tracing apps off. I find that a bit strange to say the least. The cases in schools are being covered up'

From a parent/school staff: 'My family tested positive during school holidays but schools were not notified'

From a parent/school staff: 'Very positive experience both at work and with my child's school. Management of both has been excellent, particularly in my school with almost 1500 people in the building. However, seeing how other workplaces deal with covid and the precautions in place left me stunned by the comparison. The private sector appears to be far more cautious with the health and risks to their staff than the public sector... Except for the Dail of course.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Handled very well in the school, (I'm in the high risk category and more nervous at return to school compared to September)'

From a parent/school staff: 'HSE waited 5 days to test two pupils, positive, after the parents had tested positive. Then HSE said no close contacts in school. The following week more cases in school were reported.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Our principal had to phone people. We weren't offered testing'

From a parent/school staff: 'Social Media, then days later email to staff reiterating HSE guidelines'

From a parent/school staff: 'Some students refuse to wear masks. Overcrowding in classrooms & corridors even though School has done as much as they can in current situation. Some parents continue to send kids to school even when have symptoms or been close contacts.'

From a parent/school staff: 'In the school where I work, the principal took it upon himself (correctly) to inform close contacts. He did not have permission from HSE but felt morally obliged. '

From a parent/school staff: 'My [redacted] contracted covid 19 in school. That was never confirmed, but my husband also got covid at the same time and hadn't left the house. Three others in the house were negative, but there were other cases in the school at the time. Contact tracing had been halted due to numbers. I did the phoning to avoid spread. Parents I phoned rang the school for guidance and were told that since HSE hadn't contacted them, their children should present to school. This was according to HSE guidance, the principal could only go by that despite being aware that my [redacted] tested positive.'

From a parent/school staff: 'My Students are age 18 years LC and TY - they are very responsible and bring their masks and hand sanitizer so unless they are up close during break and not wearing a mask I am not overly worried about them going back to school '

From a parent/school staff: 'None have been reported although I know parents who have been positive and their children were too. Principal (I teach there) maintains we've had no cases. I kept my children home. '

From a parent/school staff: 'School did fantastic but it's impossible to keep it up .. kids eating in class rooms, freezing cold , masks all day.. school too small ... stress on teachers & staff..'

From a parent/school staff: 'School leadership is not the problem. We had a case in one class HSE had not been in contact, so principal sent entire class home for a few days until HSE had contacted people, I believe that the entire class tested and only returned after negative results. I myself had a positive test result on [month redacted] 26th with the benefit

of hindsight I had been symptomatic from [month redacted] 21st, and almost certainly contacted the virus in school. I informed my principal and she informed others in my staff pod. HSE deemed it unnecessary to contact any of my work colleagues !!!!! 'Schools are safe ' makes my blood boil.'

From a parent/school staff: 'The school has been very efficient and the situation well managed. However, it is difficult to manage large groups of teenagers when so many limitations are imposed on them daily.'

From a parent/school staff: 'The two primary schools my children attend and that I am a SNA in have been very lucky in so far that there has only been 1 case that I know of overall however I can see from working in a school how easily cases can spread in schools whether it is brought in by a staff member or student. '

From a parent/school staff: 'The schools are taking all precautions. Far more than the frontline grocery staff could have met a possible case every??? Minutes'

From a parent/school staff: 'I feel secondary schools are safe for staff, and safe for students except for lunchtime when they can't social distance. Primary schools are not safe. Students don't, but should wear masks'

From a parent/school staff: 'No child in classroom deemed as close contact as wearing masks. My [redacted] sits less than 1m from confirmed case (postprimary) but not deemed close contact. Only those few children the confirmed case met at lunchtime when masks may be taken off to eat were classed as close contacts. School told no need to inform the class.'

From a parent/school staff: 'School is doing the best it can but there has been a delay in cases testing positive and contact from HSE public health which is worrying. In one case student tested positive before the [redacted] break, had been in school but school was not contacted by HSE until Jan 6th! One full class group of close contacts home over [redacted] not knowing. Very difficult to ensure teenagers are maintaining physical distance all the time with 1000 in the school. '

From a parent/school staff: 'HSE guidelines change too often also very slow to act'

From a parent/school staff: 'The Covid cases have been kept secret and only for the children telling each other parents would never be aware. If temps are too high they are tested until the temp reads normal'

From a parent/school staff: 'Child positive in school I teach in. No siblings. Family informed principal. Principal spent 48 hours trying to contact public health. Told pod to stay home on her own initiative until public health responded. Public health said no close contacts in school due to timing of child's symptoms.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Handled with openness and support for staff and students'

From a parent/school staff: 'I developed symptoms on [redacted]. Contact tracers did not want to take name of my school. I insisted as I had close contact with colleagues. I asked if principal would be contacted they said yes. My principal was not contacted. I insisted they

take my children's school details as they tested positive. They again did not want to but I insisted and requested the schools be informed. I was asked for principals mobile number as school was closed which I could not give. My husband also works in post primary school and his contact tracer refused and would not accept his work details.'

From a parent/school staff: 'Some have been announced. Some haven't. It's a no go area. Brushed under carpet. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Close contacts ie children from the bubble were tested. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Not informed at all '

From a parent/school staff: 'Teachers/parents are not being informed of any cases. Often the child in question was absent for 48hours before their test but this in my opinion does not mean they weren't infectious. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Brushed under the carpet and blamed on community transmission as opposed to school transmission'

From a parent/school staff: 'School contacts played down and not deemed close contacts. Disgraceful and dangerous. '

From a parent/school staff: 'Three children in my class tested positive. I was not informed by HSE or school. I found out from a parent I met in the supermarket. Two days later HSE identified me as a close contact and arranged a test. The whole town knew before I did. '

From a parent/school staff: 'I feel the government have let schools down hugely. There was ample time to have plans/ppe/contingencies in place but everything the minister does is reactive and for publicity reasons rather than wholly thought through scenarios which would benefit both students whilst keeping the whole school community safe'

Parents, who are also special school staff

From a parent/special school staff: 'HSE testing far too slow, GP referred me as I was a close contact with symptoms. We had six cases at school but I do not believe any were recorded as school transmission. This sort of practice diluted the data related to cases in schools. Class was closed by BOM as HSE too slow to act - although did advise to close class eventually'

From a parent/special school staff: 'I'm an SNA in a special needs school. But also a mom to a teenage boy. Who's very high risk and hasn't attended school since September '

From a parent/special school staff: 'I'm a cleaner in after staff leave but never informed of a case only asked to deep clean whatever room as it's a special school there are other reasons for deep cleaning besides covid if I knew I could be better prepared also I have emphysema so it's a scary prospect '

Preschool and primary school staff

From a preschool & primary school staff: 'Preschool dealt with it very well and kept in contact with us during the process even though they were on holidays. They informed us that our [redacted] was a close contact. Hse took their time getting onto us.'

Preschool staff

From a preschool staff: 'In the preschool I work in it was handled very well, management had to push for children on the bus that were in direct contact with the staff member they tested positive to be deemed close contacts by the HSE because she always wore a mask so the HSE tried to say that they would be ok even though the children would have to be fastened into their seats by the person that was covid positive. Everyone isolated for the 14 days. '

From a preschool staff: 'It is a small school. Only 50 students. A sibling of the child in my [redacted] class had tested positive. I think more now than before it will be even much higher risk of my kids getting Covid or been in close contact. I'm worried.'

From a preschool staff: 'Thank goodness with almost 80 children going through the setting daily we've had no cases that we are aware of, ecce and afterschools'

From a preschool staff: '2 cases in same room same week when cases were high in november, was told it was community transmission and unrelated'

From a preschool staff: 'A letter has been sent out . When pre school returns Ecce , and a covid case is positive in the setting , it won't be counted in numbers '

From a preschool staff: 'Was not happy with the way covid was handled in our school felt HSE let us down no contact tracing had it on my App it was like secret service no one knew what was happening till school closed and we all had to be Tested ended up with 17 contacting covid from one student'

From a preschool staff: 'We had a child test positive but we only found out as child was absent for a week and text to find out was all OK. We were never informed by the hse as by time child tested positive she wasn't in the classroom for 3 days previous to result. '

From a preschool staff: 'I feel there is an obvious risk to students and staff. I feel the definition of close contact allows for an unrealistic representation of numbers. I feel the conditions in which learning is taking place is unsafe for students in particular.'

From a preschool staff: 'I work in a private creche we had one staff member who contracted covid in her house and in turn unknowingly brought it into creche our whole creche had to close as a result and as much as the government keep saying they are a safe environment 3 babies under 1 tested positive due to this one staff member testing positive and then we had countless children who weren't even tested due to displaying no symptoms so god only knows the real figure of how many were actually infected'

From a preschool staff: 'I work in an early years service, I have been a close contact and been tested twice. We have had 4 staff members test positive and 7 children, when we tried

to report one of the staff cases the HSE told us because she was asymptomatic we didn't have to report it to them and we didn't need to close her pod or inform the parents. Creches are not safe, covid is rampant and nobody can say anything because of confidentiality agreements, and they don't want to be stuck at home with their own kids. As long as a parent is paying their fees they can send their kids in whenever they like, essential workers or not. We have been sacrificed in early years to save teachers.'

From a preschool staff: 'There was no contact tracing and if a student was a close contact you were not told '

From a preschool staff: 'We found out on Dec 29th that 2 children tested positive on the 28th. HSE did not deem any staff close contacts as the children hadn't been in preschool since the 23rd. We only found out after one parent contacted us on the 29th to say her [redacted] wouldn't be returning on Jan 4th as planned. 3 staff members developed symptoms and subsequently tested positive (between Dec 29th and 31st) along with almost all immediate family members. The contact tracers were extremely dismissive to me on the phone as I didn't develop symptoms until the 29th and tested positive on the 31st. I explained about the cases in our preschool and they said there was absolutely no way I could have contracted Covid from the child who tested positive even though I was in extremely close contact, cuddling her for around 10 minutes on the 23rd at around 3pm as she was upset. I had not even been to a shop after the 22nd of Dec and I only had my immediate family as close contacts. '

From a preschool staff: 'We try very hard to ensure that adults never come within 2 metres of each other. Children well wrapped up and we are outside as much as possible. So far thankfully no cases, and children are cared for very well'

From a preschool staff: 'Well I know for definite that a childcare services cases were put down as community transmission and it's a disgrace'

From a preschool staff: 'Child in preschool positive case, but no one at preschool seen as close contact due to test do at weekend!!'

From a preschool staff: 'HSE have been totally inefficient. Contact tracing has been done in all cases in my school my senior Management. If principal wasn't so proactive there would be much larger numbers. HSE start to contact trace 3 days after the event so it has already been done by school. We have also had difficulty getting on contact with HSE albeit that had improved before school closures. Also HSE only consider very few as close contacts. None of the other students who sat in class with the positive case were deemed close contacts and none of their teachers were either. ''

From a preschool staff: 'Positive covid case handled by management who contacted HSE Tusla DCEDIY and teachers staff and parents. Those in pod were asked to restrict movements and contact gp if symptoms. Service closed immediately until public health advised. All done without disclosing child or adult. All contacts previously organised per pod ready when Hse eventually contacted us (2 days). Risk assessment forms and covid compliance sent to Tusla. External deep clean. All preschool teachers in pod sent for private test as at the time long delays. All teachers plus children in pod tests negative. Extremely

exhausting and stressful work continued over weekend. Too many agencies to deal with in early years. Hse Tusla DCEDIY CCC"

From a preschool staff: 'Very well'

From a preschool staff: 'As well as expected '

From a preschool staff: 'We've been told there are cases but not told who.. therefore staff in the rooms with others aren't being deemed close contacts '

From a preschool staff: 'I have a preschool and a positive case was identified within my setting. I was informed by the child's parent. I received a call from public health 2 days after I was notified of positive case. I felt lucky with the doctor that made the call to me as she was a GP that I had known previously. They asked about close contacts of the child, however I advised that given the age of the children and the nature of our service that there would be no way whatsoever to determine who the child was in close contact with and insisted that they offer a test to all children and staff working in the service. Tests were to be arranged but 2 days later when nobody had received their appointments I had to chase this issue up. Within an hour appointments had been issued. As I said I think I got lucky with the people who I happened to deal with however it did lead to an additional 3 cases in our service (2 children and 1 adult). I only received follow up contact tracing calls for 2 of these cases. '

From a preschool staff: 'I don't trust the hse contact tracing to honestly identify people at risk in schools settings as from my experience with this, by the time asymptomatic child is tested, usually 48hrs have passed since they attended so no one in the class environment is deemed close contact. I feel contact tracing is designed to take focus away from school transmission'

From a preschool staff: 'I dont think they were highlighted enough. A child attending a service has covid but we were not contacted or deemed close contact. Only for the honesty of parents we would of not knowing and some vulnerable people would have been potentially exposed.'

From a preschool staff: 'In our facility every precaution is been taken with extra measures put in place & training given to all staff, but when we had a case in one 'pod' my colleague wasn't considered a close contact even though she had spent 3 & a half hours with the child, she later tested positive & had to self isolate for the 2 weeks but as she was preparing to return to work she got sicker now a month later still hasn't returned & her job is being advertised to replace her '

From a preschool staff: 'I work in a crèche and have been in work since June 2020 I was a close contact twice and it was handled very well.'

From a preschool staff: 'Students from my school are being tested for covid and getting positive results and we are not told by the school or by the HSE. Five of my students had symptoms or were close contacts and were sent home from school mid week. They ALL were not tested until the following Monday and their positive results were not linked to the school but instead to the family. Even though class teachers and students also caught it from them with symptoms a few days behind.'

From a preschool staff: 'Preschool handled it efficiently and with great care. Hse took 4 days to notify me of being a close contact only for my employer got in contact and recommended I be tested. I could have potentially spread covid unknowns to myself.'

From a preschool staff: 'Possibly? '

Primary school staff

From a primary school staff: 'SNAs have been told they are not close contacts , even when their student has been positive.'

From a primary school staff: 'Thankfully we haven't had any yet'

From a primary school staff: 'There was a confirmed case in one of the classes just before [redacted] hols. All 30 kids were considered close contacts & had to isolate for 14 days & be tested. Myself & class teacher were not close contacts because we wore masks. HSE got in touch 4hrs after initial contact by principal so all 30 kids were in school the entire day & gone home by time we got instructions. We then had to ring all 30 families .'

From a primary school staff: 'Luckily there has been no cases of covid-19 while school was open, but there was a lot of community transmission cases over [redacted]. I am an SNA in school . Guidelines are very strict, but my major worry is my older children (leaving and junior cert) may be returning to secondary school and I'm extremely worried they may carry it home and I may transmit it to the vulnerable I work with. Really think we should be tested to keep the environment safe.'

From a primary school staff: 'No 2 cases the same...we tried to follow all guidelines but sometimes it just isn't possible. The hse guideline that siblings of close contacts should attend school til there's a positive diagnosis is insane. Siblings of close contacts (with or without symptom) should stay home til at least there's a negative test.'

From a primary school staff: '6 pupils in my primary school tested positive but no others were deemed closed contacts'

From a primary school staff: 'Not great'

From a primary school staff: 'Radio silence- heard from parents via email if chn were absent and most times they would explain why. Nothing from mgt.'

From a primary school staff: 'A pupil came into school on Wednesday with a cough ring his mother to collect him she came to collect him 4 hrs later and on the Friday we got told he had a positive test. The school got told by the hse that we are not close contacts so we are all ok until the Saturday I started getting sick and my own gp told me go for a test I was positive and also my husband in total there was 19 cases and the school had to be closed for a bit.'

From a primary school staff: 'As well as they could be, given the atrocious guidelines issued by DES. Principals are in an appalling position where they are not meant to inform staff/pupils of positive cases that may affect them.'

From a primary school staff: 'Child in my class tested positive. The pod and SNA deemed close contacts. Rest of class and teacher not close contacts. Child sent to sch by parent knowing he/ she was unwell'

From a primary school staff: 'Children in my school travel by taxi. They are all From different classrooms. When we had an outbreak all the classes had to close because of this. 6 children were positive so it had a knock on effect because of close contact '

From a primary school staff: 'Haven't been any'

From a primary school staff: 'Heard from colleague , the principal sent a general text. ,our cases (that we know of !!!) coincided with [redacted] hols (ruining [redacted] for the teacher and Sna who had to self isolate , starting [redacted] Eve) which meant less spread . No confidential info given by principal. Was Whatsapping the class teacher at the time. '

From a primary school staff: 'I had a case in my class, I was informed by principal but not deemed a contact nor were the children at the child's table... I wanted to get a test for piece of mind and found it very difficult to be referred.. ended up getting one on [redacted] Eve'

From a primary school staff: 'I tested positive the 4th week of school after getting head cold symptoms and losing sense of smell and taste 2 days later. I had previously had to isolate 4 children in the first 3 weeks and have them sent home due to displaying covid symptoms. I never heard whether they had been tested or consulted GPs, they just returned to school a few days or week later. When I got Covid the public health doctor said it was more than likely an asymptomatic child or colleague as my chances of getting it at the grocery store were less than 2 %. Yet none of my class were tested because they would be at low risk due to my wearing a mask, their words (I explained it was only a cloth face mask). My close contacts outside school tested negative subsequently so it had to have been a school contact. Two of my support teachers were referred for a test as a close contact as we had shared a s all break room for more than 15minutes with the 2 lunches but management disputed it due to staffing issues (said we had room for 2m distance in our break room) and only a fellow colleague (different class, same lunch) who got a test through the tracker app was tested and was a negative. It took the HSE 24 hours after my Gp rang with my results to ring and tell me I was positive and get my close contact list. It took another 24 hours for Public Health to ring to deal with school side(apparently issue with my file getting lost...) . In the meantime since the Friday myself and my principal had spent whole weekend trying to contact someone to get tracing going for school. Test results Friday, Hse letter didn't go to parents and staff till Sunday night. They chose not to tell the parents of my class it was in our specific class despite my asking them to and giving permission. HSE told them no need. As long as this lack of transparency and the not testing all close contacts just to minimise disruption continues schools cannot be safe. '

From a primary school staff: 'I think everyone is trying their best unfortunately our school building is in very bad condition. This makes it difficult to manage.'

