

Return to School – What Parents Need to Know

On 27th July 2020, the Department of Education and Skills published guidelines for reopening schools. I have selected what I deemed to be the most relevant information at this time for parents under the following headings:

What you can do to prepare

- Drop-off and collection
- Cleaning
- Physical Distancing
- Hand Hygiene
- Schoolbags and Lunches
- Communication with Teachers
- Starting Junior Infants
- High-risk pupils
- Suspected cases of COVID-19

What's happening?

School will be a bit different this year, especially at the beginning, but the children will get used to it very quickly. Explain to your child that things will be a bit different, but try not to let them know that you are overly worried. Children pick up on your stress.

Keep an eye on our school's website/facebook page for updates. I will be posting information clips to help children and parents understand the different routines for September. I hope that visually showing everyone will help everyone understand how everything will be for September. We are busy preparing the school and the new policies and procedures.

We ask that all parents ensure that we have your correct contact details before September. You can forward this information to steunansns.raphoe@gmail.com. Let us know if you have moved house, changed phone number or email address. You may also want to check that your emergency contact details are up to date. It would really help if everyone could forward this information so we are clear that we have correct contact details for all at this time.

What You Can Do to Prepare

- 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-sanitizer 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. There will be special bins in each class for tissues and wipes.
- Make sure that your child can **INDEPENDENTLY** open and close their lunchbox and bottle, their coat, and their shoes. Shoes with laces are not recommended for younger children!

Drop-off and Collection

- Schools must “limit interaction on arrival and departure from school.”
- This means that we are giving extra time for drop off to allow for a staggered drop-off. All class teachers will be in their classes at 9:10am and children will go directly to class. Children can be dropped off from 9:10 to 9:30am. **No child will be permitted on to school grounds before 9:10am. I ask that parents strictly adhere to this to avoid congregation of students.** I ask parents to assess the situation at drop off and wait and avoid letting children out of the car if you feel there are too many students entering the yard.
- A number of teachers and I will be on yard to ensure that children go directly to class and stay in their family unit.
- Each class will be assigned access points and entrances to specific classes, and one-way systems will be put in place to reduce congestion. I will send this information via a facebook clip and written note on the website in the coming weeks.
- At 3pm, classes will be let out of school on a class by class basis. Parents of Junior Infants can walk to the entrance door with your child for the first two weeks, teaching your child the routine. After this time teachers will help the children to class. I ask that junior infant parents, avoid stopping on the yard to talk and social distance at all times.

Cleaning

- Cleaning in our school will be increased considerably. We have employed extra cleaning staff and toilets and classes will be cleaned at lunch breaks.
- Each classroom will be cleaned daily.
- Resources will be provided for children individually where possible, or shared with their 'pod'.
- Books, toys and resources will be cleaned regularly or quarantined for 72 hours before being reused.
- Older children *may* be asked to wipe down their table and chair at the end of the day.

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.
 - Each class will be a 'Bubble'. Contact between bubbles will be extremely limited and break times will be staggered. The Junior Classes will be kept separate from each other in separate yards, however they will have the same break time. The senior classes will be kept separate from each other, but they will have a later break time to the junior classes.
 - Classes will be divided into groups, or 'Pods'. These children will sit, work and play together. They will stay in the same pod for a number of weeks
 - Staff will try to maintain physical distance from children when they can and will wear face coverings and other PPE when needed.
- Children under 13 are not required to wear face coverings, however they will not be discouraged if they do decide to wear a face covering.

Hand Hygiene

- Children will perform hand hygiene regularly during the school day:
 - on arrival at school
 - before eating or drinking
 - after using the toilet
 - after a cough or sneeze
 - after playing outdoors
 - when hands are physically dirty
- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be installed throughout the school.

- Children are not required to supply hand sanitizer or any other hand hygiene products, but we may allow older children from the senior classes to bring them in if there is a need e.g. traveling on school bus. If your child is in the senior classes and is taking hand sanitizer to school, parents have the responsibility to ensure that your child knows how to safely use it. There will be adequate hand sanitizer throughout the school so there is no necessity for any child to bring their own.

Schoolbags and Lunches

- The government have not given any guidelines regarding these items but a common-sense approach should be followed.
- Ensure that your child does not have any unnecessary items such as toys in their schoolbag.
- Choose lunchboxes, bottles and pencil cases that are easy to clean, as they will need to be cleaned frequently.
- We ask parents to provide children's scissors, prittstick, colours etc for your child. It is important that your child has all the stationery that they need as they will not be able to share with their classmates

Communication with Teachers

- Parents will not be permitted to enter the school building.
- Appointments may be made to visit the school for essential purposes. A contact tracing log will need to be filled out for each visit and these will be filled in the school office.
- 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 phone calls, email, seesaw etc.

Starting Junior Infants

- **All Junior Infant parents will receive a letter with a time for your child to visit the class with parents on Friday 28th August.** Students will be invited with a small number of classmates to visit the class for 15 minutes slots. This will allow for cleaning between visits. On this day junior infant students can wear their uniform and parents can get pictures in the class and with their teacher.
- Rest assured, the Junior Infant teacher Mrs Mc Gahern and other school staff will do their best to make sure that every child feels happy and safe at school.
- The number one priority for the first few months of school will be the children's well-being.

High-risk Pupils

Pupils at high risk may not be able to return to school. This will be decided with consultation with parents. The school will make every effort to work with parents to facilitate any high risk children in the school environment. These pupils will receive appropriate support to engage with learning. Ongoing connection with the classmates and school community will be ensured.

*The list of people in **very high risk groups** includes people who:*

- o are over 70 years of age – even if fit and well
- o have had an organ transplant
- o are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- o are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- o have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- o are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- o are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- o have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- o have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD
- o have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- o are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- o have a serious heart condition and are pregnant.

Suspected Cases of COVID-19

Symptoms of COVID-19:

- o High temperature
- o Cough
- o Shortness of Breath or Difficulty Breathing
- o Loss of smell or taste, or distortion of taste

• Children should NOT ATTEND school if they are unwell or if any members of their household are unwell with symptoms of COVID-19.

- If any pupil becomes unwell while at school, they will be brought to an isolation room and given a mask to wear. Parents will be contacted to collect the child as soon as possible.
- The HSE will inform any parents of children who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case.

I understand this is a lot of information. I feel it is hugely important for parents to be informed and I will be putting facebook clips to allow everyone to visually see the layout of the school before September. I appeal to all parents to talk to children and reassure them. All staff will be focused on the well being of students for the month of September and creating an environment where children feel safe and happy. We ask parents to help us in this area. The health and well-being of everyone connected to St Eunan's NS is a key focus for me as we work to re-open St Eunan's NS on the 1st September 2020.

Yours Sincerely,

Anita Keeve