

Back to School Plan - What Parents Need to Know

Dear Parents/Guardians

As the summer holidays draw to a close I want to share some essential information and guidance with you about returning to school.

This guidance outlines some of the main points from our school's *Covid Response Plan* which is our plan to safeguard the health and safety of our school community. It is not possible to guarantee that infection can be prevented in any setting, but we must work together as a school community to minimise the risk of Covid-19 infection as best we can.

The message we wish to share is clear – we aim to stop the introduction of the virus but if it is introduced we aim to reduce the spread.

We look forward to welcoming all our pupils and our new Junior Infants to school and we aim to create:

- a sense of safety
- a sense of calm
- a sense of belonging and connectedness to school
- a sense of hope

and to continue working with our pupils in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy.

Our Slogan

Though safety is our priority we don't want to overly preoccupy children with health and safety which could inhibit their learning and wellbeing at school. We want to reinforce the message to wash hands and to stay safe - but also that we're in school with our friends and it's a place of friendship, fun and learning.

With that in mind we will use this slogan

Covid's not here, let's keep it away

So wash your hands and let's learn and play!

First things first...

We love to see all our pupils every day. However, under the current circumstances, parents/guardians must keep children at home if they are unwell or displaying any Covid-19 symptoms. Likewise, staff must not attend school with symptoms.

Under no circumstances is a parent to bring a child to school if

- The child is showing any signs of Covid-19 or a member of the household is showing signs of Covid-19
- If the child is unwell in any way - has a temperature, has a respiratory illness, is sneezing, coughing, vomiting, has diarrhoea or has loss of smell/taste
- If the child has been outside of Ireland in the previous 14 days, they are not to attend school and are to isolate
- If the child has been in contact with any person who has Covid-19 or who is a suspected case

If you are in any doubt whether you should send your child to school or not, please err on the side of caution and seek advice from your GP.

If a child appears unwell on entering a classroom, or at any time of the school day, the child's temperature may be taken and in the interests of the safety of the staff and the other children, the Principal will contact the parent/guardian and ask the parent to take the child home.

(See protocols further in this document for managing children who are unwell in school).

School Drop Off and Collection Times

- We ask all parents to familiarise themselves with our new drop off and collection routines
- Please be patient as we try to embed these new routines at the beginning of term
- Punctuality is very important – please stick to the correct arrival time
- Be aware that collection and drop off times will take longer than usual and that plans may need to be adjusted as the days go by
- To help with reducing the amount of traffic around the school gates and in the Parish Centre Car Park, children are asked to walk to school if possible
- Parents who use the Parish Centre Car Park are asked to observe social distancing at all times and to model social distancing for your child if you are accompanying her to the school gates
- Unfortunately, it will not be possible for parents/guardians/childminders to come onto the school grounds before/after school.
- However, **parents/guardians/childminders of Junior and Senior Infants pupils** are allowed to enter the school via the small gate on the left and to accompany their child to and from the classroom exit door (one adult per child)
- To minimise the risks, and to help us maintain social distancing, pupils **may not come onto the school grounds before 9.10am. Gates will be closed until 9.10am**
- Parents using the Parish Centre Carpark are asked to exercise their best judgement about social distancing when escorting their child to the pedestrian crossing and when walking towards the school gates. If it is too busy – please wait for a few minutes.
- Under no circumstances are parents to pull up in cars to drop off or to collect children at the school gates.
- Adults accompanying Junior or Senior Infant pupils should not congregate in groups and must maintain 2 metre social distancing on school grounds.

First day back at school

Excitement will be high – pupils may want to get to school early and will be excited to see their friends again. There is a 15-minute arrival timeframe (for 1st to 6th Classes) so please take your time as we don't want everyone arriving for 9.10am. You and your child may need to wait until the paths towards the school are less busy. Whilst children will be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.

Morning arrival time 9.10am-9.25am

Pupils from 1st Class to 6th Class will have an arrival timeframe from **9.10am – 9.25am** to enter their classrooms. If it is too busy when you arrive at/near the school please wait a few minutes so you and your child can adhere to social distancing – the 15-minute timeframe allows for this.

Junior Infants have received notification by post of their special arrangements for the first 2 days of school. Thereafter they should arrive from 9.30am-9.35am daily (to allow older pupils to get to their classrooms first).

