

**ST. COLMCILLE'S N.S.**



St. Colmcille's N.S.

Ballinahown

Parent Information on School Reopening Plan

August 2020

Dear Parents,

We would like to welcome all of the children back to school, and particularly our new infants for 2020. I want you, as the parents, to be involved and aware of how we plan to reopen the school. Please read through the information and I hope it will make things clearer.

This is a challenging time for children, parents, staff and the wider community. No two people agree on exactly the same policy for every situation. Whilst far from the ideal school experience, we hope that these plans can ease some tensions and anxieties. We do not want Covid 19 dominating children's thoughts. We need to get back to structure, discipline, fun, learning, enjoyment and take care of our mental and physical health, as well as looking out for each other. We will know if these plans are adequate once we get the children in the door. Only then will we know what really works best.

Our school re-opening plan is based on the guidelines and recommendations of the Department of Education and primarily on their COVID-19 Response Plan.

We just want to get all the children back into school safely and hopefully get that normality back into their lives. We will of course have to ensure that we operate as safe a school as possible and we will need your help to do this.

The focus for re-opening is make sure your child is happy, safe and comfortable in returning. By working together we can make this happen.

We would advise that you talk to your child about this plan so that they are aware in advance what will be happening in school. Please do not inundate them with information. Our staff will explain everything clearly when we meet the children.

If you have any questions please feel free to email myself at [principalballinahownns@gmail.com](mailto:principalballinahownns@gmail.com). I will be liaising with the Parents Association with regards to the document.

I would like to express my gratitude to the staff members who have been working on improving the school environment, and pouring over changing guidelines over the last few weeks. I also wish to acknowledge the great support and offering of help from the parents in Ballinahown recently, and the work by our caretaker and cleaner.

The focus for our initial opening period will be 'getting back into a routine'.

We really look forward to opening our doors and welcoming the children back.

Kind regards,

Thomas Keena

## **DRAFT - Ballinahown N.S. COVID-19 Policy**

This COVID-19 policy outlines our commitment as a school to implement the plan and help prevent the spread of the virus. The policy will be signed and dated by the Principal and Chairperson of the Board of Management and brought to the attention of staff, pupils, parents and others.

### **COVID 19 Policy Statement**

Ballinahown N.S is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all our staff and a safe learning environment for all our pupils. To ensure that, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. The BOM and all school staff are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. We will:

- Continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend the plan if needed in consultation with our stakeholders
- Provide up to date information to our staff and pupils on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie.
- Display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques.
- Agree with staff, a worker representative who is easily identifiable to carry out the role outlined in this plan.
- Inform all staff and pupils of essential hygiene and respiratory etiquette and physical distancing requirements.
- Adapt the school to facilitate physical distancing as appropriate in line with the guidance and direction of the Department of Education and Skills.
- Keep a contact log to help with contact tracing.
- Ensure staff and pupils engage with the induction / familiarisation briefing provided by the Department of Education and Skills.
- Implement the agreed procedures to be followed in the event of someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 while at school.
- Provide instructions for staff and pupils to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during school time.
- Implement cleaning in line with Department of Education and Skills advice.

All school stakeholders will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues or suggestions.

## **Planning and Preparing for Re-Opening**

As a staff we are very busy preparing for all the children to return. We are undergoing risk assessments within and outside the building. Below we have answered some questions that we thought you may have. We hope you find them helpful!

---

### **You will have heard new words in the media such as ‘bubble’ and ‘pod’. What are they?**

Bubbles is a term used to describe a class and pods is a term to describe a group within the class (bubble).

Class Bubble - Each class in the school will now be its own independent group, making two class bubbles per class group. Class bubbles will also be segregated at yard times. This is to ensure that children only mix with other children within their class but social distancing is adhered to.

- Junior and Senior Infants (Miss Farrell): Bubble 1
- First and Second Class (Mr Fagan): Bubble 2
- Third and Fourth Class (Miss Kelly): Bubble 3
- Fifth and Sixth Class (Mr Keena): Bubble 4

Class Pods – The DES have made no requirement for social distancing up to 2<sup>nd</sup> class. From 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> a 1m social distancing is required if possible.