From a primary school staff: 'I work in a school setting which have had twelve positive cases with another four close contacts deemed positive . I have been a close contact but was told to go back to work after thirteen days . Hse twice told me not to and in the end told me to go back , I have had five COVID tests four with hse and one private . I was not deemed a close

contact with one of my colleagues who tested positive even though I had worked with her two days previously . I don't understand how DES can say schools are safe despite the fact that we had twelve positive cases . '

From a primary school staff: 'I worked with a student that tested positive the hse didn't recognise me or my colleagues as close contacts but within a few days there were 5 staff positive and 2 students in my unit tested positive.'

From a primary school staff: 'I worked with a student that tested positive the hse didn't recognise me or my colleagues as close contacts but within a few days there were 5 staff positive and 2 students in my unit tested positive.'

From a primary school staff: 'My particular school there is practically no social distancing, little ventilation, over crowded. Was deemed a close contact twice. School had a lot of cases so far.'

From a primary school staff: 'One staff member contracted Covid, no staff or children she was in contact with ([redacted]) were informed and when they queried it they were told 'not a close contact' although she was in the classroom with them for several hours a day. As a result there were [redacted] infections including bus driver, other children, families, other staff! Parents were never informed and all infections labelled as Community transmission although it all started in school from 1 [redacted]'

From a primary school staff: 'Parent contacted the school of the positive case immediately on getting results. Hse contacted school 2 days later '

From a primary school staff: 'Poorly.'

From a primary school staff: 'Secrecy and cover up plus fudging of numbers to suit government narrative by she. Principals hands are tied but initiated own contact tracing as waiting over a day for her tracing to kick in. Information informally made available to school community using inventive wording and communications. In some instances where staff were involved they personally informed people in the school community about being covid positive and asked people to make sure it was passed on and around to people which deserves great respect in my opinion. '

From a primary school staff: 'Secretively '

From a primary school staff: 'Staff nor pupils informed officially, word of mouth through the community.'

From a primary school staff: 'Students are in their pods & bubbles in class but on yard they are all running, playing chase dragging at each other, sweating & coughing. Also despite raising concerns they are sharing balls, skipping ropes etc. '

From a primary school staff: 'The school management and staff has acted as best they can but are confined by Dept. and Hse rules. Social distancing is not possible in many roles, pods and bubbles do not exist, yet the general public are led to believe this is not the case by a Minister with an agenda all her own, which has caused untold damage to her sector. As an example, if a child has head lice, all relevant parents are informed with the affected child

anonymous, with COVID cases are HIDDEN from staff and parent', rarely are children and staff considered close contacts and as the case in my school put down to community transmission. '"

From a primary school staff: 'There was a few close contacts in my class. My principal informed me of each potential case and informed me of the test result (thankfully negative). As I live with someone who is very high risk, I am anxious about the classroom setting. If the children in my class did test positive I would not be deemed a close contact even though in infants, there is no social distancing rules. My principal was not obliged to share anything with me but did so and I was very grateful for this. It meant I could distance myself from my vulnerable family member.'

From a primary school staff: 'There were [redacted] positive cases of covid in the school I teach in. The staff got told from the principal about 1 of the cases. The further [redacted] cases in the same class (not the class I teach in) but staff were not informed of these other two cases. I got told by a parent who felt I should know as one of the next [redacted] cases had a sibling in my class. To this day the principal never informed the staff of the further [redacted] positive cases, nor was I told about the child in my class who had a sibling who tested positive. This occurred during the October mid term and I was [redacted] pregnant at the time. Needless to mention I didn't return to school.'

From a primary school staff: 'Very inconsistent with close contacts in three different classes. More balanced approach needed. '

From a primary school staff: 'Was originally told not close contact went to work following day a Monday while in work at school I received a text message from hse to say I was a close contact. Pupil close contacts were asked to stay at home on Sunday. '

From a primary school staff: 'We hope lessening of staff & pupils during our pandemic will help safety of pupils & staff.'

From a primary school staff: 'Well my principal told me that I wasn't deemed a close contact of a positive case in a class I was substituting in, I asked specifically if I should be deemed a close contact and going by hse guidelines he was advised I was not, that was a Friday, Saturday I became sick and tested Monday and received diagnosis on Tuesday. Hse contacted me and tried to tell me it was community transmitted, I wasn't having any of it, myself and 6 other staff and 3 pupils from that class had all tested positive. That was my experience I was very sick and am currently highly anxious about being back at work.'

From a primary school staff: 'Zero cases in the school'

From a primary school staff: 'Classes too crowded hubs are impossible to keep as next hub are as near as hub children are in. Then travelling in buses and mixing with older siblings in secondary schools'

From a primary school staff: 'Covid-19 cases have been handled very much in a cloak and dagger manner which has heightened fears in our school. I do not and will never understand, how we can be informed of contagious illness such as chickenpox, slapped cheek or even

headlice in a room but we are given no such information regarding Covid-19 which has far more terrifying consequences'

From a primary school staff: 'I am a teacher. Shortly after returning to school the SNA who works with me in my classroom, full time, began to feel sick and was sent by her GP for a covid test. Her results were still not back and I began to feel unwell. I rang my GP and was sent for a test also. On the day of my test the SNA received a positive result. Contact tracers contacted my school and only deemed any staff who had eaten lunch with the SNA as a close contact and also two children she works with from my class. They did not believe I should be a close contact or any of the other children in my class because the SNA and I always wore masks in class. My principal was insisting that I should be a close contact too so the contact tracer called me to quiz me. I told her I was symptomatic and had already been tested that day. My test came back positive the following day. If I had not been symptomatic I wouldn't have been tested at all and 31 children in my class would have continued to be exposed to covid. It is definitely a case of different rules in schools compared to the rest of society'

From a primary school staff: 'I'm a substitute and student teacher so I'm often not told why the teacher is absent or why children are out. On 2 occasions there have been Covid positive children in classes I was teaching on a longer-term basis (more than 2 weeks). Neither times were the schools informed by the HSE, but were told informally. I found out from other school staff. This was the case with 5 children total that I am aware of.'

From a primary school staff: 'Kept v hush hush'

From a primary school staff: 'Not privy to cases'

From a primary school staff: 'Only know of two and was informed about only one, could be more for all I know'

From a primary school staff: 'Staff not informed of cases'

From a primary school staff: 'The definition of close contact especially in schools need to be liked at especially in junior classe'

From a primary school staff: 'Waited 4 days to be informed about one positive case in the school following parents notifying the school.'

From a primary school staff: 'A positive case, deemed community transmission with no other action needed'

From a primary school staff: 'As a SEN teacher I spent 2 and half hours in small room with two positive cases on a Wednesday - siblings! The children were absent for few days and I had parent teacher meeting on phone following week and mum told me that both children tested positive. She had informed school on Friday that their dad was positive and on Monday morning she informed school both children positive. My principal never told me. When I approached him he said the HSE said there was ZERO risk!!! '

From a primary school staff: 'Depending on cases in the community '

From a primary school staff: 'I as principal had to make 3 calls to HSE number and waited 6 hours to be told it could be up to 48 before I got a call back. Rang my local TD got a call back in minutes. I had to contact parents re times of test. Mixed messages re whether staff/pupils were close contacts or casual. This was October. The lack of prompt advice & action was what concerned me. Public Health said you only have one case so you are not a priority which I thought was damning'

From a primary school staff: 'My biggest worry is school transport/ buses. '

From a primary school staff: 'School doing best with protocols in place, they cannot do any more than what they are doing. HSE not contacting schools, staff who informed HSE that they were in close contact with positive case were told That they okay as the staff member wearing a mask. Huge secrecy for staff members who can be teaching in front of children who have been tested awaiting results and also have positive cases amongst family members. As mentioned, schools and staff are doing their best and are not visiting family Or anyone during term time (when it was allowed) as they are in contact with so many children and do so to ensure that their family is safe and that they can continue Teach in school '

From a primary school staff: 'Spread to 6 out of 8 classes. Had an outbreak of 13 cases and still not closed or deemed an outbreak. Quarter of school left attending and still not deemed necessary to close . '

From a primary school staff: 'HSE told school that if teacher wore a mask, they were safe and that contact outside doesn't count no matter how long or close the contact was.'

From a primary school staff: 'No information given to staff, only kids at a table told to isolate, NOT teacher or SNA'

From a primary school staff: 'Very small school & so far so good.'

From a primary school staff: '2 teacher colleagues tested positive after SNA was positive with symptoms. Class teacher and SET ie a special education teacher who did in class support and the class were sent home as close contacts for 2 weeks. Both teachers subsequently tested positive but we were never told or tested even though we Special Ed teachers shared a resource room. By time the teachers tested positive it was as though they didn't trace back in time. they didn't test the other SEN teachers but we had shared a room while she was exposed to the SNA. Very annoyed as I only heard on grapevine that colleague was positive and not just at home as a close contact. Public health or school management should inform us all we were exposed. I've elderly parents and I literally cannot see them if I cannot rely on being told st work if I'm a close contact ... the semantics applied to what a close contact is in schools is disingenuous and makes staff mistrust the system'

From a primary school staff: 'A positive case in the school I work in. Staff were not told what class the case was in or if the child's siblings were in their class. It was kept very hush hush. We were notified at the beginning of the [redacted] holidays that there was a case in the school, no other info.'

From a primary school staff: 'A student was sent to school on a monday. We found out on Tuesday dad had a covid test at weekend (and still sent child to primary school, did not

inform school either), positive test result monday night. Student tested Wednesday, positive result thursday. HSE deemed NO close contact as they also deemed child MOST LIKELY not contagious on Monday... child was asymptomatic. Pod of 6, bubble of 30'

From a primary school staff: 'According to the guidelines, ie secretly'

From a primary school staff: 'All aspects are under a veil of secrecy which makes for an uneasy feeling at school.'

From a primary school staff: 'As best they can be. Principal is fantastic'

From a primary school staff: 'Biggest concern is that it is very obvious reporting is contrived'

From a primary school staff: 'Class Teacher (one of my colleagues) tested positive at end of term before [redacted]. Virus seems to have been transmitted by an asymptotic child in her class. NOBODY deemed a close contact - not those she ate lunch across the table from (unmasked obviously), not SNA working in her classroom, nor any of the kids. HSE advice: no further action needed. Subsequently approx one third of the class tested positive plus SNA plus many many others in the families of those affected (approx 30 cases). Some badly enough to be hospitalised. Luckily School had decided to inform parents of effected class despite HSE recommendation (esp due to likelihood of people visiting elderly relatives over [redacted] period). Many many more would have undoubtedly been infected otherwise. Definition of close contacts in schools is an absolute disgrace. There is absolutely no way whatsoever HSE would have deemed nobody a close contact of this individual were it in ANY other setting. There is also no other setting in which 30 people would have spent days at a time in extreme close proximity, no social distancing and unmasked with said person! (2 extremes at the same time!!!)''

From a primary school staff: 'Clusters have formed due to delay of hse informing school. It's impossible to keep primary children apart. Once it's in a classroom, it spreads. The rooms are too small and there are too many people in them. The school responds quick once they have been informed by parents and has sent entire class groups home. There is concern around cross class mixing with siblings, children who go to the same cr  che and children who continue to mix outside of school. '

From a primary school staff: 'Contact tracing was mainly carried out by the principal'

From a primary school staff: 'Disappointed by not being told by school and only finding out by asking the school secretary. I feel there was probably other cases as well that we were never told about.'

From a primary school staff: 'Example: student tests positive in Class A. Sibling of this child has already tested positive 2 days previously but family did not self isolate/restrict movements. Student from class A tests positive, class teacher hears nothing/is unaware. Next day child who was sitting at table beside original child starts displaying symptoms. Principal will not send child home due to child "not coughing enough". Second child then goes for test and also tests positive. Class teacher only told by parents. No children from class deemed close contacts and was determined that those 2 children did not contract it in

school...even though both sat beside each other!?! No parents in class told about this from school/HSE and class teacher only found out by parent telling them. '

From a primary school staff: 'For myself it has been OK, but I think all staff should be informed if there is a case/cases in the school. Just before [redacted] 2 members of staff were absent as both had to test due to being close contacts. The staff were not informed of this, many managed to figure it out and word spread but management did not inform staff unless they were deemed close contacts. One teacher went on to test positive. I think this shroud of secrecy is not healthy for the school environment. It makes staff paranoid.'

From a primary school staff: 'Freezing cold for ventilation'

From a primary school staff: 'Handled well so far '

From a primary school staff: 'HSE have been very slow to react to positive case and agree to pod and teacher being tested when there has been a case in the class. Only when teacher and principal pushed the case did pod get tested and a second child tested positive '

From a primary school staff: 'Hse have not always informed school when there were cases.... school were informed by parents ... this does not inspire confidence in staff members . '

From a primary school staff: 'I am a principal. We had a positive case which was dealt with brilliantly in sept by public health. They closed a full class and sent everyone for testing. We have everything we possibly can have in place but im still unsure. Reopening would be better than remote teaching no doubt though as all staff are spending much longer hours than usual working....we are desperately in need of a proper break and a proper plan'

From a primary school staff: 'I am a teacher in a primary with over 400 pupils. We we're very lucky to have no confirmed cases in our school pre to the [redacted] holidays even though there was cases in all the local schools around us. We were given training before school reopened and we taught the children how to line up social distance with a 1m between each child at the beginning. I think my school had a lot of policy and procedures implemented that worked well but I don't think it is the right time to go back school just yet until the numbers are a lot lower and we have a better system for contact tracing in place. '

From a primary school staff: 'I am based in admin and have seen first hand cover ups'

From a primary school staff: 'I am the principal. I had to lead the response. I conducted contact tracing with staff members as they waited for an ambulance. I thought they were dying. The measures that saved people in my community (closing classes, having close contacts of close contacts stay home, screening test for all staff including substitutes) came from me rather than from HSE. It was way too stressful and I ended up on leave for stress and anxiety for 6 weeks afterwards. I have long-term health difficulties due to the severe stress of that time. It is wholly unreasonable to reopen schools with high transmission in the community and weak policies. We need a faster, more robust response to each case.'

From a primary school staff: 'I don't like the fact that I know there's been 12 cases in our primary School. Only staff in the actual classroom are informed. in my class alone we've had

three cases the first one we did not find out about till one week later and second and third we were told about because we had aired our grievances to the principal about not knowing the first one. I am an SMA and I sit less than one metre away from the third student who was positive HSE said I was a close contact for this one. on [redacted] Eve so I was tested negative by HSE for this. Another positive child in the class. the second one who I also sit nearby probably about 1 m we were told was not close contact. He was present on the Monday and off school on the Tuesday to get tested and confirmed and the Thursday so so apparently as he was not present 48 hours prior to the positive result they said there's no close contacts and the following week the third child was out. I just found it strange the second case was in term time no close contact no one tested and no close and third case during holiday time apparently over 8 kids and myself are tested I don't know the results because we've not been back since [redacted] . Kids mix freely in the yard so whatever we 2 in class comes on done on the yard it's not human nature. To stand apart by 10 metres on the yard"

From a primary school staff: 'I work in a small school. We were open a week at the beginning of the academic year before the school had to be closed for 2 weeks due to a confirmed case. This meant every staff and student had to be tested, a rather awful experience for our students. It also led to a huge amount of speculation among staff and the parents what's app group as to who was the confirmed case to begin with. This isn't really helpful for staff morale or student respect when we find ourselves debating who it may or may not be.'

From a primary school staff: 'In my experience a junior infant child tested positive on the Wednesday. He was in on the Monday, out on Tuesday as he was getting tested and then positive Wednesday. Only the pod were considered close contacts and the teacher, SNA and SEN teacher were not. Subsequently 2 children in different pods in the same class tested positive and these were not linked to school transmission and no student was considered a close contact. The teacher, SNA and SEN teacher all went and faked symptoms to their GP to get a test. The SNA was positive, and it was deemed community transmission. As she wore a mask she wasn't considered a close contact of anyone in the school '

From a primary school staff: 'In my school Covid + cases are not being communicated to the school community. HSE advise close contacts however if pupil tests positive e.g. on a Monday no class staff or pupils are deemed close contacts as pupil last in class more than 48 hours. Staff are hearing from other staff and parents when pupils/staff test positive. '

From a primary school staff: 'If numbers are low in the community then yes.'

From a primary school staff: 'It took 2 days for the hse to advise myself, jobshare partner and class whether to close or stay open. Our Principal doesn't say if there are cases in our class. We only know if parents decide to inform us. We cannot socially distance from the children. Our staffroom allows 6 unmasked adults to eat together for 10mins+. I take my lunch break in my car. I do not take a break when on yard duty as I don't have time to reach the carpark. We have inadequate PPE. We were supplied with 2 reusable masks that were made by a friend or management. They do not fit and are not medical grade. Cleaners' hours have not been increased. The classroom desks and chairs are wiped down at the end of each day, bins emptied and floors swept. I have resorted to taking on other cleaning tasks such as handles, windows, l.t, doors etc.'

From a primary school staff: 'It was all hush hush. Word spread on social media and from staff. No official word from principal. We've older staff and vulnerable staff but still no warnings given from school.'

From a primary school staff: 'It's the only being deemed a close contact if child/person in school the previous 48hours but yet in the community it's longer and you can be carrying/a carrier for two weeks? Also it's different rules for different work places and HSE don't act quick enough, a lot of waiting around for principals before they get official word and can share with staff and parents!'

From a primary school staff: 'Like a secret society - huge secrecy around all cases we had in our school. Only the first two made it onto social media, a further 5 somehow were kept quiet. Two entire families of job sharing teachers wiped out with covid following a parent sending the sibling of a confirmed case into school for a number of days. No one properly investigated. 2 weeks after teachers diagnosed before parents of other children were informed....too late at that point. Only thing dept have done is provide hand sanitiser and blue paper roll.....thats it. Crazy. Cheap masks if you want to request them every couple of days. Very distressing time.'

From a primary school staff: 'Luckily our Principal had identified the full class as a "pod" so the whole class self isolated. Following whole class testing the additional positive case was not seated near the index case.'

