

18th August 2020

Return to School – Information

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I hope you and your family are well and enjoying the summer break. I write to inform you regarding procedures that the school is putting in place to facilitate the safe return of our students and teachers at the start of the new school year.

The school is currently working with the Department of Education and Skills guidelines; the Roadmap for the Full Return to School published on 27th July 2020. Our key priority is to put in place safe systems and procedures to ensure the safe return of students and staff and to support the best possible learning outcomes for our students.

The following information on our Return to School plan may be of help:

School Transport:

School Transport will run with students being required to sit beside a sibling or a designated person from the student's class. **All students are required to wear a mask.** Supervision of students prior to the commencement of classes at 08.50 am will begin at 08.10 am.

Class Sizes:

The guidelines ask for one metre distance between students in the classroom. A comprehensive audit of all classrooms in the school has been conducted. Classrooms have been reconfigured in order to maximise the space between students. The timetable is being utilised to ensure as far as possible that the classroom in which a class is being taught has the capacity to have the one metre distancing between students. **Some students may be required to change class in order to get an even spread in the number of students in each class group.**

Timetable:

School will commence and finish at the normal time. However, to facilitate half of the school being on break at any one time there will be changes to the timetable which will be reflected in students' individual timetables.

Breaktimes:

There will be two Morning Breaks and two Lunch Breaks incorporated into the Timetable to facilitate half the school being on break at any one time. Students will have to go to designated areas. Students will be encouraged to spend as much time outdoors as is possible while maintaining the recommended 2m social distancing.

Movement between Classes:

Movement between Classes will be along designated pathways. **Students will be required to wear face masks and maintain social distance moving between classes.**

School Uniform:

Students are required to wear the full school uniform as normal. Students must bring their P.E. gear on the day that they have a PE Class. Students will change into their P.E. gear in the P.E. Hall where adequate social distancing can be achieved.

Wearing of Masks/Face Coverings:

Students will be required to wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other students or staff cannot be maintained. Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact. An alternative face covering may be worn by any student who has difficulty breathing with a cloth face covering.

Students should be reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering. Face coverings should be stored in individually labelled containers or bags. Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled. Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic. **Face masks must be plain with no writing or graphics. The school remains the arbiter of acceptable standards in this regard.**

Symptoms:

The guidelines are very clear that students or staff must self-isolate at home if any of the symptoms of COVID-19 are experienced. Ultimately the success of schools staying open will be down to low community spread and good practices in school. HSE guidelines will be followed. Random temperature checks may be carried out on students during the course of the day. Students who present to staff with any COVID-19 symptoms will be required to sit in one of the Isolation Rooms until such time as they are collected by their parents. The school may introduce random temperature checks if required.

Students Returning from Abroad:

Any student returning from foreign travel should not come to school until fourteen days has elapsed and they are free of any COVID-19 symptoms. **It would be grossly irresponsible for any parent/guardian to send their son to school inside the fourteen day quarantine period.**

Students in High Risk Category:

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who are medically vulnerable. Please inform us if you have specific concerns or if your son will not be returning to school at this time for any reason.

Personal Responsibility:

Social Distancing, Hand Hygiene and Cough Etiquette are still the basic tools to fight COVID-19. All students will be expected to co-operate fully with these and all guidelines for the running of the school in a safe manner in these difficult times. At present there is no requirement for masks to be worn in classes where 2m social distancing can be achieved. Where 2m social distancing is not achievable face coverings must be worn.

General:

I know many of us are anxious about what lies ahead but with everyone's co-operation and support we will work towards getting all students safely back to school. Hand Sanitizers will be installed at all entrances and at the entrance to each classroom and toilet in the school. Signage is being installed to encourage appropriate social distancing. All surfaces in the school will be sanitised at the end of each school day using an Electrostatic Application System.

The situation regarding COVID-19 is changing on a daily basis. Further updates will issue as required.

Please be assured we are working hard to make the school as safe as possible and we will do everything in our power to keep things as normal as possible whilst observing the COVID-19 restrictions.

Yours faithfully,

Maurice Keohane

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Principal