

Dear parents,

I hope you and yours are keeping well.

We are looking forward to welcoming your child when Scoil Mhuire opens on Monday, August 31st. As I mentioned in previous messages throughout the summer, many new procedures are being implemented with regard to the physical and learning environment of our school. This involves changes to many of our policies and practices. These are being implemented in light of Department of Education and Skills [DES] guidelines to address the Covid-19 crisis. Over the past few months, an enormous amount of planning has taken place to ensure that we can re-open Scoil Mhuire so that health risk to pupils and school staff is minimized. I would like to acknowledge the dedicated work of our Return to Work Task Force, Caroline McEldowney Patton [parent and School Safety Officer Board of Management, Claire Nolan [School Safety Representative], Aisling Heerey [Deputy Principal] Darrell Clarke [School Caretaker], Joan Lyons [School Secretary]who have worked with me throughout the summer on this challenging and constantly evolving project. Our main priority is to safeguard, to the best of our ability, the safety of all our school community. We thank you in advance for your support and know that you will make allowance for any difficulties/disruptions which have been imposed on us by this pandemic.

Our overall plan for reopening is outlined in two documents: Covid-19 Policy Statement and Covid-19 School Response Plan which will be posted on our school website www.howthprimaryschool.ie

Please take note of the following arrangements:

Health and Safety:

The school is being deep cleaned by a specialist contract cleaning company. Our own school cleaners will be employed to work extra time each day to facilitate a thorough cleaning schedule of all areas.

Supplies of hand sanitisers / wipes/ disinfectant sprays have been purchased and are being installed throughout the building.

Installation of Perspex screens in the school office.

Introduction of a one-way system throughout the school which will be clearly marked.

Preparation of a designated isolation area to deal any suspected case of Covid-19.

Pupils will continue to wear uniforms as normal. However, we ask parents to ensure that children change out of them once they arrive home so they are not worn in multiple locations. We also request that parents continue to ensure that children observe regular hand /respiratory hygiene protocols, sneezing etiquette and social distancing [where appropriate] as outlined by HSE.

As advised by DES, arrangements to ensure 1 metre social distancing from 3rd class to 6th will be in place. Pupils will be expected to sit in their appointed seat at all times.

Access to the school from necessary visitors will be restricted to essential purposes and will be by appointment. Therefore, it will no longer be possible to drop off books, lunches, sports gear etc to children once school has started each day. A contact tracing log will be maintained in line with public health advice.

Drop-Off:

As I previously outlined, we propose to operate a flexible drop-off system on school mornings whereby pupils can arrive at any time between 08:40 and 09:10. Children from Senior Infants to 6th should make their own way straight to their classroom where their teacher will receive them. Children should not wait in the school grounds before 08:40. This should eliminate clustering of parents / guardians / children inside the tight confines of the school grounds and should also help to ease traffic congestion. Parents are requested not to enter the building and should communicate with teachers via email / notes in their child's journal. We also ask parents not to allow their children enter the AstroTurf facility beside the school in the morning before school or in the afternoon at collection time.

Collection;

Senior Infants will exit from the Junior entrance door.

1st to 3rd classes plus one 4th class will exit the main building on a staggered rota to avoid a mass exodus.

5th classes will leave via their fire exit doors [at the rear of the building] and the classes in the prefabs [one 4th and two 6th classes] will leave directly from their classrooms..

Junior Infants:

We are looking forward to welcoming our Junior Infants into our school family at Scoil Mhuire when they arrive at our Junior Infant Induction on Friday August 28th. Arrangements for this have been forwarded to the relevant parents.

When school starts on the 31st, Junior Infants should arrive in the school mat 09:30 and wait in line until their teacher brings them into class. This is a temporary measure until they settle in. They will have an earlier collection time during this initial period.

Break Time arrangements:

We are fine tuning a staggered schedule of break times and supervision rota so that the risk of cross infection between different class groupings is reduced. Each class will make use of separate designated toilets.

High-Risk pupils:

We are aware that a small number of pupils may not be able to return to school because they are deemed to be in a very high-risk category under public health guidelines. Scoil Mhuire will endeavour to put measures in place to support learning so that these children can engage with their schoolwork. It is important that you contact the school in advance so that the class teacher / Special Education Needs teachers can make arrangements.

Travel abroad:

Government policy, which is based on public health advice, continues to advise against all non-essential overseas travel. It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland from locations other than those within the "Green List" to restrict their movements for 14 days. This involves staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people. We would appreciate your cooperation in the event that you have travelled to a country outside the Green List

It is critical that your child stays at home if displaying any of the following symptoms:

- [1] High temperature
- [2] Cough or sore throat
- [3] Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- [4] Loss of smell or taste. Distortion of taste.

Code of Behaviour:

Our Code of Behaviour is being revised in light of the Covid-19 situation. In the unlikely event that a pupil deliberately puts the health and safety of any member of our school community at risk or takes advantage of any new procedure to cause disruption to teaching / learning, that child will be sent home

General:

The choir will not perform at the upcoming Confirmation ceremony [September 26th] or at First Holy Communion [October 17th]

There will be no Standardised Testing scheduled for this school year [unless the school receives clearance from the Department of Education and Skills at a later date]

We have further planning meeting scheduled over the next week. I will keep you informed of any developments arising from these before we start the new school year on Monday 31st.

Stay safe.

Ar aghaidh le Chéile!

John Chambers