From a primary school staff: 'Management hid the confirmed positive cases on purpose from staff and the wider school community. Principal stated to the teacher of the room which had one of the cases that she wasn't going to be telling anyone, and she was sure it would filter down the grapevine. Parents of contacts of a confirmed case in another class (our school's first confirmed positive case) were informed via letter, but the teacher wasn't told, and then faced a group of panicked parents looking for answers upon collection that day. No sign of management that day to help the teacher, who didn't have the answers as she had been kept out of the loop and who was herself worried having shared a room and the same air with the confirmed positive case over the previous days but who herself was not deemed a close contact despite this, to give these parents answers or assistance. Other staff not told, with some finding out from parents which led to panic and worry and staff feeling very unsafe, and then finding out that the cases were actively being kept from us. Huge stress and concern for safety of children and ourselves, with cloak and daggers approach and the kind of graceful swan at the top and legs going crazy under water that has been the approach the government has taken also - pretending everything is fine, lying that schools are so called safe despite evidence to the contrary that they were clearly not etc. My colleagues in the affected classes were not approached by management or contacted at all to ask if they were ok or if they needed anything etc. - very much an 'everything is fine here' kind of stance, basically putting on a show that everything was ok when there were confirmed cases in the classroom who would have been with the contagious time period. All around a very worrying and scary time for the staff at large. Covid lead worker representative was great, and acted upon the staff's pleas for help, but this was only after the above had been experienced as due to the secrecy etc. it took a while for people to realise how wrong it all was and what was actually happening, and then contact the lead worker representative for Covid. She acted on this, as did the Covid Committee when they were informed, and

things improved slightly, but the initial experience for the first couple of months was absolutely horrendous, to the point that about three quarters or more of the staff felt so unsafe that they made official contact and statements with said Lead Worker Representative.'

From a primary school staff: 'My principal had to fight to get it recognised as possible transmission. It took nearly 2 weeks for the 'pod' to be called! A bit late. I organised my own test in the meantime. I felt let down by the state and disposable!'

From a primary school staff: 'No one deemed close contacts of positive cases. I answered "I don't know" to the question about "have you been in a classroom with a positive case" as I have no idea if any of the kids who who missed school were positive cases or not. The subsequent questions appeared linked to that question "if yes", "if no" etc but they didn't necessarily make sense so I'm sorry but I think the routing in this survey will render the results void. It's worth considering paying for the premium version, people on the page may contribute a euro towards it if you're finding the results don't add up.'

From a primary school staff: 'No transparency, school community has never been made aware of positive cases, staff find out from other staff or parents. '

From a primary school staff: 'Not been informed of any from principal heard from a third party'

From a primary school staff: 'Not enough transparency from hse re school covid positive tests. School conducts its own "contact tracing"'

From a primary school staff: 'Not formally told when child/adult in "bubble" being tested. Symptomatic adults and kids constantly attending school pre [redacted]...assuming they just have head cold. May ultimately get tested but damage already done. Outbreak in one class involving 4 children handled ok, but individual cases in infants considered community with no hse communication, testing or tracing'

From a primary school staff: 'Not officially told by school, usually hear it from colleagues in passing!'

From a primary school staff: 'Numerous cases the day before [redacted]. Parents only informed of one. '

From a primary school staff: 'Our school has done the best we can under the guidelines we've been given. But they are not enough. They were never enough, and now with new variants and emerging research on covid in children, they definitely are not enough. Masks are needed for all children over 6yrs, as per ECDC guidelines. Ventilation systems are needed. Meaningful social distancing in classrooms is needed. Schools are only as safe as the communities they are in. If government would commit to a Zero Covid Policy, yes, schools would be much, much safer. But they are not prepared to commit to zero covid, so schools will remain unsafe as long as we experience rolling virus surges and lockdowns.'

From a primary school staff: 'People who don't work in a school don't realise that schools had to operate as usual. Sanitiser and a few masks plus a "bubble" don't cut it when you're

dealing with the circulation of air. But every staff member tried their best to create as normal an experience for the kids as possible. Luckily we had no outbreaks before [redacted] as there is no way they could have been contained. '

From a primary school staff: 'Poorly'

From a primary school staff: 'Poorly. Positive asymptomatic case in class yet nobody deemed to be a close contact.'

From a primary school staff: 'Primary school teacher, 2 children from same household taken out of school (one child in my class) on Thursday as family member tested positive. Sunday morning I began to have minor symptoms. Sunday evening got a call from principal saying that the children had tested positive and that both classes and staff associated were deemed close contacts, told to restrict movements and a test was organised for 7 days from last contact with positive children. My symptoms got worse, so I rang GP and was sent for Covid test on Tuesday. I didn't receive the positive result until the Friday afternoon, but luckily I only had 1 other close contact living with me, who then tested positive also. Out of my class of 18 plus 4 adults associated, there was 1 other positive case, who sits right beside the original positive case. There was no other positive cases associated with the other class. I think Public Health dealt with our school very well and made the right decision to close and test the two classes. I think schools are overall safe environments, but not without risks. Close contacts need to be isolated and tested however.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Principal excellent had contact tracing done before hse had all my close contacts out from the day I started symptoms instead of waiting which would have added 4 days of potential contacts '

From a primary school staff: 'Really well..'

From a primary school staff: 'School handled them well but breached HSE guidelines to inform me of positive case. After having been in contact with a positive case, whole class were left until day of midterm break to be told officially. Over 5 cases in class at that point. Lives put at risk to keep cases quiet in school.'

From a primary school staff: 'School was closed for 2 weeks but only after I managed to convince HSE that we had a serious outbreak. They wanted it to be swept under the rug as out of school cases. So hard for me as principal to get them to listen to what I was telling them.'

From a primary school staff: 'School were quick and decisive'

From a primary school staff: 'Schools are only as safe as everywhere else in society. High numbers of positive Covid cases in the community means high risk in schools. And vice-versa. Teachers and pupils in our (primary) school were not deemed close contacts when there was a confirmed case in the class. This is a joke. The whole class should automatically be deemed close contacts, due to class sizes, share toilets, close contact of children at playtimes etc. Overall, the staggered day, the pod/bubble system, hygiene practices etc have worked well for us before [redacted]. But, the contact tracing is a joke and jeopardises the safety measures put in place by schools.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Secrecy a disgrace '

From a primary school staff: 'Staff are not treated as close contacts because they are wearing a mask. All the children in the class are not being treated as close contacts even though they spend 45 min break time with each other and engage with each other in PE. If you want a safe school environment you need to stop Covid at its source and the only way to do this is to send entire class and teacher home for testing if the child has been in school in the previous week and not the previous 2 days that is currently in place for contacts in a pod'

From a primary school staff: 'Teacher and sna in class with a positive case not deemed close contact. '

From a primary school staff: 'Teacher and sna in same classroom, teacher tested positive, sna not a close contact because she had a mask!! (Just a fabric one). Same teacher back at school after 10 days, on hse advice, while teacher's own family were still infectious. '

From a primary school staff: 'Teacher positive and I was subbing as an Sna in her classroom and I wasn't officially ever told.'

From a primary school staff: 'The numbers are too high and the schools are a big part of the community and to reduce the risk of transmission in the community schools need to be safe and have appropriate procedures in place. There needs to be a reduction in children in schools - half online and half in school or some such arrangement. COVID cases have been handled very well in my school, no further transmission occurred in the classroom from the original cases.'

From a primary school staff: 'The principal caught it first. Nobody was deemed to be a close contact. Subsequently 2 teachers 1 sna and her secretary caught it. 11 days later they did a u turn and only then were we made close contacts and got tested. In between that time people paid for private tests. The contact tracing is a shambles if you are not deemed a close contact on the basis that you are wearing a mask'

From a primary school staff: 'The statement... Your not close contact with positive case as you should be washing your hands and wearing your face masks so if your doing all what you should be doing your not close contact your deemed casual contact.????? What is casual contact ????' "

From a primary school staff: 'There have been no covid 19 cases in our school. '

From a primary school staff: 'There is no social distancing between the whole class with infants classrooms are too small class sizes to big we have been promised for over 20 years smaller class sizes and here we go now over crowded schools in a panda dosent work 36 in our 6th class most of them are taller than me it's very crowded up there but weve had ""zero cases"" from hse but 2 positives we were never told about "'

From a primary school staff: 'There was a clear mix up. Only three tested in class. The pod shit has to go. This is an airborne virus. Class testing from now on. Classes should be named. Staff were very nervous as they had been around parents [redacted] week yet they

did not know they were close contacts. Support teachers etc were doing class assessments. Not fair on school community. Creates culture of mistrust. '

From a primary school staff: 'There was one case in the school that was handled very well.'

From a primary school staff: 'They've been hidden. Staff & pupils just disappear for a couple of weeks with no explanation given to anyone '

From a primary school staff: 'Too much secrecy around being informed of incidences.'

From a primary school staff: 'Very well'

From a primary school staff: 'We are a large school in suburbs of [county redacted] (500 plus kids). Luckily to my knowledge there have been about 3 cases to date. One case was identified and a whole class of junior infants stayed at home for 2 week period. Other children have tested positive but to my knowledge they tested positive while isolating at home as a parent or a sibling has previously tested positive so they were not in school when they developed symptoms so no response was necessary in school. I think while numbers are high and community transfer is high school is NOT a safe place. '

From a primary school staff: 'We are lucky in our school - our system has worked very well '

From a primary school staff: 'We don't know, we are not given any information from school. You would only hear from them if your positive or classes as close contact by hse'

From a primary school staff: 'We had no cases in our school. '

From a primary school staff: 'We had one teacher test positive so the class was sent home. Another teacher was also sent home but her [redacted] was still in our school. The second teacher tested positive and only then was her [redacted] sent home. Another teacher and the principal were close contacts and were out of school but staff weren't told. A lot of the staff were scared because of the secrecy.'

From a primary school staff: 'We have been very fortunate. Any parent who had a positive test or was a close contact promptly kept their child out of school until sure that the child was safe, and informed the class teacher or the principal privately why the child was absent. As of yet we have had no positive cases in the school. We are a rural school with a close knit community so knowing each other's situations is normal and is key to our continuing to support one another. Since the [redacted] break I have heard of several families who got Covid. I am relieved we were not in school at the beginning of January. '

From a primary school staff: 'We were told the cases didn't originate in school. However 5 positive cases arose in the class from one child being sent to school while awaiting a test'

From a primary school staff: 'Well enough by the principal but HSE were days behind in informing close contacts'

From a primary school staff: 'Wholly inadequate ventilation for an aerosolised virus. Merely opening windows in winter in the largest classes in the EU, with a 60/70 % more

transmissible variant (which is currently dominant in Ireland) is state endorsed Russian roulette.'

From a primary school staff: 'Zero openness about cases. Shame tag with it. Disgrace teachers aren't close contacts of pupils who are positive. Disgrace that kids in pods are only ones deemed close contacts. Primary school classrooms are tiny and they all mix. Found out through grape vine that cases were in the school not through HSE or management originally. Fear of going in each say what will I bring home with me and when will I be told, total risk!'

From a primary school staff: 'As I was a close contact with 1 of my colleagues who tested positive it was 13 days later by the time I got a call from hse if it wasn't for another colleague informing me I was a huge risk to my close family its just not good enough.. The figures daily are still averaging 1000 and the deaths are still very often double digits it's just not safe for us all stuck in a classroom together with a cloth mask for protection.'

From a primary school staff: 'As much as schools are trying to be safe, kids snort and sneeze all the time and wipe their nose in their hands, it's impossible to keep safe, if a child falls you are going to put your arm around them and help them sit down etc. Social distance isn't possible in schools, the kids find it hard to hear you with the masks on also some children you can only wear a Shield as they lip read etc. Its 100% not safe in my opinion.'

From a primary school staff: 'Badly. No Information shared or given.'

From a primary school staff: 'I am a primary school principal. I know some of my children and their families tested positive during the first term, however the school was never notified.'

From a primary school staff: 'I believe the school is safe but it's the parents congregating, the play dates, the afterschool activities, taking public transport I don't see as safe!'

From a primary school staff: 'I personally believe if positive case in class send class home'

From a primary school staff: 'Limited definition of close contact'

From a primary school staff: 'Look we do an amazing job but after i got it myself i 100% believe if it is inna classroom it is hard to avoid as i teach **[redacted]** yr olds who cannot social diatance properly and who i cant social distance from what can we do??? I am fearful about this new varent and would not like to return to school without everyone being vaccinated. For the sake of all staff, children, parents and families associated with the school as well as my own family. Nobody knows or understands the fear or reality of it all until it lands on your own doorstep.'

From a primary school staff: 'Not one case in my school. Children checked at the gate every morning. Some have been turned away as temperature high but came to nothing. There is actually more control when in school as otherwise they are all out hanging around in groups.'

From a primary school staff: 'Our school has dealt with everything as well as possible with limited space and resources. The main issue I see is the different rules applied to contact tracing.'

From a primary school staff: 'Principal has made the decision to send pods home in senior classes. Whole class sent home in junior classes. HSE were a week late in giving guidance due to back log.'

From a primary school staff: 'School good but hse dreadful'

From a primary school staff: 'SNA in a classroom, 1 child positive case, I was deemed NOT a close contact by HSE however the entire class including the teacher were all told to get tested and stay home for 14 days. Went into the school next day and stated that I was not comfortable with not being tested. I was advised to consult my GP who assessed me as a definite close contact and sent me for testing. School was not happy but I felt it was the right thing to do to ensure that I didn't have the virus which I could have potentially infected the entire remaining school population with.'

From a primary school staff: 'Thankfully my small 6 teacher school has escaped a covid case so far. However, I live with other teachers and a nurse. One of my household members who is a teacher was deemed a close contact of a positive case in [month redacted] and I still had to go to work as normal (I believe this has changed since). I had no option to stay off on sick leave at that time and could afford to take unpaid leave. The dread I felt everyday going to school that week before [redacted] holidays was immense knowing my housemate could possibly have Covid. I was completely honest about it with my staff. They were scared to be around me so close to [redacted] while I waited for news on my housemates test. Neither I or my principal could say anything to parents about my situation as I wasn't yet a contact. I was so conscious that I could have my own and children in my classes [redacted] ruined. I spent the week glued to my desk trying to avoid any contact with the children and unable to explain why I wasn't able to come down to their desk to help them. Thankfully she was negative but it felt like pure luck and I know how dreadful it could have been if I myself became a contact or started showing symptoms.'

From a primary school staff: 'Thankfully they are handled correctly and really well'

From a primary school staff: 'The HSE said that the positive covid cases in our school were not close contacts of anyone. They said that because they were absent from school for 24 hours before they tested positive that they were therefore not infectious while in school.'

From a primary school staff: 'The school is doing all that it can and being as open as possible within the confines of HSE/DES rules re sharing of information. The contagious periods applied to school cases it appears are deliberately calculated to limit the number of school contacts that must be identified. This is particularly true of asymptomatic cases. The definition of close contact is too narrow and in no way takes account of the unique environment of a teacher in an enclosed room with 30 unmasked children who cannot socially distance. I have no confidence that I will be contacted in a timely manner to inform me that I have been a contact of a positive case so that I can protect my family and other students and staff members I will be in contact with. Keeping classes open is being prioritised over the abundance of caution that should be applied in such cases.'

From a primary school staff: 'Very poorly. Parents were informed before staff and we're not told what class confirmed child was in.'

From a primary school staff: 'Very well. Close contacts informed/pods sent home/teachers tested.. out of the few cases schools had, everyone came back negative. School was in the worst hit area in [county redacted] too'

From a primary school staff: 'We've not been told anything. Children in SEN told my colleague about siblings. My colleague told me.'

From a primary school staff: 'Well'

From a primary school staff: 'No positive cases that I have been made aware of but 2 children were tested in the class I'm assisting in and I found out from their school bus driver that they had been tested. No feedback with one child as to whether test was positive or negative '

From a primary school staff: 'Not told about positive cases. Hear from parents only because they want work sent out. So many teachers self isolating or with covid. All being recorded as community transmission even though it was caught in school. No masks for children even though recommended by WHO for over 6s. Freezing classrooms. Further down the vaccination list than others who are working in less dangerous working conditions.'

From a primary school staff: 'Primary school experience: SOME Parents with covid positive in their houses not willing for information to be shared at all and definitely not with class teacher/SNA after contacting school and threatening statements either via phone calls or emails. IF THEY CONTACT THE SCHOOL AT ALL ABOUT IT. N.B. Parents contact school if child is missing for one day.....panic day for them....day they get positive result in their house. Parents Telling contact tracers child was not at school those days ...when they were!!!.....SO THEN the school is NOT contacted by tracers to ask if said child/ren was at school said days. Child told to tell lies as to why they were absent on their return. Not keeping children at home as per the guidelines set out for isolation. (Returns before time) Parents making up their own rules and interpretation over guidelines. Leading to others contacting the school reporting these cases and asking what are ye going to do about it ? Principal might not even know of confirmed case and only informed by others. Parents not answering their phones when called to come collect their child....especially covid positive household cases that didn't do full time required to isolate. Staff stressed. Teacher Having to act as judge & jury in relation to coughs, temperatures, sore tummies, reasons for absence etc. The list goes on '''

From a primary school staff: 'Too much cloak and dagger around the whole thing. There's needs to be honesty and transparency to foster trust and respect. The powers that be (hse, govt. And dept.) school staff as if they are stupid, very patronising. I was deemed a close contact at [redacted] because my cousin called to my house for 15 mins, she tested positive for covid the next day, however if that was a classroom.and it was one of the students or the sna who had covid, hardly anyone else would be deemed a close contact, even though it is for 5 hours a day, 5 days a week, how on earth is that the case? The government know that covid spreads just as easily in schools as anywhere else but they cannot afford to admit that and deal with the consequences and repercussions that entails. They ignore covid in schools as they know it has little affect on kids and the teaching force are relatively young, they take the risk. But let's just be honest about that.'''

From a primary school staff: 'very well there was one case and because of proper protocol no one else tested positive'

From a primary school staff: 'We have had no positive cases in school'

From a primary school staff: 'no say'

From a primary school staff: 'We had 1 family test positive, all their class teachers were tested promptly and classmates told to isolate and they were tested.. Our principal was very open and honest with the staff and parents.'