Senior Infants are asked to arrive from 9.30am to 9.35am daily (to allow older pupils to get to their classrooms first).

Older siblings of Junior/Senior Infants may arrive for 9.30am too.

Children will go directly to their classroom on arrival and take their seat. There will be no play time outside in the mornings. All class teachers will be in their classrooms at 9.10am.

For the first few days, other staff members and helpers will be available outside and inside the building to receive the children and to help them to their classrooms.

Home time

Junior Infants: Junior Infants will finish at 12pm until the 15th September. Parents/Guardians will collect their child from the classroom exit door in the Infants' Playground. They will exit one at a time to the designated person. From 15th September they will finish at 2pm.

Senior Infants: Senior Infants will finish at 2pm daily. They will exit one by one to the designated adult via their classroom exit door in the Infants' Playground.

1st Classes: Our 2 First Classes will finish at 2.45pm daily. They will exit one at a time, supervised by teachers, to the designated adult who will wait outside the front gate.

3rd Classes: will finish school at 2.50pm daily

4th Class – 6th Class: will finish school at 2.55pm daily

Parents/guardians/child minders are asked to maintain social distance at all times outside the school grounds.

This system will apply hail, rain or shine so make sure your child comes to school prepared for the weather!

Please see the table below with the entry and exit points for each class. Don't worry if you are unsure about the gate or specific door – we will have helpers at hand for the first few days to guide you.

Class & Teacher	Entrance Route & time*	Exit Route & Time*
Junior Infants (Mrs Rust)	Via the Left Gate at 9.30 - 9.35am & enter via the classroom exterior door in the Infants' Playground	Classroom door at 12pm up to 15 th September and at 2pm from 16 th September – pupils will be dismissed one at a time to the designated adult
Senior Infants (Ms Farrell)	Via the Left Gate at 9.30 - 9.35am & enter via the classroom exterior door in the Infants' Playground	Via their exterior classroom door in Infants' Playground at 2pm – pupils will be dismissed one at a time to the designated adult
1st Class (Ms McGeeney)	Via the Centre gates & then enter the building through the front doors of the school 9.10-9.25am	Via the Front Doors at 2.45pm , down the steps on the right and exit through the Centre Gates (one at a time to the designated adult waiting outside the gates))
1st Class (Ms Clinton)	Via the Centre gates & then enter the building through the front doors of the school 9.10-9.25am	Via the Front Doors at 2.45pm , down the steps on the left and exit through the Centre Gates (one at a time to the designated adult waiting outside the gates)
2nd Class Ms McBride)	Via the Centre gates & enter through the front doors of the school 9.10-9.25am	Via the Middle Playground and exit via the Fairy Garden Gate at 2.50pm
3rd Class (Ms Clerkin)	Via Left Gate, through the Infants' Playground and through Exit Door adjacent to their Classroom D 9.10am-9.25am	Via Exit Door at their Classroom (D) through Infants' Playground and out via the Left Gate at 2.50pm
3rd Class (Ms McClean & Mrs King)	Via Left Gate, through the Infants' Playground and through Exit Door adjacent to their Classroom E 9.10am-9.25am	Via Exit Door at their Classroom (E) through Infants' Playground and out the Left Gate at 2.50pm
4th Class (Ms Mason)	Via Fairy Garden Gate, through the Middle Playground, up the steps and enter at Exit Door adjacent to Classroom J 9.10am-9.25am	Via their Exit Door J, past the greenhouse, down steps, through middle Playground and exit via Fairy Garden Gate at 2.55pm
5th Class (Ms Balfe)	Via Left Gate, through the Infants' Playground and through Exit Door adjacent to their Classroom F 9.10am – 9.25am	Via their Exit Door F, through the Infants' playground and out the Left Gate at 2.55pm
6th Class (Ms Sheridan)	Via Fairy Garden Gate, through the Middle Playground, up the steps and through Exit Door at 6 th Class 9.10am-9.25am	Via Exit at 6 th Class, through the Infants' Playground and out the Left Gate at 2.55pm
6th Class (Ms McKenna)	Via Fairy Garden Gate, through the Middle Playground, up the steps and through Exit Door at 6 th Class 9.10am-9.25am	Via Exit at 6 th Class, through the Middle Playground and out the Centre gates at 2.55pm

*All arrangements are provisional for the first few weeks and will be subject to change as needed

Breaktimes: Morning Break and Lunchtime

The Department of Education guidelines state that the risk of transmission from contact with outside surfaces or play areas is low.

