



Returning to School September 2020

Dear Parents,

This is a working document and not an exhaustive list but it may help to answer some questions you have at this time. Our finalised version of our Response plan will give more exact details, times and other logistical changes that will take place.

Some helpful advice

School will be a little bit different this year, especially at the beginning, but the children will get used to the 'new norm' very quickly. Explain to your child that things will be a bit different, but try not to be overly worried. Children pick up on stress/worry.

Keep an eye on Aladdin Connect and the school's website for updates. We will be busy preparing the school and the new policies and procedures over the coming weeks.

Check that the school has your correct contact details. Let the school know if you have moved house, changed phone number or email address. You can edit this via your Aladdin Connect app or by emailing the school.

Please let the school know, via email, if your child is leaving or will not be returning to school and we will contact you to discuss some options.

While all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents that, where children are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school.

Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period.

What you can do to prepare

While this will all be reinforced in the classroom it would be helpful to practice washing hands properly, with soap, for 20 seconds. Make sure that your child also knows how to dry their hands thoroughly. Children should also know how to use hand-sanitizers correctly, and that it should not be ingested.

Teach your child correct cough and sneeze etiquette. Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your elbow if you do not have a tissue. Put the tissue in the bin and wash or sanitize your hands.

Hand Hygiene

Children will perform hand hygiene regularly during the school day:

- on arrival at school
- before eating or drinking
- after a cough or sneeze
- after playing outdoors
- when hands are physically dirty

Hand sanitizer dispensers are being installed throughout the school. Children are not required to supply sanitizer or any other hand hygiene products.

While the school will be in a position to supply some stationery/materials, all pupils should have their own supply of pencils, pens, rubbers, rulers etc as they will not be permitted to share these items with their classmates.

Hygiene and Cleaning

In accordance with the Departmental guidelines, the school will be thoroughly cleaned at least once per day. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

The BOM have taken on a new cleaning company with 2 cleaners assigned to our school to help us implement these measures.

Drop-off and Collection

One of the biggest requirements of the guidelines is that schools must ‘limit interaction on arrival and departure from school’. Parents will not be permitted to enter the school building. Parents will also be required to maintain their social distance from other parents at drop off and collection times and avoid congestion in the car park.

In order to try ensure social distancing we will have to have staggered drop-off and possible collection times, assign access points and entrances for specific classes, and put arrow systems in place to reduce congestion within and around the school. There also needs to be increased supervision rotas to accommodate this change.

Punctuality and cooperation with this is vital. The school will be split into two groups for drop off times to allow us to bring children safely into the building. Parents dropping off are required to get their children safely from the car park onto the school grounds at the car park entrance. There will be no parents allowed after this point. From here the children will be supervised and will go directly to their rooms. They will not be lining up in the yard at morning time. An initial exception will be for the parents of infant pupils (especially Junior Infants) but we would envisage that after they have settled they will be encouraged to make their own way to class.

Start of the day

Group 1

***8:35am** – The pupils on the the **first bus** plus **5th & 6th class pupils (plus their siblings)** will go to their classrooms via designated entry points.

Group 2

***8.45 am** – The pupils on the **second bus and all the other pupils** of the school will go to their classrooms via designated entry points.

- ❖ It is envisaged that all of the pupils will be in their seats for 8.50am as per the normal day.

End of Day

***1.30pm – Junior and Senior Infants go home.** The Junior Infants will also have a settling in period of 10 school days where they will go home earlier (time tbc) but once this is completed they will go home at 1.30pm with Senior Infants.

1st to 6th Class (Times to be Confirmed)

We are awaiting clarification of Department guidelines on tuition time and what, if any, flexibility we have with them. When we have this we will outline collection times for the rest of the school. We will communicate this to you in our Response Plan but it's very likely to be a few minutes either side of 2.30pm.

The end of the school day is a more controlled scenario as all pupils are in the building and can be lined up and brought out class by class. Pupils going on buses will be brought out separately. Pupils going to After-School will go to a designated collection point at the front of the school.

Exact entry/exit details/classroom details will also be communicated to you in our Response Plan, once risk assessments and building works are completed. There will also be extra teachers on duty in the initial stages to help guide everyone with this process. This will all be explained to the pupils when they returned

Communication with Teachers

While Parent/Teacher communication is very important it will have to change somewhat in this 'new norm'. **Appointments** have to be made to visit the school for essential purposes. There will be no morning appointments for the first month to allow us extra teachers for supervision purposes. A contact tracing log will need to be filled out for each visit. This does not mean that you will be unable to communicate with your child's teacher. You can communicate with them via the traditional methods such as homework journals, phone calls, emails and Aladdin Connect etc.

We are currently working out a protocol for children who have to be collected/signed out for appointments. This will be communicated in our Response plan.

Physical Distancing

Children from Junior Infants to 2nd Class are not required to physical distance. Children from 3rd -6th Class are expected to keep a distance of 1m where possible. In our case we have a 2nd/3rd class so we will work within the bubble system.

Each class will be a 'Bubble'. Contact between bubbles will be extremely limited and break times will be staggered to allow us to maintain physical distancing. Classes will be divided into groups, or 'pods'. The children will sit, work and play together in these pods.

Children under 13 will not be required to wear face masks as per Departmental and HSE guidelines. The teachers' desk will be situated 2 metres from any other pod and PPE will be supplied for the times when teachers cannot maintain appropriate physical distance.

Uniforms/Tracksuits

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is probably not practical for most families.

We will follow our usual practice in relation to uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn every day, except on P.E. days, or when otherwise requested by teachers. It is likely that the class will have 2 timetabled PE days per week this year.

This will allow us to alternate days between uniforms and tracksuits. Junior/Senior Infants will wear tracksuit only as it is more practical for their needs.

As a school we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits **only for school related activities.** Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. They should not be worn later on at the GAA club, in shops, during other after-school activities, etc.

Teaching and Learning

As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 12th. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families.

Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that all staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during their return to school.

We have to finalise plans around items such as Homework/Special Education Teaching and more. We will only be able to assess that situation once we are back in the school context. Like everything it is very likely that this will take a different format as Special Education teachers will be allocated to certain classes only and may also have to cover classes in the event of teacher illness etc.

As you can imagine, there is a lot of information to be processed and applied to our school. The above should help give you some guidance and reassurance. There are other areas of the reopening plan that have to be fully clarified by the Department. We also have some building works to be completed so we hope to have our published Response Plan to you by Monday 24th August.

Kind regards,
Stay safe,
Mr Fenton.