From a primary school staff: 'Covid took over our school we weren't told once it went past one classroom. It was so unsafe found more out in media then I did from school So unsafe. It is not a safe place as children are coming in no ppe and coming in with symptoms that were not covid related at first but now they are. '

From a primary school staff: 'No cases of Covid-19 '

From a primary school staff: 'No holidays. Exhausted. October Week before midterm. Will never forget it. Huge cluster of positives. I did the tracing, the shutting down of class, the meetings and the FIRST I heard from the HSE was on DAY5 ((class shut down on night of DAY 2). This large outbreak (6kids, one teacher, one parent) never even featured in MartinaBs School Cases graph.'

From a primary school staff: 'Badly and too secretive'

From a primary school staff: 'Children are frequently out sick and I'm never informed that they have been tested until the child themselves comments on it when they return to school. If the principal is told, it's not passed onto me so I could be at risk but it would be too late by the time I find out. Too much taboo and concealment of symptoms, testing and cases. No social distancing in my classroom as it's too small and I have too many pupils to have children sit more than a metre apart. I have 5 windows in my room only 1 opens so no ventilation. If someone is a close contact of a positive case their siblings are allowed come to school. This makes no sense. If they have it there's a strong possibility their siblings have it and are thereby spreading it to another set of 30 plus students etc. Madness. '

From a primary school staff: 'I don't believe the word "safe" is appropriate, no place where people congregate for periods of time is safe in the pandemic. It is appropriate to say that we can control how people engage with each other in a school setting to a certain degree. It is not safe, but weighing up the risks it is worthwhile to take them for the greater benefit of society as a whole. '

From a primary school staff: 'Improvements should be made e.g. When bubble was sent home the table was not cleaned til the day before their return. Availability of masks all of time not most of time, communication of rules to substitute teachers é.g re nb of open windows /doors. More stringent cleaning, cleaners currently roam throughout the school with the same one cloth used in bathroom as classrooms. Need CO2 monitors for classrooms to ensure the rooms are ventilated properly.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Silently'

From a primary school staff: 'There's a huge lack of trust in the government and the HSE in dealing with covid cases in schools. Pods and bubbles within schools are not magic and do not mean anything. The children all mix with others when they are in yard, all use the same door handles, bathroom, sink, etc. They're kids, they cough, sneeze, pass things to friends, etc. So how the HSE can say that there are no close contacts or that the whole class aren't close contacts when there is a positive case in a small, poorly ventilated room of 25-30 children is beyond me. I still want schools to return as soon as possible but there is a different rule for teachers when it comes to contact tracing as I know many teacher friends who had a positive case in their class and the HSE somehow came out with no close contacts each time. Ridiculous. As soon as it was mentioned that they were a teacher the rules changed and they were fine to go to work. Another friend of mine was positive, caught it in school from a child and the HSE put it down as community transmission, all in the effort to keep numbers in schools seemingly low. Numbers on the news about schools are false because of this which many people don't realise and believe everything they see in RTE. Guidance to schools given from the start has been extremely vague and guidelines are all 'where possible' / 'as much as you can. As a result, conveniently for Norma Foley, schools and teachers can be blamed instead of the government if and when things go wrong as these vague guidelines mean that every school may be doing things differently. '

From a primary school staff: 'Too many cases hidden and tests'

From a primary school staff: 'V poorly '

From a primary school staff: 'We are not informed of close contact cases due to data protection..'

From a primary school staff: 'We haven't had any cases within the school. We had one case of a student testing positive. Her older sibling in secondary school had been a close contact and later tested positive. The family kept primary child off school as soon as they were aware of close contact sibling. As she had not been in school in the 10 days prior to a positive test it was not a school case. I would agree with this. Our principal informed us anonymously if the case and will always do so '

From a primary school staff: 'We were notified 8 days after a positive case. Our Principal was explicitly told not to inform the class teacher and SNA as they weren't deemed close contacts by the HSE and the Principal would be violating GDPR. The Principal was also told by the HSE that they were not obliged to inform the school community of the positive case.'

From a primary school staff: 'Great at the start but as time went on things went a bit lax. Not following proper protocol/lack of protocol when should have been-consequently endangering staff and their families-no procedures for when a child was said to be a close contact of a positive case and removed from school-case turned out to be negative but if it had been positive it could have been detrimental. I lost all faith then.'

From a primary school staff: 'I feel HSE seemed unable to give the guidelines and I was concerned as I was a close contact to a child so I contacted my GP who sent me for a test. Result was negative. I do not trust the contact tracing or HSE as a result of that incident.'

From a primary school staff: 'We have a covid free school with a perfect record yet two staff members tested positive [redacted] week. We still have not been informed by the school which leads me to wonder how many other cases have we not been told about.'

From a primary school staff: 'Handled with an air of secrecy where staff aren't informed of positive cases in their class and finding out from a third party outside the school. '

From a primary school staff: 'Very well handled. In a timely manner and the hse staff to be commended '

From a primary school staff: 'Very well. School transport is the issue, no social distance.'

From a primary school staff: 'Yes when community numbers are low. Schools are only as safe as the communities they are in. I'm very grateful that as some one who is at very high risk I have been facilitated to work from home for the duration. '

From a primary school staff: 'All handled very well in our school.'

From a primary school staff: 'Because of GDPR we were not informed about cases or in fact anything unless a class is sent home. It was nerve wracking sometimes wondering were we safe, had we cleaned enough and whether I might bring it home. I look after my 88 year old mother and my husband is a diabetic. All the time we were making sure our anxieties did not get passed in to the children especially as some would be extra anxious themselves. The fact that the schools were not deemed like another community and that we were told they were 'safe' was so annoying, belittling and a major source of anxiety.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Each school seems to vary in their approach. We keep our windows wide open all day long! Heat on in the morning for 2 hours before school. Classroom doors kept open. Great ventilation. We feel this aided us in 4 confirmed cases where 4 classes were deemed close contacts and not one child/teacher/SNA tested positive! Staff strictly in staff bubbles. No mixing. Only 2 in staffroom at any time, breaks staggered. No sharing of mugs/spoons/coffee. Everyone is self sufficient! Own shelf in fridge. Masks worn all day.'

From a primary school staff: 'Quickly but no support from hse'

From a primary school staff: 'Could have been less cases if siblings of close cases are required to stay at home until a not detected result is achieved by their sibling'

From a primary school staff: 'I teach in a small rural school (5 staff/93 pupils) a teacher tested positive and my experience of the HSE contact tracing was poor. I found out from the principal as the staff member had the courtesy to inform the school. It was over 24 hours later before the HSE contacted the school to inform the school that a positive case had been detected. At that stage all of the pupils had attended school that day and it was decided they were all close contacts and sent home, a sub teacher had been contracted for the day and had been exposed unnecessarily. I had eaten lunch with the teacher who tested positive the previous day and not considered a close contact. As a small school, a lot of our students are first cousins/ from the same family. 19 siblings of the "quarantining pupils" were allowed to attend school, even though they lived in the same household as a close contact who needed

to quarantine. I felt this was a scandalous decision by the contact tracing team. I feel strongly, that going forward, pupils/ siblings who live in the same household as someone who is isolating should not be allowed to attend school.'

From a primary school staff: 'Contact tracing was not sufficient, children coming to school sick. If they were moved to isolation area it took 1-2 hours to collect child. It's very scary and I have had a really tough time mentally coping with dealing with being in this state of fight or flight over a prolonged period of time. I feel we have been completely forgotten, abandoned - left to the wolves in this pandemic.'

From a primary school staff: 'We've been lucky with no cases in our school but I've no doubt it would spread rapidly if it did get into the building. Classes are too full, no social distancing at all and little or no ventilation.'

From a primary school staff: '35 children in the classroom. Impossible to keep 2m apart. '

From a primary school staff: '9 children and 3 teachers in my school tested positive just before the [redacted] holidays. Principal told us about the 1st child and we learned about the rest through WhatsApp. Principal interrogated the first teacher diagnosed, accusing her of partying . All teachers were tested 10 days after we were told about the first teacher. We all had contact with her in staff room. '

From a primary school staff: 'As well as could be expected. Parents not telling us about positive cases at home, sending kids to school anyway. V hard to contact HSE. Inspectorate no help in any way - 3 phone-calls in the last 12 months. No support for principal. '

From a primary school staff: 'Awful. Mask denying principal. No PPE. Shockingly poor cleaning. '

From a primary school staff: 'Classes and teachers sent home, told to isolate at home as no social distancing possible in my school setting '

From a primary school staff: 'I am a Junior Infant teacher. A boy in my class tested positive on a Saturday in [month redacted] and had been in school right up to the day before. I found out accidentally through the boy's neighbour that he had Covid. I contacted the mother, who confirmed that yes [redacted] was tested on the Friday after school (Nana who lives with them had contacted it, so he was tested as a close contact). Mother told me HSE told her NOT to contact school as there was no need. My principal was outraged & rang HSE to ask why they would tell the mother this and why the HSE had not informed the school. HSE Lady on phone was most unhelpful (to put it as politely as I can) and told my principal there was no risk to anyone in school!!!! Disgraceful that HSE did not consider me, the SNA or the [redacted] year olds in the room beside him as close contacts. What I was most upset about was the fact the the child who sits right beside the positive boy has a seriously ill infant sister in & out of [redacted] and she is severely immunocompromised. This is just my own story from my own class, but I have heard so many similiar stories from teachers. '

From a primary school staff: 'No confidence in contact tracing . It's very slow and rules keep changing! '

From a primary school staff: 'No staff wise notices when anyone tests positive. Only staff ~officially' involved informed and a culture of secrecy seemed encouraged. '

From a primary school staff: 'Our case was a teacher who had been nowhere except school + Aldi for 2 weeks before [redacted] as his father was vulnerable and wished to visit at Christmas. Tested positive 23 Dec with symptoms. No staff or children deemed close contacts. Realistically he could only have contracted in school. Everyone was a close contact. We were just lucky. I got private antigen test 22 Dec. Feel very unsafe. My siblings in private sector book times to go into office so no overlap with others, all doors left open, communal areas sanitised. My school is cleaned once a day - cleaner on minimal hours cannot sanitise fully. Lunch area shared and not cleaned after use. No cleaning of shared photocopier. Barely 1m between class pods. All redundant as on top of each other on yard + before + after school. And the list goes on. '

From a primary school staff: 'Response from HSE was very slow. '

From a primary school staff: 'Schools not safe, parents send in kids with cough etc social distancing simply cant happen, '

From a primary school staff: 'Very open. All staff and parents were informed and updated'

From a primary school staff: 'We had no positive cases while schools were open. My issues were if someone was deemed a close contact, everyone in that household should isolate for the 2 weeks. That should have been mandatory from the start. It would reduce exposure. The advise from HSE was contrary to how schools operate. If a parent is a close contact, keep all children at home for 2 weeks.

It would reduce contacts in a school.

If parent is a health care worker and has a negative test, maybe children should return then.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Well. Thoroughly and openly. But owing to the individual work of our principal, rather than HSE/DES regulations.'

From a primary school staff: 'Because of privacy issues and there was information that the principal was not privy too so there was a delay in their realising that a family waiting on what turned out to be positive results were car pooling with children from other classes . In a school environment we have contact with lots of pupils be it helping them in yard . I feel in schools staff should be made aware of who the positive cases are for the above reason. It is not as though the info will be shared . '

From a primary school staff: 'Contact tracers said that they could not record the positive cases from a school cluster as anything other than community transmission. They said they have no box to select for school transmission.'

From a primary school staff: 'From school and staff point of view, doing everything that can be done. Very frustrating to hear children are still having sleepovers and play dates (not childcare related) while we as staff have removed ourselves from elderly parents or stopped visiting our vulnerable family members to keep them safe. Yet children are still going for play

dates and sleep overs. Just so hard when we are sacrificing our families to hear this carry on is happening'

From a primary school staff: 'We had a mini outbreak among staff and pupils the end of the week leading up to [redacted] holidays. It was a cluster of teachers and pupils in the one year group. Myself and a few teachers decided before returning home to loved ones for [redacted] to seek the advice from our gps. None of us were deemed close contacts but all our gps had advised us and booked us in for appointments. Our principal was constantly ringing and liaising with the HSE before and during the [redacted] break. The school was not closed even though we had a day and half of school left. Some parents kept their children at home others sent them to school. A full week later the HSE then deemed the staff room as a cause of concern and advised all staff members to be tested.'

From a primary school staff: 'Only children were deemed close contacts. No adults in the school were. No covid tracker app code given. '

From a primary school staff: 'Between September and December schools felt safer as community transmission was lower. Since January infection rates have soared and although the school I work in has been proactive and effective in managing transmission I would not have felt safe to be there as an sna. Hopefully cases are coming under control again before we go back, the genie was let out of the bottle in Dec, and nowhere was safe. '

From a primary school staff: 'Handled well by staff and principal but not by hse. The secrecy from them is very worrying.'

From a primary school staff: 'In my school, we had a cluster resulting in approximately 18 positive cases over a 2 week period before [redacted]. Our principal did his best and tried to close the school to all staff and pupils but 2 days later was ordered to open by the department of education. It was so dangerous and threatening to the health of staff and students that many staff took sick leave resulting in the school remaining shut. I still feel that this was the right choice for all concerned and thankfully ensured the safety of many who had not contracted covid.'

From a primary school staff: 'School have done everything they can for kids etc but too many staff in the staff room etc. Started okay in September but got lax as year went on. HSE not telling siblings of close contacts is very worrying. There was a case in my school and 8 siblings of children restrict movements were sitting in my room with 18 others!! That is not safe. Also principal had to fight with HSE to ensure they deemed some staff/children close contacts '

From a primary school staff: 'Secrecy '

From a primary school staff: 'We had a positive case in the school. Principal not informed by the hse but by the parent. Principal rang the hse for further clarification told no one in the school was deemed a close contact. Also said due to 'gdpr' she was not allowed to tell anyone including teachers, sna etc. Who the child was or what year group they were in. I trust our school in the precautions we are taking but I do not trust the hse or the dept of education to give us the correct information. '

From a primary school staff: 'We have been fortunate in our school to not have any positive tests. In an SNA and have more face to face contact with the children than the teachers and any other staff. I feel the schools would be safe if there was more clarity about cases, not the secrecy/shaming there has been. I think if classes were sent home once there was a positive case in their room then the situation would have been better controlled and school could have stayed open. The secrecy around Covid is the biggest problem in the schools in my opinion!'

From a primary school staff: 'We were given no information about how many cases were in the school, or whether or not there may be siblings in other classes affected. '

From a primary school staff: 'It has been horrific. Teachers sitting less than a meter away from a positive case not being told. Parents of child with underlying serious illness not notified. No staff members told. Living in constant fear that it's your class and you will bring it home to your family.'

From a primary school staff: 'Huge cover up regarding positive pupils. Mistrust of school management and DES off the charts. Mixing on yard, at toilets, corridors & at end of school day means pods a joke.'

From a primary school staff: 'Limited information (power trip), one third of cases deemed necessary to test bubbles, bubbles a joke. Windows wide open saved further spread. Level of mistrust and anxiety off the charts. Sick kids being sent to school daily terrifies other kids and staff. Causes upset for all. '

From a primary school staff: 'Schools are only safe when the community is safe '

From a primary school staff: 'We had [redacted] confirmed cases in a 21 day period , [redacted] of which were in the last 14. It amounted to over 1/8 of the school. We were informed by contact tracing public health for most though some, it was the parent who notified us. I contacted any families with assistance from school secretary to inform them of the result of testing and advice from contact tracing. Part of their advice at that time in letters that I had to forward onto affected parents of close contacts advised it wasn't necessary for siblings or parents of close contacts to restrict their movements. Which I disagreed with. I asked Public health to close the school as community rate at the time was over 3 times national rate. 3 classes and teachers plus SNA were all off work restricting movement. While communication with public health and contact tracing was fine, it was intrusive into school time and personal time regularly. Substitute teachers were difficult to secure out of availability and fears. I continued to notify parents directly and through textaparent and the school website with updates throughout. As cases continued, I took the decision to close the school with support of the Board of Management, parents association. The officials in Dept. Overturned our decision. I notified parents, if they wished to keep their children out of school for the 11 days period leading up to the [redacted] holidays, they had my support to do so and we would provide online learning work. A very small turnout dropped their children to school initially, then all parents kept their children off a couple of days later for the remainder of the term. With huge national increases and new variant introduction post [redacted], I dreaded reopening but, didn't have to reopen then as national lockdown level 5 was reintroduced and remains.'"

From a primary school staff: 'It's handled well but it's not right that 31 students are packed in a small space and we just have to hope and pray everyone is negative. I've lost family to COVID and I'm Petrified to return to the set up pre [redacted]. Freezing cold with windows open, only me alone all day with 31 [redacted] year olds. It's hard'

From a primary school staff: '1 case in a different class in period from sep- dec. No concerns with school. They've been professional throughout. my children are missing school and their friends.'

From a primary school staff: 'Advice about safety not heeded eg number of classrooms/bubbles learning support teachers going in and out of. '

From a primary school staff: 'Cluster among staff, 3 of five members of my pod tested positive. HSE didn't organise testing, local GP organised testing for all staff'

From a primary school staff: 'Excellent by the school but awful by HSE you not for parents informed us of some cases we would never have known.'

From a primary school staff: 'Extremely well in the school I work in but I feel the government have not been honest enough with figures etc and often don't leave enough time for preparation for new measures in school. '

From a primary school staff: 'I believe the schools are only as safe as the community. If numbers are high in the community they will be high in schools. I believe that children spread Covid and I believe a lot of cases that were spread in school are incorrectly recorded as community spread'

From a primary school staff: 'I would rather know if the case was in my class or not. weve been lucky, only had 3 cases. 2 the staff members told us it was them, but there was a third case and we were never told who's class it was in. '

From a primary school staff: 'It is impossible to social distance in an infant classroom.Children were sent to school by parents who knew they were close contacts of confirmed cases. Its just a miracle I didnt test positive yet .'