### **What adults are allowed to enter the school buildings?**

To ensure a controlled and safe hygiene environment only staff members will be allowed access to the school building, or those who have an agreed prior arrangement with the principal. Please under no circumstances should you come into the building and the use of reception is only for special circumstances. Please see the communication question below.

### **Have the opening times of the school changed?**

- Similar to last year, there will be supervision on the yard from 9:00am to 9:15am. We ask that no child is brought to school later than 9:15am.
- With many families with children in multiple classes, we cannot stagger mornings, as it will lead to traffic congestion.
- All children use the front gates in the morning. The 15 minute window is ample time to socially distance while walking into the school grounds.
- We expect that parents obey a stop, drop, and go policy, ensuring that their children have entered the school grounds before they depart.
- Please adhere to social distancing, and wear a mask when approaching the gate.

## **Wed 26th August**

**Junior Infants Day:** We welcome our new infants to their new school. There are no other classes on that day. This will be an opportunity for parents of junior infants to bring their children into the classroom, before departing. Please bring your new books to school in the school bag. We will take them and store them. No need for lunch on the first day! Our infants will resume their school days for their first full week on Monday 31st of Aug. We anticipate that some new infants may be distressed, so we will have a designated area of the yard where parents can accompany their children, before they are ready to join in with their classmates.

Pick up 12:00pm for infants for the first week.

2:00pm thereafter. Parents must come into the yard to pick up their child, as we cannot congregate around the gate. Please adhere to social distancing and wear a mask.

## **Thursday – 27<sup>th</sup> August**

Senior Infants, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class come back to school.

### **When the children come to school in the morning what will happen?**

This is a big change for the school starting back. Please support us to keep the whole school community safe. For week 1, starting Thursday 27th of August,:

- Bubbles 1 & 3 will go onto the yard.
- The teacher on yard duty will show them which yard to go to.
- A Teacher and SNA will be on the yard to ensure there is no mixing of the two bubbles.
- Bubble 2 & 4 will go into their classroom.
- Teachers will be in their rooms to supervise the children who are inside.
- We are operating strict bubbles on school grounds so we cannot have children mixing outside in the morning or after school.
- On Week 2, starting Monday 31st of Aug, Bubbles 2 and 4 will be on the yard, and Bubbles 1 and 3 will go inside. We will continue to swap, week to week.

### **Are parents allowed in the school yard in the morning?**

No. We ask that parents, apart from those with infant children, let their child walk in from the school gate at the front of the school. Parents dropping children off by car are asked to let them off in the drop off area and drive away. Please ensure that children have entered the school grounds before departure.

### **What door should my child enter in the morning?**

We are operating on a week on, week off basis for different class bubbles in the yard in the morning. Class teacher will instruct the children where to go. We do not expect them to remember every rule from the off as it is a worrying time for many.

- Bubble 1 and 2 will use the front door
- Bubble 3 and 4 will use the back door.

## Are the school closing times changed?

Yes, there are changes to finishing times to stagger the children leaving the building and the grounds. To avoid huge congestion at the front gate, the following plans are in place.

### 2:00pm

- **Junior and Senior Infants (Bubble 1)** : This class will be in the school yard. Parents must come into the yard from the **front gates** to beckon their child forward. Children will be supervised. Please adhere to social distancing and wear a mask.

### 2:50pm - 3:00pm

- **1st and 2nd Class (Bubble 2)** : **Mr Fagan** will take his class to the **front gate**. Parents are asked to wear a mask, obey social distancing protocols and depart promptly.
- **5th and 6th Class (Bubble 4)** : **Mr Keena** will take his class via the Sportspark side gate and onto the **car park beside Ballinahown Community Hall**
- **3rd and 4th Class (Bubble 3)**: Once Bubble 4 have left the premises, **Miss Kelly** will lead her class out the side gate to **Ballinahown Sports Park**

**Families with siblings in different classes who are being picked up, will be supervised on the yard. Each family will be given a designated cone, where they will wait.**

### 3:00pm

- **Parents who are picking up children from different bubbles (e.g a child in 2nd and 5th class) will collect their children from the front gate.**
- **Children using the bus will use the front gate as usual.**

## My child comes to school by bus, how will that be organised?

If your child comes to school by bus that is a private arrangement between you and the bus company and all questions should be addressed to them. Staff will not be able to supervise children getting on and off the bus. Staff are fixed to class bubbles and cannot be in contact with children from other class bubbles. It will be the bus driver's responsibility to assist the loading of the bus. Children using the bus will remain in the yard until it arrives.

