



19th August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

We hope that you and your families are well. Undoubtedly, the end of the last academic year proved to be very challenging for everyone, and particularly, students in Third Year and Sixth Year. We are also very mindful of our new incoming First Year students and that their final days of primary school were not what they expected nor wanted. We are extremely grateful to our students, you as parents and our staff in making great efforts to engage so positively during school closure. We want to keep you regularly updated about plans for reopening our school over the next two weeks.

Scoil Ruáin is committed to a smooth resumption of school operations and the return of our whole school, safely and in adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and Government guidance. Our return to school will take place in a planned and careful manner with the support and cooperation of our whole school community.

These are unprecedented times and reducing the risks associated with Covid-19 will require us to do certain things differently as we all adjust to the new norm. It is very important that all the changes below are emergency measures to ensure the safe return to school for all our staff and students. Measures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with public health guidelines and any changes will be communicated to all. We are looking forward to welcoming our new first years, and all other returning students to school.

Steps the School is Taking

Below is a list of some of the measures that Scoil Ruáin has currently in place or is working on in preparation for our return to school at the end of the month.

Response Plan

All schools are required to implement a School Covid-19 Response Plan, including a:

- Covid-19 Policy Statement
- Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- Procedure in dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19



Our school Covid-19 Response Plan is near completion and will be available on our school website shortly.

- **Suspected Case of Covid 19 :** Procedures are in place for dealing with a suspected case in school as per DES guidelines . You will receive a call and be asked to collect your child promptly from the isolation area and contact your GP.
- **Confirmed Case of Covid 19 :** In the case of a confirmed case of Covid 19, contact tracing will be carried out by the HSE and the school will follow their advice.

Confidentiality in all cases is important and all people should ‘avoid the rumour mill’.

Reconstruction of school day

- A new timetable and grid will be in place for 2020/2021, 1-hour classes will replace 40-minute classes. This will minimise the amount of times students will be on the corridors and break of classes.
- Consideration is currently being given to the possibility of staggered breaktimes. Meaning there will be separate break & lunch times for different student groups.

Training

- All staff have received Covid-19 induction training.
- On the first day of school all of the new procedures will be explained to students.

Blended Learning

- As Covid-19 crisis continues to evolve, Scoil Ruáin will take appropriate steps to safeguard our community. This may see a return to distance learning / blended learning (a combination where students both attend school in part and stay at home for online learning in part). We are preparing contingency plans in the event of school closures.

Hygiene

- Hand sanitizing stations have been installed inside every classroom and areas of entrance & exit. Everyone will be required to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving a classroom.
- Our student toilets are being adjusted to help maintain social distancing, new paper towel machines have been installed in all toilets as well as sanitizing stations.



- Cleaning products to sanitize surfaces will be available in all classrooms.
- A separate isolation room has been provided in school to accommodate students who feel ill in school and present with symptoms.

Face Coverings

- **It is important to note that all Parents/Guardians & students be advised that government advice now insists that all students and staff wear face coverings (masks) in school.** It is important that all students supply their own masks. Cloth face masks should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

Note: Face masks are widely available and advice about the types of facemasks we recommend can be found via the HSE link below.

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>

We request that students refrain from wearing face masks that depict any imagery on them so as not to cause offence to others. Face masks will not need to be worn when students are exercising, eating or drinking or in the yard. Additional disposable face coverings will be available for students, teachers, and staff in case a back-up face covering is needed during the day.

Heating, Ventilation

- All windows and doors will be left open to ensure adequate ventilation

Physical Distancing

- Students should not congregate in groups close to one another. Assigned entrances and exits will be given to all year groups when they return.
- A traffic flow plan is being finalised for movement within the building and this will include a one-way system in certain areas. Signage will give clear guidance to students.
- Classrooms are currently being cleared of any excess furniture to facilitate maximum space for social distancing.
- Classrooms are also being arranged seating wise to facilitate the maximum space for social distancing.



The school will endeavour to support physical distancing. Based on our experience we have no doubt that our students will be fully cooperative.

Lockers

- Lockers – Due to space constraints and to prevent mass gatherings students will not have access to school lockers for the moment.

Transport to and from school

- All students on the post primary transport scheme were issued with the following advice issued by Bus Éireann:
 - A student is not to use school transport if they are displaying symptoms
 - Students are to maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport
 - Students are asked to sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or child from their class group (this should always be the same child)
 - Students are requested to use hand sanitiser on boarding the bus
 - Students should always observe respiratory etiquette while waiting for and on-board transport services
 - To disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
- With the exception of those children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to wear a face mask or face covering, all other students travelling on the post-primary scheme are required to wear face coverings while waiting for and on-board transport services.
- Students are encouraged to walk or cycle to school if possible.
- **When students arrive at school, they should proceed directly to the area / classroom which will be assigned to them once they return to school.**

Communication

- Information posters will be prominently displayed at appropriate locations throughout the school including offices, corridors, staff room area, classrooms and toilet areas. They are intended to inform but



also to remind all members of the school community about the importance of hygiene in preventing the spread of Covid-19 virus and protecting health and safety.