From a primary school staff: 'None reported in the school '

From a primary school staff: 'School has been excellent, HSE not so much-have taught covid positive students who were sent in to school as they were asymptomatic! No one let us know, heard about it informally. '

From a primary school staff: 'Very confidentially, class sent home'

From a primary school staff: 'Handled well when community numbers were low and not with the new variant of Covid.'

From a primary school staff: 'No cases that i know of. But that doesnt mean no cases. Its the lack of reliable information that is the biggest concern.'

From a primary school staff: 'There have been no Covid cases in my school'

From a primary school staff: 'We just got lucky.'

From a primary school staff: 'We were not allowed to tell parents when children in our class had covid. But yet we send letters to say there's an outbreak of headlice. Every single positive case we had in our school were deemed as having NO close contacts!! Staff asked to speak to BOM but told HSE decision was final. We had many parents send their children to school while waiting for covid test results... Then 2/3 days later taking child out as they got positive result.'"

From a primary school staff: 'We've only had one case, schools are only as safe as their community'"

From a primary school staff: '[county redacted] went into L4 in [redacted]. I have a baby with a heart condition so was being extremely careful, literally from sch- home & nowhere else in between!!! i tested positive & got the shock of my life! Tested positive on a Wed the HSE contacted my school Principal one full wk later! She plagued them with phone calls looking for advice, they told me a number of times they would be in touch with her but she heard nothing for a full wk! They came in and did an audit when the school was empty & deemed it safe! I had been mixing with 90+ children daily as a SET teacher, they said station teaching was safe not knowing what station teaching even is! The school stopped it when i got sick! I spent 3 full wks in bed isolated from my 3 young children! I am still extremely fatigued & was signed off work until the New Year, I feel like my entire body has just been destroyed!!! My baby with the heart condition tested positive a wk after me & then all clinics were cancelled in [redacted] so i'm still waiting on her heart scan to get her checked!!! Schools are not safe! I am so angry at how it was handled at how it was brushed under the carpet, because i developed symptoms on the Sunday I had no close contacts in sch ! '

From a primary school staff: 'I see two issues with the present contact tracing system. Firstly, we had an issue where there were cases in the local crèche. We have children in our classes who were told by the hse to continue coming to school even while their crèche siblings were being tested. When a number of the crèche children subsequently tested positive, it was only then that their siblings were told to stay at home. Some of these school children also subsequently tested positive. School staff and students were not deemed close contacts even though these children do not have to social distance. This seems crazy to me as it put many staff and numerous students at potential /unnecessary risk. I don't blame the parents - they were only following the HSEs guidelines. For the sake of the few days, while these crèche children were awaiting the test I feel that their siblings should have been kept out of school. HSE guidelines should be changed to keep children out of school while siblings are being tested, particular now as the virus is going to be way more transmissible and staff & students should not be left vulnerable to this unnecessary risk. My second issue is that being in a border county school there is a bit of an anomaly with regard to contact tracing. Some parents and children are getting tested in the north (as that is where their doctor is or where the parents work). Presently there is no obligation on northern Ireland contact tracers to inform the hse so we are depending on parents to be open and inform us and while most are, I'm sure there are some going under the radar and have been missed.'"

From a primary school staff: 'Only 1 pod identified as close contact and 1 of the pod not deemed a close contact as seated just over 2m away from positive case even though all in

same pod. The school was informed by the principal of a positive case and mentioned the class. No other information was given by school or hse'

From a primary school staff: 'Cases have been handled well by school staff. HSE not helpful with cases and I am petrified to go back to school to teach in a tiny classroom with 32 kids and no hot water for hand washing. Children have no concept of social distance and their parents (in 90% of cases in my class) seem to have no concept of covid and are continuing with sleepovers and play dates. All while in level 5 during remote learning!'

From a primary school staff: 'Child was a covid positive case, was in school Friday, got tested Saturday, got positive results on Tuesday. No one was deemed a close contact in the class of 32 children in a 50sq foot classroom.'

From a primary school staff: 'Class is sent home which is a relief thanks to principal. Contact tracing was very slow by Hse.'

From a primary school staff: 'Great . 50% pupils and 100% staff . Safer but also in my school due too behaviours we have now more time to give our children and their education.'

From a primary school staff: 'have been provided with ppe but feel that pupils that are severe to profound are of great risk because of their needs'

From a primary school staff: 'I am a cleaner in a school. We are not told there has been a positive case in the rooms we are cleaning. We have no PPE .I work in a school of seven hundred pupils and staff. Contact tracing is non existent in schools. How can you avoid been in contact with someone in a building of seven hundred pupils and staff. I feel very unsafe going to work every day. '

From a primary school staff: 'I feel there's a secrecy as management don't want fear and panic to set in but not knowing makes me more nervous. I think it's awful that staff are not immediately contacted when a child in our class or one a child's family member has covid.'

From a primary school staff: 'If it's not safe for the rest of the population to be in conditions that apply to school and early years then it is not safe for anyone.'

From a primary school staff: 'In my school kids were disappearing for days on end with no explanation, parents were testing positive and bringing their kids to school. Principal was asked by LWR (me) to keep all teachers informed of suspected and confirmed cases, no names required but to be informed if there was a suspected/confirmed case in their bubble so any necessary precautions could be taken regarding high risk family members etc. Principal refused as it would add to people's anxiety apparently. As LWR I had teachers coming to me in Oct requesting we be kept informed as the lack of info was fuelling their anxiety and they were genuinely afraid for their health and family members health. I for one am SO glad I am not in school and would gladly remain working from home if I could. I'm high risk but not 'high risk enough' to warrant being allowed work from home when all schools return. While I appreciate the position principals have been put in by DES, the principal and BoM have a duty of care to each pupil and member of staff first and foremost. I feel really let down by my principal, DES and union and don't know where to turn next. '

From a primary school staff: 'In one instance, two further cases in a class were classified as community transmission because the testing of those children happened on the first day of midterm (despite the protestations of the principal). These children were also not sitting anywhere near the initial case and so undermined the validity of 'pods' completely in my eyes.'

From a primary school staff: 'My [redacted] was deemed a close contact waited a week for a test then another week before contact tracing called. Not good enough. schools need rapid testing and contact tracing. They need full cooperation from the HSE and DES to keep staff and pupils safe. Giving staff masks and advising to keep windows open will not keep COVID out of schools'

From a primary school staff: 'Not informed or offered testing for a case in my class. Child informed me two months later and said it wasn't the business of his teacher '

From a primary school staff: 'Our principal has been under a lot of pressure. We are dependent on families informing the school in a lot of cases (if a child had not been in school for 48 hours before their test). My feeling is a school should be informed of a positive case of a student or a staff member every time one comes up!!!'

From a primary school staff: 'Soap was not regularly supplied. No lines around teachers desks to keep distance. No screens. Not regarded as a close contact or even informed about 2 cases in classroom.'

From a primary school staff: 'The hse told me I was not a close contact with the student who was positive even though I was in the same room as him for 2 and a half days but they said I was not close enough to him.(within 1 metre for up to 15 mins at any 1 time) When I tested positive they said I was a close contact and that it was within 1 metre for up to 15 mins in any 1 day.'

From a primary school staff: 'Very badly. No communication from the HSE. Poorly managed and school really left to sort it out. '

From a primary school staff: 'Very poorly. This veil of secrecy and refusal to recognise that people (children and adults) in cramped classrooms for 5.5hrs breathing the same air are close contacts is unbelievably unfair. This is not down to the schools it's down to hse, public health and Dept of ed.'

From a primary school staff: 'We didn't have any confirmed until the school closed at [redacted]. Since then there have been many and there are currently cases still. '

From a primary school staff: 'We had a case in our school the first week of September. Local GP, who is also a parent of children in the school, was excellent. HSE were slow. Only a few children in the positive child's pod were instructed to stay out of school. When I say pod - children nearest. We have large classes, I have 31 children plus an SNA in my room. Class teacher was not deemed a close contact nor an SNA who was seated close to the positive case for over an hour. ''

From a primary school staff: 'Whole class and teacher/SNAs stayed home and got tested. '

From a primary school staff: 'Notified'

From a primary school staff: 'Staff couldn't be told of cases and were not classed as close contacts!'

From a primary school staff: 'There hasn't been one to my knowledge'

From a primary school staff: 'They haven't been communicated properly due to "data protection".'

From a primary school staff: 'First case, notified by principal, second case notified online then principal, subsequent cases, process of elimination by communications noticeboard in school'

From a primary school staff: 'A parent in our school tested positive and her children were in school while she was symptomatic. We were informed by another parent. The first parent then attempted to return her children to school after one had tested positive but was asymptomatic. It was only when the principal asked for proof that the children were safe to return to school that the parent admitted that one of her children had tested positive. '

From a primary school staff: 'A lot of confusion our principal did all the organizing of tests for 7 staff and 26 2nd class students while the HSE and DESS kept passing the buck not taking ownership telling the principal it is Hse decision or DESS decision'

From a primary school staff: 'Can of disinfectant, sanitisers and 🙏'

From a primary school staff: 'Schools have been amazing. The HSE and DOE are not able to run or plan anything. They're in denial and the whole system is an absolute disgrace'

From a primary school staff: 'We just tried to keep the school as safe as possible. No interaction between classes. Tried to keep constant and open communication with parents entrusting them not to send any sick children to school.'

From a primary school staff: 'Well handled in my school but principal's hands tied by department.'

From a primary school staff: 'We have been very lucky in not having any cases.'

From a primary school staff: 'Define safe! . The definition of safe means no risk. There is an element of risk in every work place where there are people confined to enclosed space for any period of time. Whether or not the people that are confined to that space, have varying degrees of severity or symptoms of covid, does not negate the risk of spread, or the risk of severity of disease for anyone there who contracts covid. The risk of spread is only reduced by mitigation practices but not eliminated. It is not possible to consistently maintain mitigation practices in primary schools due to space limitations and because only adults are wearing masks at any given time. I do not feel safe as a teacher but I bear the risk to some degree as part of my duty.'

From a primary school staff: 'It was handled well in my school. I have no complaints. We had no covid cases that I know of.'

From a primary school staff: 'There has been a complete lack of uniformity in procedure once a positive case has been identified in a school. The HSE have regularly overlooked the probability of Covid 19 being spread in schools, instead generalising cases in staff and students as being due to community transmission. GDPR is not a good enough reason to allow staff and students to sit in a room for 6 hours with no masks or social distancing with a positive case and then not be informed that this was the case. The school community would be informed if it was headlice so how can they not do the same for Covid 19? Not only have close contacts not been deemed as such but the school community also have not even been enabled to make an informed decision for themselves to be tested. The government have their head in the sand when it comes to this and the HSE are not blameless. It is for these reasons that people are afraid to go back to school. If we knew that a positive case would be dealt with seriously, openly and promptly I would feel a lot safer going back to school.'

From a primary school staff: 'All cases were kept top secret, we weren't told about them until much later, and all of them were deemed community transmission and nothing to do with school.'

From a primary school staff: 'Each case related to school is considered a household case. Children in the class pod are not tested and either are staff working closely with the child. Real numbers of positive cases are hidden to portray the false image that 'schools are safe', when in reality they definitely are not.'

From a primary school staff: 'There was a case in my class in [month redacted], one child. The only people deemed close contacts were the 5 other children in the "pod", ie. at the same desk. The room is only 4m X 5m, with 29 of us in the room. We should all have been close contacts in my opinion. The principal was informed not to disclose the case to anyone, including me, the class teacher. The principal did inform me, but officially, I should only have received the generic HSE letter that was sent out to all parents. The handling of cases and close contacts in schools is not good enough.'

From a primary school staff: 'Contract tracing not done correctly in school'

From a primary school staff: 'For the time we were there our school seemed to be handling it well,'

From a primary school staff: 'Terribly...complete denial by HSE that my case was contracted in school and was instead deemed a community transmission even though I had had very little contact with anyone outside the school community'

From a primary school staff: 'Told that even as staff in the class where there was a positive case we had no right to know as the child tested positive on a Sunday and when informed by management due to the parent informing us, we were told that we could face disciplinary action if we told any other teachers or staff (forced to deny it to our colleagues when asked) and we were not classed as close contact even though in the same class and none of the other parents informed that there was a positive case in class.... HSE decision'

From a primary school staff: 'Very well.'

From a primary school staff: 'One child travelling on our transport was deemed a close contact but his brother wasn't. '

From a primary school staff: 'Excellent principal and conscientious school community'

From a primary school staff: '1st case Teacher positive. No one deemed close contact as case was linked to activity outside. school. No children showed symptoms. 2nd case, child positive. Whole class tested. No further positive cases. Not all parents brought child for test. And many didn't show up for second test. '"

From a primary school staff: 'Have had to chase Public Health officials, leaving numerous messages. Not filled with confidence in system, when you're told by official (in Public Health [county redacted] office) that an SNA will never be a close contact- once they are wearing a mask- after a child they support has tested positive. '

From a primary school staff: 'Hse helpline was dire. They told me to ask my principal, that my principal would know the answer. I am the principal. They told a parent to ring me and ask if the parent could go back to their work. Parent works in an office, they don't work for us. Farce.'

From a primary school staff: 'Senior infants class and Public health only counted children within one meter of the positive child when seated at the desk. Principal was asked to get a meter stick and approximate whose mouth would be within a meter. Senior infants move around all the time.'

From a primary school staff: 'We did all we could before [redacted] when numbers were lower, community transmission remains high, and when restrictions are eased in any way they then resume mixing households, sleepovers etc despite advice to the contrary, they feel when schools are reopened so has normal activity. Schools can not control that. Communication to the school is based on honesty and trust with parents, not all parents feel this moral duty'

From a primary school staff: 'We do not be informed of anything even if people are testing positive'

From a primary school staff: 'I want to go back to school. But i want all teachers vaccinated first'

From a primary school staff: 'No information given to teachers due to gdpr'

From a primary school staff: 'We've had 1case. Handled well. Principal spent [redacted] eve contact tracing. No other cases arose.'

From a primary school staff: 'Case 1)Not told by school/hse, leaked on Facebook by childs parent. Case 2) Told by staff member of her own positive result, all kids from her class were still in school for 3 days after and mixing with another class. Not informed by hse for another 2 days.'

From a primary school staff: 'None in our school'

From a primary school staff: 'Our school has fought the HSE on every case to increase the number of close contacts but they've refused. Each time we have been proven right when it has lead to further cases... especially when it comes to children using the school bus. Between September and December our primary school has had 14 positive cases (most as a result of a positive child on the bus).'

From a primary school staff: 'I believe that it is absolutely imperative that the board of management retain the right to close the school under health and safety grounds if it is deemed necessary due to an outbreak of covid-19 this should not be a decision made by the HSE'

Secondary school staff

From a secondary school staff: 'GDPR means even compromised staff and students are unaware of positive cases they might have been exposed to. This is a major issue as i work closely with compromised students (one to one) and i feel lack of knowledge means the risk to them in particular is increased. Lack of testing by the HSE (or lack of admission that classmates, or staff are close contacts) , is seriously concerning.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Well'

From a secondary school staff: 'As safe as anywhere else in Classroom with doors and windows open. Not safe at break times as impossible to keep students away from each other and masked. '

From a secondary school staff: 'I am a teacher with a [redacted] in the very high risk category. It has quite frankly been the most stressful experience of my life teaching in a classroom with 26+ students no SD and v poor ventilation. Seeing the non existent SD at lunch times and in corridors snd knowing my 5th n 6th years were socialising at weekends was just so stressful. Before [redacted] I was terrified I could bring Covid back to my [redacted] who is on 2 immunosuppressants and another serious drug. Tbh I am prepared to hand in my notice rather than return to such an unsafe environment.'

From a secondary school staff: 'In a secretive manner, told not to discuss with staff or students which led to stigma and shame. '

From a secondary school staff: 'lunchtime 40 minutue...pissing rain...100 student packed into a small collidoor eatin with masks off..no room for student to social distance while eating while staff eat in car by themselves.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not the cases - protocols. Too many staff members in staffroom. Too much movement '

From a secondary school staff: 'Schools doing their best but you put all those people in a building for full day, masks need to be taken off to eat...'

From a secondary school staff: 'Secretly'

From a secondary school staff: 'There seemed to be a layer of secrecy cast over it. While the right to privacy is understood, teachers should at least, in my opinion, be informed if they were teaching a class with a student in it who has tested positive for covid. This would then allow them the option, for piece of mind, to arrange a private test.'

From a secondary school staff: 'To my knowledge our school has had a few positive cases but I t was during mid term and [redacted] hols so it wasn't deemed a school transmission so no one was tested. '

From a secondary school staff: 'We had one positive case in [month redacted] - the HSE gave us the "a positive case has been identified in your school community", but no other guidance. Some parents kept their children away, out of fear. We didn't know, and couldn't tell what year group was involved.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We have had a small number of Covid cases in our school. In only one of those cases did a further school member test positive and these two students had spent the weekend in each others homes. In all other cases none of their close contacts tested positive. This reassured me that the measures we had in place in school were working to reduce the spread and keep people save. The public health doctors were so supportive and helpful and worked with us to ensure both parties had all relevant information. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Very poorly, it is often the students who inform us of cases before we find out from parents or it's hinted by management there is a possible case. Students and management have been brilliant making efforts to reduce COVID-19 however wiping desks and wearing non-medical grade masks is unsafe particular at a time when new and more spreadable strains are now across Europe. I feel schools are very unsafe for everyone involved and the fact numbers are under estimated by government departments is a serious breach of health and safety.'

From a secondary school staff: 'A staff member who I team teach with (share a classroom 3 times a week) tested positive for COVID-19. I was not considered a close contact and was not told about her positive test until a month later. I was not told officially and the school managment considered the school COVID free as she contacted the virus outside the school, despite attending work while unknowingly positive. Many of the students I teach were out ""sick"" for 2 two weeks between Sep-Dec 2020. I was not informed if any of them had a positive COVID test. There is a culture of secrecy and shame around contracting COVID in my school.'"