## What is happening with break times?

We will have to stagger yard breaks until further notice to ensure that we can effectively ensure the safety of each class bubble and staff members.

Every class in the school will have their own space for break times and will only mix with children from their class.

We want to allow children to play, have fun and not have their lives dominated by COVID-19, while still remaining safe. Children will be able to play with all children from their class bubble only, on the yard.

There will be no mixing of bubbles outside.

## **Is my child safe to start back at school?**

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school:

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19.
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19.
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending.
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school.
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days.
- Children who are generally unwell.

## **How will the school support a child who cannot attend?**

If a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the class teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher, where relevant) will suggest activities to support the child's learning at home with parents.

## **What if your child has underlying health conditions but you have been told they can attend school?**

We can understand this is a very difficult situation for parents and you will be anxious about the school reopening. We can make every provision possible for a child in this situation and seat that child at an individual desk. Please email the Principal at [principalballinahownns@gmail.com](mailto:principalballinahownns@gmail.com) and we can try to make arrangements that you are satisfied with, that are possible and can be put in place.

## **How will we be managing Hand Hygiene?**

As part of the SPHE programme, teachers will cover hygiene, washing of hands, social distancing and sneezing etiquette

Hand washing is an integral part of keeping the Coronavirus at bay. Pupils will be asked to wash or sanitise their hands regularly throughout the day:

- On arrival at school;
- Before eating or drinking;
- After using the toilet;
- After playing outdoors
- When their hands are physically dirty.
- When they cough or sneeze.
- After handling resources.
- At random points throughout the day on the teachers request

*Hand sanitiser is only recommended for use on clean hands so hand washing is so important to protect your child.*

### **Will hand sanitiser be available?**

Yes, we have installed 9 hand sanitizer units across the school, at entrance and exit points, as well as in classrooms, halls and staff rooms.

Children are encouraged to have their own supply in their pack also. Hygiene pack consists of hand sanitizer, tissues and disinfectant wipes.

### **Will staff members be wearing PPE?**

Yes. Staff have been issued with and will wear one of the following: face shields, washable masks or disposable masks. Teachers will use gloves when handing out resources. In classrooms there will be a 2m x 2m area at the top of the room for the teacher. In that area teachers may choose not to wear PPE, when talking out loud to the class group. Once the teacher is 'down among the class' they will wear a face shield or mask. Children should be aware of this before starting back to decrease anxiety.

For some staff, bibs and gloves may be worn on occasion. This might include:

- Assisting with intimate care needs
- Where a suspected case of Covid 19 is identified, while the school is in operation.
- Where staff are very vulnerable to infection but do not fall into the "high risk" category.

### **Extra Curricular Activities**

We await guidelines on this. Swimming will not go ahead this term

### **Substitute Teachers and SNA's**

A copy of the Covid -19 Response Plan will be provided to each substitute teacher/ SNA. Substitutes will be required to complete a Return to the Workplace form before they enter a classroom and will be asked to confirm that they have engaged in the online induction training.

### **Have there been any changes to the school environment ?**

Yes. Automatic and hand pump dispensers are in place. New floors, which can be mopped, have replaced carpets. Bathrooms have been painted. Visual posters are all around the school. Plumbing work on hot taps to ensure more pressure has been carried out. There has been an investment in storage equipment to create more space in classrooms.

### **What about school uniforms?**

For September, your child should wear the full school uniform on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. **Wednesday** will be a non- uniform day. This will be reviewed during September.



## **What if you want to contact a teacher or the school?**

Each classroom will have a basket for notes to the teacher to inform them of sickness, appointments and other messages from parents.

Should you urgently need to contact a teacher, you should first contact Dympna in the office at (090) 64 30044. Meeting a staff member face to face will only be possible in extreme situations.

The health and safety of pupils, staff and your family is the most important thing.

