

Scoil na Croise Naofa
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Roll No. 09191I
Registered Charity No. 20204543

Principal: Mícheál Hyland

Deputy Principal: Marie Kearns

13th August 2020

Dear Parents and Staff Members,

I hope you are all keeping well.

In this letter I want to update you on our preparations for reopening on Tuesday 1st September, outline how we will implement physical distancing in the school, advise on attending school safely and share some resources on wellbeing that you might find useful.

Progress to date.

- Last week we published on our website various documents outlining our general plan to reopen our school.
- We are working through the specific details now to ensure the reopening is successful.
- So far, we have installed hand sanitiser and paper towel dispensers throughout the school to improve hand hygiene.
- A deep-clean is in progress and enhanced cleaning measures during the school day have been organised for the new school year.
- A timetable for staggered drop-off and collection of pupils has been drawn up. This will be published in the coming days.
- New break time schedules have been created. These will allow for smaller numbers in the yard at each break as well as a separate play area for each classroom or bubble.
- Classrooms have been arranged according to department guidelines to allow for physical distancing. (See below for more detail)
- We ran a successful two week summer provision programme for children in July.
- An online payment system has been set up to allow all school related payments to be made via our website. This can be found here: <https://www.geashillns.ie/online-payments/>

Physical Distancing

We are currently working on upgrading our procedures and routines within the school to ensure that there is as much physical distancing as is possible in our building. We will apply physical distancing in a practical and sensible way, recognising that the classroom must continue to be a happy and positive learning environment. As the recent Roadmap for Reopening Schools published by the government does not provide additional teachers to allow classes to be reduced in size, our classes will be allocated as previously outlined in June.

Junior Infants: Ms. Galvin

Senior Infants & 1st Class: Mr. Galvin (Replacing Ms. A Walsh for this school year)

2nd & 3rd Classes: Mrs. Shaughnessy (Ms. Grimes will be the teacher while Mrs. Shaughnessy is on maternity leave)

4th & 5th Classes: Mrs. Hyland

6th Class: Mr. Hyland

Cairdeas 1: Ms. Leonard

Cairdeas 2: Mrs. Kearns

Special Education Teachers: Ms. McGrath, Mrs. Bell & Ms. Walsh.

The Public Health Advice sets out the guidelines for maintaining physical distance in the classroom at primary level as follows:

"A distance of 1 metre should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors. Therefore, achieving this recommendation in the first 4 years of primary school, is not a prerequisite to reopening a primary school for all pupils."

It also states:

"The aim of the system within the school, is that each class grouping mix only with their own classroom from arrival at school in the morning until departure at the end of the school day."

Therefore we will promote physical distancing in our school in two ways.

Increasing Separation.

This will be achieved by re-configuring the classrooms to maximise space. This involves removing unnecessary furniture and clutter and arranging desks to increase the space between pupils. Each classroom will be referred to as a bubble and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles. Within the bubbles, children may be organised into pods. A pod is a group of children who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom.

Decreasing Interaction

This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles or classrooms to interact. Children will go directly to their classrooms when they arrive in the morning. There will be marked routes for various bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. Bubbles will have different mid-morning and lunch-time access to the playground and will only play with children from their bubble. We will make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

Safe Attendance at School

Illness

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 brought to the designated isolation room and parents will be asked to collect them from the school.

I fully understand and appreciate how difficult this may prove to be for all of you. I normally write in newsletters that we should aim to have our children in school every day. This year it is a very different message. If you have any doubt about how your children are feeling keep them at home.

As an extra precaution we will also be asking you to check your children's temperature each morning before coming to school.

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Travel from Abroad

Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period. See the Green List at:- <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8868e-view-the-covid-19-travel-advice-list/>

Face Covering/Mask Wearing

The latest advice from the Dept. of Education states that all teachers/school staff should wear a face covering where a distance of 2m cannot be maintained. This means that in reality school staff will be wearing face coverings in all classroom settings.

This advice also goes on to say that primary school children will not be required to wear face coverings.

You can read the full advice here. <https://www.into.ie/app/uploads/2020/08/COVID-19-Interim-Recommendations-for-the-use-of-face-coverings-in-school-settings-JC-070820-1.pdf>

Wellbeing

Our school is opening up and staff are really looking forward to welcoming students back and helping them re-engage with learning in school.

Most students will be looking forward to school and meeting up with friends, teachers and other school staff. Many will feel excited, relieved and happy. Some may feel a little anxious and worried about getting back. That's to be expected and it's a normal response at a time of transition and change. Most students will settle in over time, as they reconnect with friends and get used to the new school safety routines.

You can find some information on how to help your children during this time here.

<https://www.education.ie/covid19/wellbeing/>

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the school environment.

If anyone has any queries or questions please contact me by email at geashillnsoffice@gmail.com or by phone at 057 9343754 where you can leave a message.

I will be in touch again soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mícheál Hyland