From a secondary school staff: 'If there was a positive case in the class I work in I wouldn't be deemed a close contact even though I spend 6+ hours in the same room with this class. I can't social distance in my work. Also kids use face coverings and sanitise throughout the day. However during break and lunchtime they have no masks on and are in each other's faces inside the classroom with no social distancing whatsoever. The whole thing is a joke! Classrooms are not safe '

From a secondary school staff: 'Management deny that there have been any cases. We are told the cloth face covering protects us and we are not close contacts.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Terrible '

From a secondary school staff: 'More information need to be given to teachers about positive cases of COVID in school'

From a secondary school staff: 'A cloud of secrecy. I'm a high risk teacher, I've chosen to stay in school because I love my work & my role is one that is really important in the school. I work with students most at risk of leaving school early & know that a change in teacher isn't ideal for them. My principal is aware of my status as high risk, I've asked that he let me know when there is a positive case in a class I've taught, not the students name but just that there is a case so I can arrange testing for myself through my consultant. I've had six separate classes where I've taught the group and someone tests positive within a day or two later. Never informed by the principal or school management about any of these cases, other kids in the class were able to tell me about them & I've seen the letters posted up on the Facebook group from my school. Some letters were up on the Facebook group page before staff were even aware of cases. We've resorted to keeping each other informed as much as possible and keeping an eye on our school communication systems to see if/when a message is sent about positive tests or when a note is put on a students attendance file to say they are absent due to covid 19. We had a large number of students isolating due to one case - they were all considered close contacts just before [redacted]. The number of parents sending their kids back into school before the end of their isolation period and then telling the school that they weren't sick so could go in was scary. Out of this we then had a second & third positive case where the students had been sent back into school, teachers weren't aware they were supposed to be self isolating because nobody was told anything and then these students tested positive in the days afterwards.'

From a secondary school staff: 'A culture of clear communication was decided upon originally but then we started to hear of cases that we had never been formally informed of. This led to heightened anxiety and rumours. Actual case numbers had to be announced to quell these rumours. As a teacher living with high risk parents, it has been exhausting trying to keep my distance while living in the same house. Especially when you know someone in the class has tested positive yet no close contacts identified despite seeing this student interacting with friends in the class maskless while walking home. Schools could be safe if we take the same precautions as the rest of society- 2m distancing, proper ventilation and the same contact tracing procedures as other work places. I cannot wait to get back to my students in the classroom. I just hope it is safely.'

From a secondary school staff: 'A student tested positive, 16 students were deemed close contacts and even though I (SNA) had sat and moved within 1 metre for the day preceeding the Covid test I was not considered a close contact because I kept my mask on. The student did not keep her mask on and along with other students had to be reminded constantly to pull up their masks and sanitise desks and hands.'

From a secondary school staff: 'According to guidelines '

From a secondary school staff: 'Although I don't know of any cases in our school, the conditions are awful- every window abd door open, freezing, damp, no lunch or tea breaks at all, scheduled toilet breaks. The kids are freezing. No one can hear anyone. Online has been so much better. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Any cases, even very obvious school transmission, have been put down as community transmission. I'll be pushing my union to not go back at all in 2021.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Badly handled/ Little False information Do it myself'

From a secondary school staff: 'During class time is manageable. When, every 40 minutes, 1000 students converge on the corridors to move between classes, the environment is not safe. Quite a large number of Students, the moment the teachers back is turned, pull down their mask under their chin, or remove it completely. At the start of day, breaktime, lunchtime and the end of day, students may be unsupervised and the Masks are not worn. When supervised, as above, masks are removed when the teachers attention is diverted. The moment the school day ends, Masks are removed and students converge In groups outside of the school boundary - large numbers hugging, hanging out of one another. Etc. Management tell us very little. They hide all day in their offices while teachers face students, actually FACE students. They remain removed from the risk, lecturing on safety standards, willingly ignorant of the reality. I could go on - the 5th and 6th house parties, the gatherings in the school toilets, the public have no sense.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Fairly well but 2 metre distancing is recommended and in schools where this isn't possible it's one metre.. that's too close and too many especially for a 80 minute double. We had gales blowing through with doors open and windows also. Too many shuffling around corridors between classes and too small an area outdoors for lunch so they didn't stay socially distant enough with masks off.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Good mask wearing by all in my school community indoors but out on yard or on school grounds social distancing not being observed and no masks worn. Cleaning routines usually carefully followed. Most classrooms have windows left open (Freezing in November and December!) but several classrooms in our school have NO windows at all- so not properly ventilated but still being used as classrooms. '

From a secondary school staff: 'I am 60 Year old Secondary School Teacher. A colleague asked if I would informally allow a number of 6th Year students who needed extra tuition in Maths to join my 1 hour long class on [month redacted] 14th 2020. One of these students tested positive on [month redacted] 17th. To date I have not been contacted by anyone. The principal has used GDPR as an excuse to not warn his colleagues (in my case 22 years) of dangers we face.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I am a teacher who had a positive case in one of my classes. I spent over two hours with the student during their infectious period. I was not deemed a close contact and as a result continued going to school/shops etc. A couple of days later I became unwell however my doctor wouldn't refer me for a test as I wasn't deemed a close contact and only had a sore throat, not typical symptoms. I paid for a private test which came back positive, I then got sent for a hse test which also came back positive. When contact tracers called they informed me it would be noted as community transmission - I argued that it was school transmission without success, they wouldn't budge. They didn't contact my school for a couple of days and they didn't identify any close contacts, despite me being in with a sore throat.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I have no idea how they've been handled as we haven't been told when there were cases. We were notified once in the early stages of reopening in September but the HSE informed our Principal not to notify staff of any further cases. We were only told there was a case but nothing about the student, year group or class. I know I teach the confirmed case as the students in my class were able to tell me who it was. The student confirmed it when they returned to school. Their only symptom was loss of taste which they discovered in Mcdonald's on lunch break before they then came back to school for class.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I just think the close contact criteria is not safe enough and if it were expanded it would be better. I also think that the Government need to account for the families of positive school cases in order to grasp if schools are statistically safe'

From a secondary school staff: 'In post primary school the corridors are narrow and due to needing to use the gym and canteen to hold pods (to allow for almost 1 meter social distance- which is measured from the centre of the desk to the centre of the other desk- which I think should be from the edge of the desk but anyway), also the students need to move for options subjects there is a huge amount of movement in the narrow corridors. I often feel claustrophobic, hold my breath while walking the corridors with numerous students bumping into me. It doesn't feel safe at all. For the woodwork room/ IT room /science lab you have students queuing to get in sometimes both sides of the corridors and others trying to pass by through the middle. There is no such thing as social distancing. We have to keep the windows open for ventilation. As soon as teachers leave a room students close the windows because they're freezing. They lean towards each other to talk because they can't hear each other through masks and they still mess around physically, it's to be expected they're young and feel invincible to covid as they have been told they're safe in school. In a 5x5 meter class I have 24 students for 40 minutes then another 24 for 40 mins and so on so that by the end of the week I've interacted with almost 200 students. We have 1000 students in our school and over 100 staff. We have been told that we've had 5 cases associated with the school- but this only accounts for the teachers who we know through the grapevine have been positive. With over 1000 students theres definitely more cases that are being swept under the carpet. I eat my lunch in my car as I cannot bring myself to remove my mask in the building. I have a young baby and vulnerable people at home. Thanks you for giving me the chance to get this off my chest. '

From a secondary school staff: 'It's been disgraceful handled. Students staff [redacted] have all had cases and all discovered through rumour mill and that's the cases we know about. I had unmasked colleague coughing in staffroom beside me the day before [redacted] positive test. What's worse when [redacted] came back [redacted] still goes around unmasked. [redacted] We have had 3 outbreaks that the rumour mill has discovered but no idea of the real number. And all the while we sit with windows and doors open with no heat on. [redacted] '

From a secondary school staff: 'Known cases have been well handled by the school but unfortunately it seems the school isn't always informed of cases and so the management of the virus is very difficult. Also it is important to remember that students are children- they struggle to wear masks properly, keep their distances and wash their hands regularly. This makes containing the virus particularly difficult in school settings. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Lack of transparency about cases. Students and teachers unable to socially distance not being considered close contacts to confirmed cases. Lack of testing. Lack of PPE.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not told about positive cases. Social distancing v very hard to maintain on corridors, walking to school, lunchtimes'

From a secondary school staff: 'Parents send children to school even when someone is positive in there home'

From a secondary school staff: 'Principal, staff and students are all doing incredible work to prevent outbreaks in school but it is impossible to mitigate all risks. In one class 4 students who all sat close to each other all tested positive but none were deemed close contacts of each other by HSE which is implausible at best.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Quietly, minimal fuss, minimal info for staff'

From a secondary school staff: 'Quite poorly. Very rigid definition of close contacts and reliance on DES criteria. There is an obsession with reputation and how we appear to others do management is unwilling to assert themselves to deal more directly with outbreaks and are towing the official line of community transmission when we know that our official number of cases is far higher and transmission could only have happened within the school community. Schools are not safe abs the situation has been appalling handled by government who are also obsessed with appearances.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Radio silence...we hear from the students about clusters. Could be 6/7 students missing from the class but they are told they got it outside of school and not from each other in school. Principal would arrive at the door and ask "when you had your 5th years last Tuesday did you keep the windows open? Did they all keep their masks on? Yeah? Grand!" It's very upsetting.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Really poor ventilation in some of our classrooms. Internal rooms with windows and roof vents not working. Two people in the same class tested positive at the same time but not deemed close contacts even though they were in school, no one else in the class deemed close contacts. Some students refused to pull masks up/wear correctly and were not removed by senior management when incident was reported. Some students constantly had masks down despite being asked to fix them, teachers reported it to Senior Management and nothing happened'

From a secondary school staff: 'Safety measures need to be tightened. I'd be worried if I lived with a vulnerable person. '

From a secondary school staff: 'School had a positive case. Student was deemed not to be infectious while in school. School requested not to inform the student/parent body. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Shocking. No regard was shown for health and safety. I don't blame the school - they were told they had to hush everything up. The Department of education has a lot to answer for - endangering the lives of everyone in schools and not even telling anyone when there were positive cases in classes, Disgraceful. There's no way

I'd send my kids back in as long as this pandemic goes on because the Department of education lied to all of us when it kept saying schools were safe. That was all lies. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Social distancing is not possible in the school scenario. Students sit less than a metre from each other and don't wear masks when eating and chatting during break of class. Movement between classes means students and teachers are in crowded scenarios 7 or 8 times a day . '

From a secondary school staff: 'Staff member tested positive on a Monday returned teaching on Friday, in contact with at least 30 staff & 180 students & yet no one considered a close contact. Very little social distancing in school. Solution of washing up liquid being used to clean desks. No hot water to wash hands. Open bins in classrooms, not emptied for days. Students leaving school at lunchtime & returning leading to more contact with the community.'"

From a secondary school staff: 'Staff mixing freely unmasked in Staffroom. Students moving class desks not sanitised properly students not wearing masks properly'"

From a secondary school staff: 'Students mingle before and after school without masks. At lunch time they don't stick to the distancing rules while eating. Staff eat in staff room without masks. If any member of staff has covid the whole staff room will catch it. Schools are safe only in so far as we wear masks and teachers are fastidious about wiping down desks and sanitising hands. Students must do so also and are good at doing this for the most part. When community numbers were high in Oct we had the most number of student positive cases. Another factor that has helped keep us safe is that parents are good at keeping their [redacted] home from school if their [redacted] or another family member is ill in any way. Schools are only as safe as the practises that take place within them . I do my part but know not every individual does theirs. When community levels are low we stand a better chance of being safe.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Very secretive, but I'm aware of confidentiality afforded to positive cases.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We had a case during the week before [redacted] break. Apparently there was more than one confirmed case but we were never informed. It was kept very hush hush and only people who needed to know information were told.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We weren't told about certain cases of Covid 19 and heard about them through other students '

From a secondary school staff: 'We've done our best I think. However, the fact that we've had 7/8 cases amongst students since we reopening and not one has been told to staff is frightening. Not one staff member was deemed a close contact nor student. I want to get to school naturally as quickly as possible. But being an NQT and living at home with my parents while my dad recently thankfully overcame cancer, everyday is an ordeal in itself.'

From a secondary school staff: 'With secrecy and no close contact information given. Need to oniw basis and seemed noone needed to know. I was called by HSE and told close contact 7 days after they knew and wasn't told if it was school. My only other place I could

have been a close contact was Dunnes so in fairness it was school but that was kept from me. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Discreetly'

From a secondary school staff: 'I am a post primary teacher in a large school. No cases at all.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Schools hands are tied by hse and the right of parents not to disclose information . They should not have that right. Children tested on Monday and Tuesday don't count as school cases as they were not at school 48 hrs before.... but its 14 days contagion time for every other workplace also not right. If a family member is being tested for covid as a close contact the teacher still has to come into school which is potentially exposing the entire school population which is also not right. All of these things make the school a very dangerous place to be. Up to [redacted] the numbers of schools who had experienced cases was very high yet department still said schools are safe with this new more contagious strain we have no chance of staying safe. Department says the class room is safe because everyone wears a mask but the students either go without or wear them incorrectly.... this is a constant issue but they never ask were all students wearing masks properly. The whole situation is a nightmare.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Secrecy'

From a secondary school staff: 'Covid cases have been handled badly, kept secret and LWR's not listened to when approached management about a suspected case in ASD room. SNA's told "sure everyone gets colds this time of year" very disappointing'

From a secondary school staff: 'Disgracefully and recklessly for all involved, the government are to blame. It is just not logistically safe to be in close contact with over 250 kids a day in a confined place in the middle of a deadly pandemic.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Disgracefully..pure cover up'

From a secondary school staff: 'I don't think people are admitting cases. There is still a stigma attached. A member of staff had Co l'd and only 4 staff were deemed close contacts and as cleaning/supervision staff I was not even informed of the case.'

From a secondary school staff: 'In my school handled well.. but feel left down by the department of ed... no help aside from "get on with it" and threats of covid inspections which I find a disgrace.. where are all the inspectorate now??? A year to plan what to do after last years fumbling mess and back in the very same situation again.. a year to formulate a plan. 12 months.. yet nothing to offer??? Teachers in secondary schools have been front line keeping students moral up and adapting without training and receiving unmitigated abuse on social media.. all through this. Not on..'

From a secondary school staff: 'It has been very selective in choosing who are close contact putting most of hem down a community "'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not acknowledged officially or spoken about. Teachers asked personally by management not to talk about it'

From a secondary school staff: 'Teachers know student friendship groups. Cases in one class group treated as community spread but we knew very well that the students involved would not have contact with each other outside school. Told teachers/principal not public health expert.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We have only been told of 2 cases officially, but in reality there have been many, many more. Quite a few of my colleagues had it but we were never informed by management that it was amongst the staff. Govt are playing with the numbers. Schools are not safe'

From a secondary school staff: 'We were not informed of any cases'

From a secondary school staff: 'Extremely well'

From a secondary school staff: 'Schools need to be properly kitted out with protective measures before we should return and we should only return when it is absolutely SAFE to do so; when numbers/cases are down. Safety first.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Students don't wear masks, they're together longer than 15 minutes within 2 metres of each other during every break. They share utensils even though it's against the rules. Teenagers break the rules and don't understand the consequences normally it just now unfortunately their consequences are deadly at the moment. I'm living with someone working in and ICU ward and I will not be deemed a close contact of any member of staff or any students as I keep a mask on in the school at all times. If parents knew this would they want their children in a classroom with someone that is a close contact of someone in a Covid ward every day??'

From a secondary school staff: 'At the start management refused to tell staff of cases in school for fear of local public opinion of the school. At present teachers are not being told by management about cases unless you teach the particular covid positive student. In a big school other teachers aren't aware of a positive case in the school or in a year group. This is ridiculous and very wrong. In my case I was teaching siblings of the positive student on the Friday. Went home for the weekend not knowing that a positive case was confirmed in the school as I didn't teach the student. I take care of my elderly father in his 80's with terminal cancer at the weekends. On the Monday a fellow teacher told me that I was teaching a sibling (stepbrother) with a different surname on the Friday. I was sick to the pit of my stomach with fear for my family. '

From a secondary school staff: 'In lots of school windows don't open fully so how is this a well ventilated room'

From a secondary school staff: 'The school I work in is in a town where another school had a large outbreak before [redacted]. It spread rapidly in that school - from one single student to 17 classmates. These children then transmitted it to their parents and siblings - none of which were recorded as school transmissions, instead they were all recorded as community or household. We had a number of siblings that continued to attend school - we are at the mercy of parents doing the right thing. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Was deemed a close contact through the app. The person tested positive on a Thursday i was not notified until the following Tuesday through the app. However I was not personally in that person's company for more than 15 mins. The wait time was way too long by the time I received notification 6 days. This was way too long as I could of passed it on to so many others without knowing especially my kids who were then going into a primary school where they don't wear masks '

From a secondary school staff: 'We were not officially told of cases/ suspected cases in the school which is scary as we're going in working every day'

From a secondary school staff: 'Weve had a few but no close contacts deemed as they were out of sch when they tested positive ... I dont believe in all the secrecy when u have cases ..I was finding out from students when we had them ..I do think it needs to be better for when we return again as this variant is more transmissable ...I think we need to have a serious look at ventilating systems as its freezing with windows open ...'

From a secondary school staff: 'I have had a hush, hush experience. Students are off for 2 weeks and then suddenly appear in again. We're not given any explanation as to why. Students with coughs are still mixing with the school population and are allowed to attend class rather than being sent home. '

From a secondary school staff: 'I work in a school. The guidelines are not adhered to. Students are not consistent with cleaning their desks when moving... my school only provided one bottle of Tesco anti bacterial spray and one roll of paper per classroom per week. I would buy my own wipes and students would have to use them. I've seen some students were the same dirty mask every day. When I looked to get disposable ones from school for the student, it was refused. I'm very concerned as I work on a one to one basis. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Inadequate'

From a secondary school staff: 'Poorly, especially initially. In fact, I had to ~confront~ our DP to ask some questions in September/October- which didn't go down well and I came out the worst end of that conversation.. however, some- limited- communication did take place on foot of my queries. We had cases, but never formally notified in HSE letter head paper, always schools paper, thus always had our Schools interpretation of events...'