## **What do I do if my child forgets something?**

Please label it and drop it off at reception. Parents should wear a face mask when entering the school grounds.

## **Collecting your child from school early?**

We ask that this happens for medical appointments and emergencies only as we try to minimise children moving around the school during the day.

If it is absolutely necessary for your child to go home early, you must first notify the school by contacting the office at (090) 64 3004, letting us know the time and date you wish to collect your child. Please also notify us of your arrival on the above number so we can safely escort your child out of the school. On days that there is no secretary please, knock on the window of the classroom.

Alternatively, you can inform the teacher by note, that morning.

## **What about the personal equipment my child brings to school?**

- Insofar as possible, it is requested that children bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment.
- Pencil cases will remain in school overnight and where possible they should be made of a material that can be wiped.
- Please do not bring footballs or toys to school.
- It is further requested that all items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.
- Children will have their own hygiene pack, consisting of mini sanitising hand gel, tissues and a packet of disinfectant wipes for wiping down their lunch box before they go home. There will be hand sanitisers provided in each room and public spaces, but we feel the children having access to their own hand sanitiser will enhance hand hygiene.
- Children's books will be stored in the classroom in their own box
- If you wish for your child to wear a face mask we fully respect your decision. Can you please ensure your child has been shown correctly how to wear it and store it safely. Under current guidelines we will not be supplying facemasks to children.

## **Will any shared equipment be used?**

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared including iPads and the equipment used for structured activities and play in infant classrooms. Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection.

## **Will my child be receiving homework?**

There will be very little homework for September. Children will not be taking books home and bringing them back. They may use G Suite, Athletics, Home Reading, Spellings, and a workbook for their homework activities. This is at the teachers discretion.

## **What will go in my child's school bag ?**

Lunch box, a drink and their own hygiene pack containing antibacterial wipes, mini sanitising gel and tissues. Please remember our Healthy Eating Policy. Please LABEL each item, making sure your child can identify their own belongings and please reinforce the no sharing message. Some children will be storing their coats in the school bag to avoid overlapping coats on the hangers. The child's books and pencil case will be left in school.

## **What about Cleaning in the school ?**

The school is undergoing a deep clean, prior to the childrens return. Surfaces, handles, table tops, resources being used and high frequency touch points will be cleaned daily. The bathrooms will be cleaned every day during school and after school. Classrooms will be cleaned again in the evening.

## **Teaching and Learning**

We are aware that children have been away from school since March 12th, and there have been very different distance learning experiences. Each child will be at a different place in relation to his/her learning, and the staff will take this into account when planning for teaching and learning, based on the department's guidelines.

## **Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19**

Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19.

If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following procedures will be implemented:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- The child's temperature will be taken using a remote temperature checker.
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.
- A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms. He/she should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.
- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP if required.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The instructions of the HSE should be followed.

### **Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class**

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 the parents of all children in the class will be notified and public health advice will be sought and followed.

### **Isolation Room**

Should a child have symptoms of a Covid nature he/she will be brought to an isolation room. The child will be isolated from their class (bubble) and will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times until the child's parent/guardian has been contacted. The accompanying member of staff will be suitably attired in PPE equipment to guarantee their safety. Once the child has been brought home the isolation room will be sanitised in readiness for the next potential case.

### **Coaches**

External coaches will not be coming to the school for the first term. This will be reviewed at Christmas.

### **External Visitors**

There will be no visitors allowed to visit the school in an effort to keep the virus at bay.

**Reminder:** If you have visited a country that is not on the green list on the 27th of August, please remember it is a requirement to self-quarantine for 14 days. Please consult the up-to-date list.

## **Wellbeing of the School Community**

We will work on the recommended five principles to support the wellbeing of all our pupils and staff. These are promoting:

- A sense of safety
- A sense of calm
- A sense of belonging and connectedness to the school

- A sense of self-efficiency and school community efficiency
- A sense of hope.

We very much look forward to welcoming back the children into our school, and getting to know our new pupils. We appreciate your support as we try to safely reopen the school building. Our aim is to open the school in an orderly and safe manner, while reassuring everyone in our school community, making them feel comfortable and safe in their environment. It's time to learn, play and develop.

Go raibh maith agaibh.