- Support videos will be made available to parents and guardians. Students will be shown videos on induction.
- Any new updates or information will be available on our website and parents/guardians will be texted to inform them.
- Please visit the DES website for further information <https://www.education.ie/covid19>
- In light of the need for students to be more mindful of attending school during the current Covid-19 climate, an amendment to the Code of Behaviour Policy is required so that students will be aware of specific rules on their return to school. Our guiding principle when making any changes or adjustments to this policy is to be able to keep all of our students, families and staff safe. The amendments will be communicated to students, parents and staff shortly.

How to prepare for the return to school - how can parents / guardians help? Steps you should take:

1. Know your child's **return to school date**

- Bus Eireann will start their service on Monday 31st August
- If we receive any new directives requiring us to open at a different or staggered time, we will communicate the new arrangements to you immediately.

DATE	TIME	GROUP
Thursday 27 th	All Day	Staff Planning Day
Friday 28 th	9.00 – 1.20	Induction 1st Year students on site only
Monday August 31 st	9.00 - 3.59	Induction 6th Year & 1st Year students on site only
Tuesday September 1 st	9.00 - 3.59	3rd Year Induction



		6th Year students on site
Wednesday September 2nd	9.00 - 3.59	5th Year Induction 6th Year students on site
Thursday September 3rd	9.00 - 3.59	TY & LCA Induction 6th Year students on site
Friday September 4th	9.00 – 1.20	2nd Year Induction
Monday September 7th	Full timetable	All Year Groups

2. In accordance with DES advice – water fountains will be disconnected – so students should arrange to bring an adequate supply of water for the duration of the school day (please label water bottle with the students' name).
3. Coats will no longer be hung in corridors, so students will need to bring their coats with them when moving classroom or keep them in their bags (it is important that all coats have an identification label with the students name).
4. The school recommends that students should bring two spare masks to change after breaktimes.
5. Each parent /guardian should discuss the following checklist with their daughter/son and make sure it has been completed:

Finally, while measures have been put in place, we must always remember that nothing works better than ensuring each individual takes personal responsibility. Everyone needs to play his/her part to minimise the risk of Covid-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole. Everyone must make every effort to minimise the risk of infection.

IMPORTANT

- **Knowing the Symptoms of Covid-19**

In order to prevent the spread of Covid-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms.

They are:



- **high temperature**
- **cough**
- **shortness of breath or breathing difficulties**
- **loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste**

If your child/children complain of any of these symptoms, please keep your child/children at home and call your GP without delay.

Please note, that wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

- **Travel**

It is of the utmost importance to point out that all staff or students who have been abroad in **'nongreen list countries' should not return to school until 14 days after arriving back in Ireland** and instead are encouraged and required to self-isolate during this period. Please see the following link for the most up to date list of countries. We are encouraging this in the interest of the health and safety of our whole school community. <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/>

- **Routine and Habits**

As students have missed several months of life at school, it is totally understandable that it will take some time to adjust to returning to school-life in the new reality we find ourselves.

You, as parents/guardians can help with this adjustment by starting to encourage your child/children to change their **routines and habits** between now and start of the school year. Going to bed a little earlier, preparing uniform, schoolbag, school books etc. are all helpful in preparing students for the return to school-life. There is an excellent range of supports available on <https://loveparenting.ie/back-to-school-resources/> specifically for parents to help with this. These resources have been created specifically for parents to use with their children and cover these areas;

- Having the conversations
- Routines
- Managing your child's anxiety
- Parent Self-Care



- Maintaining Routines
- **New First Year Students - Resources**

Step Up To Secondary School is a fantastic resource developed by Planet Youth and their partners. It has a number of resource pages for parents and students. Each resource page has a number of topics to browse through. Some topics have additional information such as advice, videos or extra research. You can access this site here - www.stepup.ie

- **Supporting the wellbeing of students**

Both the Department of Education and we as a school, appreciate that we are living through exceptional times which impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times. People have been naturally worried about the risk to their physical health and that of their loved ones. There will be a significant emphasis on promoting the wellbeing of our school community to ensure a successful return to school as we all continue to manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We realise that many of these measures sound scary and daunting, but we will do everything we can to help you and your child through the process. If we continue to work together, we can make this challenging time that bit easier. Please communicate with us as often as you need (email is the most effective way of getting in touch with us). Thank you for your continued support of our school and we look forward to being in contact with you soon again.