From a secondary school staff: 'Social distancing is very difficult at secondary level. They say now with the new variant it's very important to be 2m away but in my classroom most students are 1m apart but the front row is only maybe .5m from me. They are wearing masks but not when we supervise them at lunch/break time and they eat indoors? Realistically we will only have one window open as it's so cold and the windows are mainly at the same height level the students are sitting. We don't have room when 27 in a class to not put a student beside the window.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Some not reported to parents if HSE decide no close contacts'

From a secondary school staff: 'We were very lucky as we had no cases in our school yet'

From a secondary school staff: 'In our school sna's and cleaning staff were not informed of any cases in the school, we had to find out by an alert on a Facebook page or by overhearing a conversation within the school. For cleaning staff this is unacceptable as they are in the rooms and toilets that are being used by people who test positive. Their health and that of their family is put at risk simply by having to be in the school and moreso when school management deem them beneath them and unimportant.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Over crowded and not safe'

From a secondary school staff: 'A veil of secrecy. Cases reported as community transmission when it was clearly a case of school transmission. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Cramped spaces, with 30 students in for an hour. Students told to wear masks but some wear the same mask for the whole week, loads keep it down under the nose no matter how many times you tell them. Poor ventilation in class rooms. Our school only had a few positive cases but was right before [redacted] and could tell there would be a huge outbreak only we were lucky with timing of [redacted] holidays. More and more students in run up to [redacted] were self isolating as close contacts so looked like an outbreak was inevitable except for holidays. It's worrying working in that environment, especially when you can see that age group in general do not observe social distancing outside of the classroom where teachers are there reminding them.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Despite being Covid positive and teaching in a secondary school. Contract tracing told me I was community transmission even though I had not been in contact with anyone outside my household.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I work in secondary school of over a 1000 students and I feel the school are doing all the can re hand hygiene, social distancing, face masks ect ..We didn't have any positive cases till after the Halloween mid term break when students had been out in the general public / coming back from different households ..However I strongly feel primary school children should be wearing face masks and should have been all along as I think it's the primary schools where the cases have shown to be the highest ..'

From a secondary school staff: 'Rumours on possible cases, kids often absent but no explanation given if absent for eg 2 weeks. Rumors re staff absences, all create increased anxiety within the the school community'

From a secondary school staff: '4 positive cases many many clothes se contacts in school - no involvement or contact from HSE & no information given from school management to parents & staff - all hushed up like syphilis'

From a secondary school staff: 'Staff colleague tested positive and was put under pressure by management to state it was community based and not school based transmission. Staff member herself sure it was school as she was very safe re. precautions outside of school/at home. Also, school v secretive in approach re confirmation or otherwise of cases. Shameful behaviour really.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Completely inconsistent between the number of deemed close contacts. In the first positive case, the principal did not even have the seating plans to

give the HSE (even though all the staff had prepared seating plans). Instead of sourcing the seating plans on computer, sch management was happy to allow all 145 5th year students to be deemed close contacts and ALL 5th yrs sent home from school for 8 school days. This impacted on their private lives. My own [redacted] was removed from an inter-county minor team because he was a "close contact", but was actually not. He still missed his C'Ship match. When I rang the doctor who signed my [redacted] letter, I told her she was wrong to send home 145 students and to get the seating plans. So she did a risk assessment review and 110 students returned early after missing only 5 school days. The interesting part of this story, is that with 145 lads deemed a close contact, NOT ONE teacher was deemed a close contact by the HSE doctor, based in the [hospital redacted]."

From a secondary school staff: 'I feel that covid 19 would spread rapidly in my school if a student or staff member attended with it. Ventilation is very poor and will only be worse with cold weather and also, staff sit together in small staff rooms with no social distancing at break times. Students don't social distance on breaks and can't in the classroom. Schools keeping Covid at bay is dependent on people staying home and being tested if any symptoms and a much more comprehensive test and trace system for a y students or staff within the school system '

From a secondary school staff: 'Small stuffy classrooms with less than a meter between students. Poor ventilation. Students (and some staff) wearing masks incorrectly - under nose, pulling them down to talk. Constantly battling with people to pull up their mask. Packed corridors with absolutely no social distancing possible. Shoulders touching. Students often with their masks down. Constant battle. Lunch time supervision - 40 mins supervising over 200 students. The majority not wearing masks as they were eating. Eating lunch in the car as the staffroom is too small to social distance in and too packed. Never officially told of cases, but students themselves have informed me that they were diagnosed Covid positive. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Knowledge very limited to a very small number of staff. Whole staff not made aware of cases in school. The students themselves know from each other.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not able to keep 2 meter distance between students as rooms are too small and not able to split classes'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not told by management when we have positive cases...we hear it from the students who has tested positive'

From a secondary school staff: 'Numbers of covid are way too high in the community, people are told to keep contacts to a minimum but yet sit in a classroom of 30 pupils .'

From a secondary school staff: 'Our school is in an area that had the highest incidence rate in the country at several times in the year. We did not have many cases in school - under 10. Mask wearing and sanitisation was going extremely well. If I was to just go based on those facts, I would say I felt very safe at school. However, the social media chatter has made me doubt this. I try to remind myself this isn't factual. I think it is very unhelpful to students and staff. I have stopped using social media frequently and feel much better for it. I understand that contact tracing doesn't include the class room as everyone is wearing masks, however it doesn't take into account that when a teacher leaves, students remove their masks. At

lunchtime, they remove their masks etc. We can only do so much. I feel the incidence rate is too high for a safe return at present. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Some days up to 15/16 students going home sick, students staying out - sick not getting tested for 2 weeks, a parent testing Covid positive sending their child to school being contacted in regards to it to say they had to do their [redacted] shopping ! Class pupils testing positive and as their teacher not being deemed a Close contact! School cleanliness students not social distancing etc Very little regard for employees health & safety '

From a secondary school staff: 'Some official, some on grapevine'

From a secondary school staff: 'We were told about 6 teachers who had tested positive but 2 student teachers also tested positive and this was all hushed up. We were rarely told of any students who tested positive. We were just told they were isolating. It was as if the school had to be kept open at all costs. Privacy rules were used as the excuse for everything. It was a handy cop out. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Any cases have been handled confidentially by the management and even as the LWR representative for the school I wasn't informed about a lot of the cases'

From a secondary school staff: 'My school was part of the large cluster of staff who were notified via the covid app that we had been close contacts of a confirmed case within the school. I was never contacted by my HSE to confirm this or not. I made my own appointment for a test through my GP. We know of many more positive cases within our school than those which have been notified to us by our school or ETB as parents do not always notify the school. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Poorly. Management have a duty of care to their staff as well as students. To have a positive child in your class one day, and only find out that they are positive through some of their friends or because the student emails you to tell you, is not only dangerous, but incredibly disrespectful. I've been in class with a 6th year while he was symptomatic and was never formally told he was positive, and I went home to my family without knowing I was a close contact. I was of course never officially deemed a close contact! The cloak and daggers crap is ridiculous. If you get mumps you have to inform staff and students in case someone is pregnant - so why not with Covid? '

From a secondary school staff: 'Schools are trying their best to keep everyone safe but they are no safer than anywhere else in the country. '

From a secondary school staff: 'We have had a number of cases (approx 5) which HSE contacted us about, and only in one incident did they deem students as possible contacts. WE had a case of a bus driver for special transport be positive but the students and bus escort who spend up to 3.5 hours a day with him not be considered contacts. We have also had about 6 cases advised by parents, with no contact from HSE - as students chat between each other on social media, other parents were contacting the school asking when HSE would be in contact about their child who they felt are contacts of the positive cases (no HSE

contact ever made). I feel that HSE are intentionally not checking students or linking to school, so that they can remain open.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I think the close contacts within schools need to be revisited. In the classroom it is as safe as can be managed due to space but once students leave the classroom it's a free for all. All the teachers are constantly correcting students for taking off their masks not keeping a distance between themselves and are aware that students are mixing outside of school. '

From a secondary school staff: 'No way. Cases in school and not told as staff. Management just wanted to say school was covid free. Isolation room not cleaned after potential risk students isolated in there until collected. Other students with potential symptoms told sit in main hall where other students could talk to them until collection as management unavailable. Happened numerous times. Big act put on for dept inspector who only wanted to see what he wanted. Only shown large classrooms. Management stay in offices safety away from students and staff. It a walking nightmare. Students on top of each other in corridors, on way to school and outside no masks etc.. I'd rather stay home and not be paid than face in there again. '

From a secondary school staff: 'All very hush hush. Students openly saying that family members have Covid or that they themselves are waiting on a test result. A lot of students recognise the importance of washing hands, sanitising, sneezing and coughing etiquette but unfortunately so many don't. Constantly playing with their masks. Flicking their masks at one another. Swapping masks. Keeping masks under their chin etc. I as an SNA felt terrified in school as our role means that you are sitting beside students and in the body of the class. Also by the jobs nature, which I adore, a lot of the time you're dealing with students with behavioural issues. I genuinely love my job, I am an SNA in the same school for 20 years. However I am absolutely sick with worry when we're in school as to how exposed that we are.'"

From a secondary school staff: 'Hidden, staff not informed of cases. Obvious in school transmission but HSE deemed it not to be'

From a secondary school staff: 'One case officially and close contacts were sent home immediately. I do feel schools would be much safer working at 50% capacity..'

From a secondary school staff: 'Too much mixing before and after school. Too much mixing at break and lunch. Kids mixing socially at weekends, then coming in to us on a Monday morning. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Anyone sitting in a classroom with a person who has gotten a positive covid case, was not being identified as a close contact. Students sitting one metre away from other students, teachers two metres away, 40 minute classes, and yet not deemed as close contacts '

From a secondary school staff: 'Excellently '

From a secondary school staff: 'Handled well, isolation room at back of school, at rear entrance/exit'

From a secondary school staff: 'No one is told. We are just told a student will be absent. HSE automatically declared no close contacts and did not ask for seating plans at all.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Our school community is not informed when there are cases in our school. (ETB School) students & parents usually tell staff members that live in the local community & that is how we know. As a teacher I have noticed huge absence in some year groups. Usually students are absent for 2-3 weeks when they are off. This would suggest that they or a family member are isolating. I have suggested at union meetings that our union should be collecting data on the numbers of staff getting Covid but no one seems interested in doing this. I do not trust HSE/NEPHET Data. In saying this if numbers go back to pre [redacted] levels I think students need to get back to school. I worry for our young people who are experiencing anxiety, disengagement from school and loneliness.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Quietly..secretly'

From a secondary school staff: 'School are managing it as well as they can. Classes should be smaller then it would be better.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Students who are sitting one metre away from positive cases are not being deemed close contacts by the HSE because they wear masks. The whole room should be sent home and room and rooms locked down and decontaminated as a result, otherwise it's free to spread throughout the building, to the community and staff and students homes and relatives/ friends/ bubbles. School should remain online until this virus is completely eradicated. The virus kills people, it loves lungs, it loves human interaction and therefore is in love with classrooms.'

From a secondary school staff: 'There is uncertainty in our school if contact tracing is not informing the school of cases or school management is not informing staff. Staff are finding out about positive cases from students (friends/cousins) or the student themselves when they return to school. Some parents will inform the school, others won't. Students who are deemed close contacts from family contacts... Not all are doing the 14 day quarantine and are being sent in. Due to a complete lack of communication with staff, many of these students who should be isolating are flying under the radar as we are such a big school... Some are picked up where they might meet a year head in the hallway and then sent home again. There is no communication with staff whatsoever about positive cases in the school, we are hearing from the students what is going on in our classes. There is no provision for PPE in our school. A single box of masks rests in the main office, but to get to the office you must be wearing a mask. During class is the safest time of day in preventing the spread of covid-19, breaktime is when everything falls apart... Students of all ages remove masks to eat, do not social distance, move from room to room despite being instructed to eat in base classrooms. We noticed a huge reduction in students using the hand sanitiser at each doorway from November onwards. They were tired and covid fatigue had set in. It is tough on them, they are teenagers and tried their best but it wasn't enough sadly and there was a sense of inevitability about it. Many of our older students were absent on the lead up to [redacted], again staff had no idea if they were isolating or sick. The isolation room of the school was naturally very busy on the lead up to [redacted], many sick students being sent to school, but there is little a school can do about that. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Very badly. All the secrecy is awful. Parents have to tell each other when they know of a positive case in a class, so they won't send their kids in then. Even then, staff haven't a clue who is or isn't Covid positive. Staff are not allowed to ask any questions, parents can't ask either. Kids are terrified they're sitting in class with someone who is Covid positive but they don't know because nobody is told anything by the school. I know families who had Covid and the only way they could have got it was through school. Still the HSE said it must be community transmission. It wasn't. It was definitely in-school transmission but even so, nobody in school was officially informed. We only heard about it through word of mouth from other families. Some people never know how many cases are in their school unless they look at Parents' Facebook Alerts. I feel so sorry for anyone with underlying conditions - being exposed to Covid 19 in schools and not even being told about it. It's so wrong. And now, with these new variants, there's no way anyone should be going back into schools. No way. Government has to put money into funding wifi and i-pads / laptops for all students to be able to choose remote learning and stay safe at home and keep their families safe too. After all the lies about schools being "safe" from September to [redacted] - it was all lies - we'll never believe any reassurances they spin in future. Trust was totally destroyed by the policy of secrecy and lies which put all our lives at risk.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We were only informed about one case, the first one to arise in our school. We were not informed about any other cases after that, but I heard through conversations with other staff about more cases. When kids were absent we were not informed why but told to post notes and homework online for every class every day. We basically had to do the same job twice, without even knowing why they weren't there. In my day you texted your friends to find out what you missed rather than being babysat online. I know for a fact that I was in classrooms with kids that I heard tested positive later on.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Well in general but the secrecy re positive cases and I have no trust in the close contact definition for a student or the way public health are dealing with positive cases in schools. Also, [redacted] incident before [redacted] has made me think that DES doesn't care about protecting teachers health and that it's all political.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Covid cases have been handled in line with HSE guidelines: the problem is that HSE guidelines for schools is at odds with criteria applied to community transmission outside schools, thereby making schools less safe. This is the major issue facing staff & students. School communities would feel safer in their place of work if the same criteria for contact tracing was being exercised.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Information was poor from HSE, management tried to keep ahead of it, more information available in the community than from anyone official'

From a secondary school staff: 'My school has dealt with Covid 19 brilliantly. I felt very safe. I did test positive for Covid after symptoms started on [redacted] day. I have no idea if I got it in school. No one was considered a close contact in school as my symptoms hadn't shown more than 48 hours after last time I was in the school. I am really fed up with the government claiming schools are safe but they won't sit in the Dail in the same way they expect students and staff in schools. I am really sad but also angry.'"

From a secondary school staff: 'Not informed in school about any case so of covid. There were student sent to school who's parents were positive. Parent did drop off and collection'

From a secondary school staff: 'The first case came to light after the student told classmates, who told teachers, who I heard it from. The Principal, after someone approached her, admitted the student had tested positive but owing to a short break from school before testing positive that there were no close contacts. Only then was an email sent to staff. This made myself and a lot of my colleagues distrust the management. The 2nd case, a student had attended school and went home sick. Was marked absent with 'flu', before returning 6 days later. Spent a 2 hour class, coughing progressively more. Teacher noticed flu entry on student's attendance record and asked student if they had been covid tested. Student had not. Teacher went to a member of management, who initially fobbed her off. After the teacher, who was uneasy about it, went a second time to management, they sought the student after lunchbreak. They took students temp, and as there was no high temp, they left the student in class. Teacher, again, expressed concern that it was not following protocol to leave this student in class. To the best of my knowledge, this student was not isolated in an isolation room. Management, under pressure from this teacher, phoned home and student was collected and tested positive subsequently. Only one other student was deemed a close contact, even though the covid+ student was in school for 6.5 hours that day, and was still symptomatic. The 3rd case was posted to a Facebook page. Unclear whether it was the same case or not, I text management, who confirmed then, that there was a 3rd confirmed case, 'not linked to the other'. They had not gotten around to informing the staff. Management continue to temperature check students who say they feel unwell, and often students are returned to class if they do not have a high temperature. No one is checking up on students who return after illness to see if they have been tested or have been symptom free for long enough. I have witnessed many Students pretend to take sanitiser, or, students take sanitiser and flick it on the floor if they think you won't see and pretend to sanitise. They lean across the desk for a chat (putting them within 1 metre) they pull down their masks to be heard..."

From a secondary school staff: 'We have only 3 cleaning staff throughout this pandemic in a large secondary school. 2 years ago there was 7. Toilets are cleaned only every 2nd day. Classrooms are cleaned one day per week. We did not receive any ppe until November after asking numerous times. I had to get in touch with the ACCS to get provided with some. Have never been shown the schools covid policy. Was only told in December by a new caretaker where the isolation room was. We were let go into this room to clean it without knowing if a positive case may have been in there before us. Bought my own disinfectant wipes as school said it wasn't in the budget. Have been told to skip rooms that look clean even though it's an invisible virus. Have also been told to ignore the dept. of education cleaning guidelines. Schools should have surprise audits. A cleaner in another secondary school was able to tell me in advance they were getting a compliance inspection before they did and what day it would take place. Schools are the biggest breeding ground for the virus with guidelines that aren't being followed.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Because of I know of children going for tests and only by chance hearing they were having the test by third hand information in the town I live in hearing they were negative the family don't have to tell the school 1 child was a 6 year old SEN child who I work with all day long side by side hand in hand my mother is 82 lives a few doors from me so if he had been positive I could have given it to my mother who is very vulnerable but I have to do her personal care.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Shrouded in secrecy, impossible to know anything. As a teacher I hear through the students themselves..they know more always '

From a secondary school staff: 'We are given guidelines by politicians working in their homes or in an office in [county redacted]. These people are not in schools. They do not see how cramped classrooms are. They do not see that teenagers do not social distance when an adults back is turned. They do not hear of these teens in one another's homes and having sleepovers etc during weekends. They do not see the fear in the eyes of mask wearers when we hear whisperings of such and such's mother having covid. Schools will not be safe environment as long as there are people in them because some people are liabilities no matter what. I reprimanded a student multiple times for not wearing his mask correctly, later that day, he refused to use hand sanitizer- his reason?? He wouldn't get covid. Guess who was out [redacted] week with Covid?? God help us all. Bring on the vaccines.'

