

21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents / Guardians,

I hope you and your families are keeping well.

We have been working on our plan for the safe reopening of St. Teresa's National School for some weeks now and would like to communicate some relevant elements of it to you at this point so that you can be as best prepared as possible for what to expect. Please be assured that this planning is in accordance with the guidelines issued by the DES and NPHE.

Re-opening the school safely will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community - BoM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner which prevents the spread of the virus and allows the vital work of Teaching and Learning to proceed with as little disruption as possible.

There will be a number of changes to many of our routines in order to keep everyone as safe as possible and we know we can count on your cooperation as always in adapting to these changes. Further modifications may be necessary as public health advice dictates. Any changes will, of course, be communicated to you.

Please carefully read the following information and keep a copy of it so that you can refer back to it.

**DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY:**

- Monitor your child for symptoms of Covid 19. If ANY of the listed symptoms are present **DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL**. Please stay at home and seek advice from your GP/HSE.
- If you have been in close contact with a confirmed case of Covid 19, do not come to school for 14 days or until a negative test result is obtained.
- If awaiting the result of a Covid-19 swab test - do not come to school.
- Take child's temperature before leaving every morning. If temperature is 37.5 degrees or above - **DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL**.
- Please do not take any chances - if your child is unwell at all or if unsure whether your child should come to school then err on the side of caution and stay at home.

**Before you come to school:**

- Please ensure your child is fully aware of how to wash their hands properly and has had plenty of practice.
- Reinforce respiratory hygiene as often as possible so that it becomes 2<sup>nd</sup> nature to the children before they return to school.
- If you have been out of the country, please ensure you follow most current NPHE advice before returning to school.

- Ensure the school has the phone number of someone who can collect your child at short notice should the need arise.
- Ensure your child has thoroughly washed their hands with soap and water just before leaving the house each morning.
- Long hair should be tied back for the usual head lice reasons but also now to keep touching of head and face to a minimum.
- Fingernails should be kept clipped short to avoid dirt and germs building up under the nails and to mitigate against risks associated with biting nails.
- Children should be able to independently manage their lunch boxes, drink bottles and shoes. Please practice this at home in the coming weeks. If your child cannot manage shoelaces please ensure they have Velcro closing shoes.
- Please ensure your child has everything they need **BEFORE** you arrive at school. Parents will not have access to the school building to deliver forgotten items.
- Double check that your child has the correct lunch and drink before leaving the house every morning. **Children will not be allowed to visit a sibling's class to swap lunches.**

#### **Opening times and entrance to school:**

We are waiting the results of a Health and Safety Audit before finalising the details of how best to facilitate the entrance to and exit from school. We will communicate these details to you shortly.

#### **Break Times:**

- Break times will have to be staggered to ensure more space for children in the yard.
- All children will wash/sanitise their hands before and after eating and when coming back into the classroom.
- Under no circumstances will children be allowed to share food or drink and we would ask you to reiterate this with the children at home.
- Children will not be allowed to bring any toys or cards for swapping to the yard. They should not be brought to school at all. Please reiterate this at home to avoid unnecessary upset.

#### **Throughout the Day**

Children will be reminded to wash/sanitise their hands on a regular basis throughout the day, especially before and after using communal resources, entering the classroom, before and after eating etc. Classrooms will be sanitized on a regular basis, as will touch points around the school. Children will remain within their own class bubble and there will be no mixing of classes within the school building.

#### **Home Time:**

Home times will be staggered slightly to avoid crowding. We would ask that you ensure prompt collection of your children and leave the vicinity of the gate

immediately to facilitate the next class group's egress. Please maintain social distancing while outside the gate.

As above, we are awaiting the results of a Health & Safety audit and will communicate further details, including specific times for your child's class, before reopening.

\*\*\* We continue to encourage children to walk, scoot or cycle to school for health and environmental reasons. However, we cannot allow bikes and scooters on the premises at this time due to congestion around collection of same and the risk of cross contamination during this pandemic. Please bring your child's bike or scooter home with you if they are using them to come to school. \*\*\*

### At Home

- Please wash and sanitise lunch boxes and bottles daily. Ensure any tissues and rubbish are disposed of and clean and sanitize the school bags.
- Please ensure your child has a few sharpened pencils, colours and glue stick in their pencil case. This pencil case will remain at school. Please ensure you have a supply at home for homework.
- Toys or other personal items are **not** to be brought to school. Please ensure that your child's bag is clear of them and reiterate the importance of this rule to avoid unnecessary upset.
- Your child should only have to bring their lunch- box, drink, coat ( older classes will have homework) in their bags.
- Uniform will be worn **in all** classes on Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Tracksuit on Tuesday & Thursday. Please adhere to this regime as it affords the opportunity for washing & drying the clothes.
- Talk to your child about the importance of following these new routines and the reasons for them. Reassure them that we are all in this together and we will keep everyone safe. Allow them time and space to voice any fears real or imagined. It has been a stressful few months and they are not immune to picking up on that stress so don't be afraid to let them express it.

### Meeting with teachers

All informal 'dropping in' to speak to the class teachers **will have to stop**.

Parents are asked not to enter the school building unless absolutely necessary **and only by prior arrangement**. Instead make a request by emailing or phoning the office, stating the general nature of your query/concern, for a call from your child's class teacher where any issues can be discussed. Likewise, you should not delay when collecting your child to speak to the teacher. If a face to face meeting is deemed necessary, social distancing of 2m and wearing of masks will apply.

We are very conscious that this goes against all that we have strived to achieve in making St. Teresa's National School a warm and welcoming place not only for the children but for their parents too. However, we ask that you please bear with us and understand that we are doing this for the safety of all.

### Curriculum

While the curriculum plays a central role in our school, the main focus for school leaders, teachers and parents must be to gently re-introduce pupils to their friends and to many unfamiliar and new school routines. For a little while this must take precedence over some aspects of the curriculum. Helping all pupils to make the transition back to school, to reconnect with their teachers and friends and to establish new school routines that support their health and safety will be a priority at the start of the new school year.

**Payments:**

No cash or cheques will be handled in school. All payments will need to be made using our online system. This will include Maintenance, Book rental and any other payments throughout the year. You will receive further communication re how this works shortly.

**Incoming Junior Infants**

Parents and Guardians of our new Junior Infants have received separate communication regarding meeting your class teacher and arrangements for the first day of school. Junior Infants will have the opportunity to visit the school on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August and parents can take in all of their books on that day.

**And Finally...**

This is a lot of information to process. Read it a few times and discuss with your family. Give yourself time to absorb everything. There may be questions that arise but we ask that you write them down and keep them for the moment. Further details will follow, and your questions will most likely be answered at that point. We are planning, discussing and finalising the finer details in conjunction with staff & BOM etc and these will be communicated to you before we return.

With all of this change, school will be a slightly different space for all of us. However, our top priority upon our return remains the safety and wellbeing of your children and our whole school community. There will be a strong focus on helping everyone to settle back into school safely and happily and as near to normal as possible, and we know that you will, as always, work with us in achieving this. We are conscious that the last few months have been very difficult and that there will be anxiety around coming back to school for children and parents alike. Rest assured that we will do our utmost to make the transition safe, easy, straightforward, and most importantly happy, for all involved.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming your children back to school.

We will be in touch with you again before school re-opens.

Regards

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Louise & staff