From a secondary school staff: 'They have been handled well but the new variants make schools very unsafe, we are so close to students and not deemed close contacts even if we have been close to them for 40 mins. Its very scary. If the same rules applied to schools that apply everywhere else i would feel a lot safer. Schools do not have some magic anti-covid bubble. I would absolutely love to be back in school but not at the expense of my family's health. '

From a secondary school staff: 'It was passed from teacher to teacher in the staff room and no one was informed. When the teacher returned she informed us. Management released a statement saying one member had tested positive, when two had. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Teachers not informed - second hand information from students is how we found out.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Heard was a positive case - nobody contacted us'

From a secondary school staff: 'Ignored and great use of GDPR to play dumb and tell staff nothing'

From a secondary school staff: 'Too many people in small space with no ventilation '

From a secondary school staff: 'Very little communication with teachers and parents re positive cases in the school. Diminishing emphasis on PPE as term went on.'

From a secondary school staff: 'As a secondary teacher, I've been kept in the dark about cases in the school. Not told even if there has been a case in one of my classes. Totally left guessing. Not ideal as I have vulnerable family members. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Generally very good with plenty of sanitizer available and big efforts to make school safe though once classes were not on, kids did not social distance nor wear masks.'

From a secondary school staff: 'I became symptomatic late [month redacted] after being informed I was teaching a student that tested positive My test was negative ,however I'm still on sick leave 3 months later Im asthmatic and am still suffering from extreme breathlessness

.I have had 3 courses of steroids 2 ECGs for a racing heartbeat during this time.Department of education or school did not recognise or link my sick leave to covid.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Ignored!!! Staff not informed if positive child in class'

From a secondary school staff: 'No space to take a step forward back or sideways during change over of classes every 40 mins. 32 students squashed into a room that has a yellow poster on the door stating that 10 maximimis allowed.Sen office is the isolation room!'

From a secondary school staff: 'Not handled well, Health board uninterested, did not visit school. Mantra of schools being safe being fed to media and not being investigated properly. Teachers (ASTI only union to act) had to take matters in hand after [redacted] to ensure safety of all.'

From a secondary school staff: 'School have informed parents and staff, no year group mentioned. Word of mouth to find out if they were in a class I teach.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We haven't been informed about the positive test which happen when they went back last year. As a tutor I have both side of the coin my [redacted] is doing LC. I think the schools are a seriously dangerous place to work in. The teachers have familys as well and need to protect them you have a group of people in the same room for hours with the windows open. That doesn't work. A full and complete lock down for a few weeks no one in no one out of the country. That should go some way to slowing or stopping '

From a secondary school staff: 'We are not informed of anything, and unlikely to be deemed close contacts. Since we are not informed of the cases we can't come forward to signal that we were in contact with the person.'

From a secondary school staff: 'A lot of secrecy. We were not informed if the most recent case was a student or member of staff we were simply told that a member of the school community tested positive.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Rules seemed to change every subsequent case...'

From a secondary school staff: 'Staff are not considered close contacts if a positive case is in a class. Staff are not told if there is a positive case. '

From a secondary school staff: 'We are lucky we have a matron services in our school so all children's temperatures are checked on Sunday nights and we as a school are very strict on the correct covid protocol througjout the school day.'

From a secondary school staff: 'As a high risk teacher with long term illness I am terrified of being in school. Kids are coming in with symptoms and nobody is doing anything about it. Students and staff members have tested positive and we haven't been told. I have never been as stressed in my life and do not feel safe at all and am dreading going back. '

From a secondary school staff: 'Exceptionally well. Students and staff while IN the building are safe. It's getting students and staff to the building where safety is my biggest concern; busses, students congregating without masks etc.'

From a secondary school staff: 'The issue isn't at school level. Calling school cases community transmission means no faith whatsoever in the government or nphet.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Very well '

From a secondary school staff: 'It was handled with lots of lies and secrecy.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Covid room. Then told to go home and to get test. Also have a covid officer in the school.'

From a secondary school staff: 'Management have dealt with situations the best way they can. However it is very difficult in a small school to ensure distancing at all times. Every space possible has been utilised (including a corridor) to try to keep distancing which is proving impossible'

From a secondary school staff: 'The school has done the best it could with a gun to its head. It's comical that small shops are unsafe but schools with over 500 people are safe. There is no honesty from Norma Foley, Josepha Madigan and the department of education. I fully believe if/when there are covid related deaths in schools the DES will cover it up. Schools are closed at the moment because it is not safe but teachers and other school workers can't be pushed up the list because schools are safe. The Dail now sits in the convention center with loads of space between everyone. That does not happen in schools. School buildings weren't built to be spacious. School buildings were built to put people out of the way. There is overcrowding in schools because of negligence by the DES. The only ventilation in schools is from the windows because after a year with covid, the DES are still shrieking from their responsibilities to staff, parents, students and the communities.'

From a secondary school staff: 'We on average had over 100 pupils absent per day from set to dec. From Sept to dec, we had [redacted] days in total that all staff were in. Lots of students were absent for more then 2 weeks, told informally covid also told we were not close contacts as we have masks. We all supply our own masks, we were never given any by school. The ones given by given are given to students, over 100 masks a day are given out, at least 40 students turn up every day with no mask. Every day we had to fumigate room which means np one allowed in room fir 30 min. At one point, we had [redacted] rooms being fumigated as kids reported with serious symptoms, we had to send [redacted] students and [redacted] teachers to walk around the track in the rain as we don't have any spare classes. Our gym is now [redacted] classrooms. We also have had parents refuse to collect their children who present with covid, we have also been told that they were not bringing them for a test as parents were not going to be out of work. It's terrifying, in our school students are not 1m apart as rooms are to small, dept and hse were told snd we were told you will be fine. The students at break and lunch take if masks, there is no social distancing no matter how often we told them. My own child played closely in school with a child who tested positive and I was told he's not a close contact. Its all wrong. Students in my school who did test positive were told they didn't get it in school they got it in the community and principal was told to inform no one'

Special school staff

From a special school staff: 'My school had 12 positives cases in school resulting in an additional 6 that I know of cases with parents and partners of staff. When the first person tested positive nobody that were in that class were deemed close contacts, even though it was highlighted that we can't social distance and the amount of intimate care etc that goes on. The school was notified on the wednesday of the positive case and by the following Tuesday we had our third confirmed case. We got mass tested, the first time they bought all staff and pupils into classrooms one of which was the class of the 3 positive cases. This was very traumatic for the children, it was suppose to be done in tents. The hse later apologised for this. They then said those tests were invalid as they were completed in a contaminated environment and brought everyone back for a second test. This time in a drive through tent. I must note that pir school caters for children with ASD and a severe to profound learning difficulty. '

From a special school staff: 'No close contacts identified, mixed messages from hse.'

From a special school staff: 'Special classes - were considered not close'

From a special school staff: 'Staff wear masks but unfortunately the pupils, although some are older, would not understand wearing masks, coughing/sneezing etiquette, distancing or hand hygiene. We all try are best and are just back since the 11th so time will tell after mid term!'

From a special school staff: 'Very well thanks to an exceptional principal despite the lack of support she receives from the government(based in special school)'

From a special school staff: 'Special school , treated as childminding facilities. No social distancing , spitting, hitting , smearing , constant licking of hands and furniture by children posing a constant risk to staff . '

From a special school staff: 'Overall well but we have have so many cases it's scary...13 last term...I feel like I'm back in school to catch covid'

From a special school staff: 'I am a teacher in a special school and I have no idea if there were any/many cases in our school community...the secrecy surrounding covid cases in schools is deeply disturbing '

From a special school staff: 'Much safer in special schools now with 50% attendance and better access to PPE. This should be done across all schools (maybe less than 50% due to numbers in mainstream classes) when it is deemed safe (genuinely safe) for them to reopen.'

From a special school staff: 'No adequate cleaning supplies Very limited ppe that's controlled by principals as if it came from their own money No social distancing in a special school especially with child with autism or severe and profound gld Children on school bus , then school etc.. moving with 25-35 different families while in school. Schools start out well but become very complacent and barriers are dropped. It is not normal times.. I much prefer to be in school with the students but not right now.. it is not safe enough. '

From a special school staff: 'no cases'

From a special school staff: 'One positive case, whole school closed as Special Needs school so while school is one bubble. Day to day I don't see any change since we returned this week. '

From a special school staff: 'Shocking ..special school.no social distancing..kids coughing spitting etc on staff..fight continuously for masks...expected to clean with water and rag .. .no disinfectant provided'''

From a special school staff: 'I work on school transportation. 3 different schools, one special needs, one mainstream secondary and one mainstream primary with a special needs unit. 9 kids. Only 2 wear masks. No social distancing on the bus at all. All seats in use including the ones beside the driver. Travel time is 1hr 15mins for the child who gets on first. No I don't feel safe at all. '

From a special school staff: 'If I started I would never stop. So angry at public health and contact tracing. '

From a special school staff: 'In all of the cases we have had to date our principal has taken action to close classes/pods/bubbles to prevent the spread of Covid19 as HSE are far too slow to react. There was one positive case I'm aware of that the parent was advised by HSE not to contact the school to advise of the positive case but they took the decision to inform the school anyway. We had a case on 10th Dec and again the principal closed the class. The staff in that room went for testing and were told by HSE to return to work the following day. Luckily the staff decided not to return until they received their results as one of them tested positive on the evening of the 11th!! There were many cases related to initial case on the 10th Dec due to children travelling on buses etc but if that member of staff had of turned up to work as per HSE instruction I dread to think how many more cases there would have been. The principal decided to close the school as so many staff and students were deemed close contacts but he was instructed by the department to reopen on Monday 21st Dec. '

From a special school staff: 'Told I was a close contact. Notification from HSE to say I would be contacted within the next day. Five days later still no contact from HSE and was never tested'

From a special school staff: 'Although we were not made aware in the first instance... And seen things happening.. We were told later... This is not good enough... However I believe the schools hands are tied and this is not right... We as staff know when a room is closed... We are not stupid...'

From a special school staff: '25 positive Covid-19 cases in my school, only 3 of these were deemed close contacts to the first case by Hse. Once a special school has a confirmed Covid-19 case within the walls, every person in the class (pupils and staff) should restrict movements and be tested.'

From a special school staff: 'Very bad HSE didnt even consider myself or anyone else on the bus as a close contact, principal covered it up only the parent rang myself & my co worker 8 days later to say the child wasn't going to be going back after midterm she was horrified to

find out we weren't even told! When we called our principal out on it her attitude stank & basically told us it was nothing got to do with us the HSE didnt consider us as a close contact, in result alot of people got infected by it. '

From a special school staff: 'Our school had a positive case, our principal sent the pod home. The HSE made the staff return the following day saying there were no close contacts even though we are within 1m of student and student does not wear mask. '

Students

From a student: 'I am in 6th year. I have a large group of friends and at lunch we sit in our assigned places in the classroom "socially distanced" with masks off so we can eat. Three of these girls became a close contact to a positive case yet we were not informed until the following day. When we then took it upon ourselves to ask the principal why we were not informed of 3+ cases in our year and if we were to quarantine. Some of us stayed home for the week of our own accord just in case so that we didn't endanger any staff or students. We were only informed of two covid cases in our year. We don't get informed of other years. And it is a fact that there has been at least 7+ in my year.'

From a student: 'I'm in **[school redacted]** my class is squished into a small room everyone has no masks on during lunch everyone mixing schools should stay shut'

From a student: 'Bad. I wasn't told about a positive covid case in my class '

From a student: 'My school only takes covid seriously when cases are going up because then there's a risk of the school being closed down.'

From a student: 'No cases have been in our school '

From a student: 'only one case in the school right before [redacted], it's hard :('

From a student: 'There have been 2 cases in my class and while about 30 from my year were deemed close contacts for the first case ([month redacted]) another case in november only around 5-10 people were considered close contavts'

From a student: 'Very poorly. Students giving jockey backs while staff watched. I commented it in this group and my principal called me and told me to remove the comment and said I was giving baseless lies.'

From a student: 'We, as students, have not been informed in any way, shape or form as to the status of Covid-19 cases in our school. I have no idea if any students have tested positive or not'

From a student: 'Fantastic'

From a student: 'I don't think we have had any yet'

From a student: 'Not being told when there is cases'

From a student: 'Very poorly. A parent of a child had tested positive in my school, she allowed her [redacted] out to a houseparty despite all this. The [redacted] was lucky and thankfully she didn't have the virus, but the school was informed and no disciplinary actions were taken against the girl or the person who hosted the party. Completely inappropriate behaviour if you ask me. This girl had half the school worried for days, everyone was thinking the virus would spread like wildfire at that stage.'

From a student: 'Have not been advised of any cases at all'

From a student: 'Horrific, and through no fault of the school.'

From a student: 'Terribly'

From a student: 'A student got a text about being a close contact and was picked up immediately but the teacher would not let the student leave the classroom to go home and tried to make the student explain why they were going home and that a parent must come into the classroom to take them out. Obviously the student didn't want to announce to the whole class that they were a close contract and embarrassed them. Other cases have not been reported or of students family members who got it and the students were close contacts. We all found out from other students'

From a student: 'The town knew before the school community'

From a student: 'We can and should be back need normality covid only flu affects old and vulnerable. Us youngsters need life again we being locked up like lab rats'

From a student: 'Good'''

From a student: 'Positive case of one of my friends (who I spend classes with and lunch), wasn't deemed close contact, wasn't even told by school who it was (which i guess is understandable). All his teachers were close contacts but not the classmates who actually spend time with him. Seems crazy'

From a student: '2 children -1 Primary, 1 Secondary. Not well. No information to the student body or parents, of positive cases or close contact in both teachers and students. Reliable and confirmed information from other students or parents, otherwise we would never know, NO Information from schools in this regard. Rearrangement of classes or dividing up to other classes, due to lack of teachers out with Covid or being close contact - (Secondary). Social distancing and Covid - 19 guidelines only adhered to when notified of Health inspector visit, (One visit each school for the duration up today). Normal desk distance 400 mm (Measured by a 6th class Primary student), separated only when the notified 1 and only visit by the HSE took place (Primary) Narrative of "Schools MUST Stay OPEN at ALL Costs" regardless of consequences, being strictly followed in both schools. Very little thought of "Community transmission" through school system, ie, being brought in and transmitted home. Students allowed to congregate in groups. Parents congregating in groups. Primary school 800+ students, Secondary 600+ students. Both schools exercise 100% more notification of Head lice outbreak. As a family with some members having serious underlying health issues we are terrified of Covid - 19 transmission through the schools. Thank you for your work. Stay Safe.'

From a student: 'Are teachers and principal have done a lot to make school safe we have are tempature taken as soon as we arrive at school hand held are always changed we are spoke to about covid masks social distance etc the hardest part is having all the windows open in this weather. Some schools do none of the above my school can't do any more it's up to us & staff to stay home if we are unwell'

Student & parent

From a student/parent: 'It's devastating. We're in level 5 and they want to send children back to school!!! They can travel as far as is required to be packed into a small room with thirty others, yet when they come home they cannot have a single friend from that class over without risking a £500 fine for an illegal social gathering!!!! NO child should go back to school until cases are below 100.'

Student & parent & school staff

From a student/parent/staff: 'No caretakers on it so no point'

From a student/parent/staff: 'To the best of their abilities under hse guidance requirements '

From a student/parent/staff: 'In my [redacted] school (1st year student) she has a base class that she stays in for the majority of the day. She was given a table to sit at and was told she was to sit there for the year. Yet when it came to lunch time, she could remove her mask and go sit in the cafeteria with friends and other kids from other classes, which to me defeats the purpose of social distancing. Then when she has a optional class, like Home Ec, she is told to sit at a certain desk, but is then mixing with all the other children from the different base classes. Thus being put at more risk of contracting the virus as she is now mixing with more children outside of her base class. I would personally prefer chosen subjects to be temporarily cancelled for children outside of exam years or for the schedules in schools to be changed so that base classes are taught in school and chosen subjects taught online at home. This would make the school day of being exposed to other children shorter and would create less risk as they are with the same kids day in and day out, with the more safe chosen subjects being taught from home as online classes. In my work place as a [redacted], I have seen since September parents still sending their children in even though they arent well and unless they show the top signs for Covid there is nothing my setting can do. Which puts us at risk and what annoys and upsets me is that parents still send their children in when they arent well which puts the setting at risk. Instead of keeping the child at home for a few days they risk it and then put us at risk of having to close. I have also heard of parents keeping children home from being ill, but refuse to call the Dr. Because they feel they will automatically be sent for a test and this seems to be a fear that alot of parents have.'

Student & preschool staff

From a student/preschool staff: 'While there has only been one reported case, social distancing is non existent and masks (among both students and staff) are often worn incorrectly'

Student & school staff

From a student/staff: 'In that last question I answered No, I do not believe schools are safe. If restaurants, cinemas, outdoor arenas are not open to the public due to not being safe, I don't understand how any school can be deemed "safe". I would prefer the wording be changed as surely everyone is at some level of risk wherever they go during this pandemic. I do want to attend work in person and not virtually but the method of choosing close contacts in schools needs to be changed for workers in the education sector to feel somewhat at ease. If a class has one positive case I believe the entire class should be sent home and tested, not just the children sitting at the same table, they share toilets, sinks etc. It is insane how a patch of carpet between tables in a classroom determines who should or should not be tested as a closed contact.'

From a student/staff: 'Within my school in the southeast someone in my year tested positive for covid. I found out by actually messaging the individual myself, staff nor close contacts had a clue and I spent a lot of our classes with this person, they were even in my base class yet I had to find out myself. Our principal claimed the individual was not in school whilst experiencing symptoms which was a straight up lie, the individual told me in class at least 3 days before he left telling me that he was dizzy, asked if he was the only one that felt hot etc etc. Staff and students were outraged and naturally unhappy with managements decision to not follow this up correctly.'