The times of the morning break and lunchtime will not change. All classes will be out on our 3 playgrounds at the same time. However, we have subdivided each playground into separate play areas for each class so that each class will remain with their "Class Bubble".

A "bubble" is the new name for a whole class.

Junior Playground: Junior and Senior Infants

Middle Playground: 1st Classes and Second Class

Senior Playground: 2nd to 6th Classes

Wet Day Procedures: Children will be supervised in their classrooms as we will not be able to use the PE hall or lunchrooms.

School Uniform and Tracksuit

Pupils will continue to wear the school uniform and school tracksuit this year. There is no guidance or advice to say uniforms or tracksuits have to be washed every day. However, they should be clean and washed regularly as children may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve. We strongly advise that uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school. They should not be worn to after-school activities, shops, playgrounds etc.

- **School tracksuit should be worn on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.**
- **School uniform to be worn on Tuesdays and Thursdays.** *(However, teachers may ask pupils to wear tracksuits on a specific day depending on PE arrangements).*

Junior pupils should be able to open and close their shoes/runners by themselves therefore Velcro or easily secured straps are best.

Jumpers, PE tops and coats must be clearly labelled with your child's name.

Please consider that rooms will be well ventilated during class time and especially at breaktimes so the temperatures will be lower as a result. The wearing of vests and layers with the uniform may be appropriate for your child.

All children will be outside every day (unless the weather is extremely inclement!) so please make sure your child has a coat with a hood every day.

PE

Where possible, PE will take place outdoors and each class will have its own set of equipment.

Classroom Layouts – Bubbles and Pods

The Department of Education (DES) guidelines recognise that a common-sense approach is needed in our Primary Schools. To that end, every effort will be made to limit interaction within classrooms, to limit contact between class groups and to limit the sharing of common facilities.

Each class will be treated as a “**Class Bubble**”. A Class Bubble is a grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible. The aim of the system within the school is that class groupings mix only with their own class from arrival in school in the morning until they go home at the end of the school day.

Within the classroom “bubble” children will be arranged in small groups – these little groups are called “**Pods**”.

Our classroom desks have been laid out in accordance with DES classroom layout plans. A distance of 1 metre will be maintained between desks or between individual pupils. This recommendation does not apply to pupils from Junior Infants to second class.

Staff will maintain a 2m distance from each other and a minimum of 1m from pupils.

Junior Infants to Second Class: It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain physical distancing indoors so there is no requirement for children from Junior Infants to Second Class to maintain a physical distance within their Class Bubble. We will maximise classroom space to distance children as much as possible and children will also be seated in groups called “pods”.

Third Class to Sixth Class: Our senior classrooms are all in line with DES recommended class size 80m² and desks have been arranged in accordance with DES recommended layout plans to maximise physical distance.

Classroom seating arrangements will be changed at mid-term breaks and after the Christmas and Easter breaks.

All unnecessary furniture has been removed from classrooms to create as much space as possible.

Corridors: Briefly passing someone on a corridor is very unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of infection if people do not have physical contact and avoid informal group discussions. A one-way system will operate on corridors and signage will be used to facilitate this.

Doors and Windows

Where practical, all internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common surfaces.

Our new windows have very good vents and to ensure extra ventilation windows will be kept open as often as possible and will be opened while children are taking breaks in the playground. This will leave classrooms cooler in the winter months so your child may need an extra layer of clothing.

Handwashing Facilities and Toilets

Water heaters have been installed in all toilet blocks and there is adequate liquid soap and hand towel supplies in each classroom and toilet area.

Sanitiser dispensers have been installed in each classroom, throughout the school building and at exit doors.

Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged and parents/guardians are asked to support us in reinforcing this message.

Pupils are required to wash/sanitise their hands:

- on arrival at school
- before eating/drinking
- after using the toilet
- after playing outdoors
- when their hands are dirty
- when they cough or sneeze

Children are to go to the toilet and wash their hands before they leave home for school each morning.

In the first few weeks, staff will complete many lessons with pupils on good hand hygiene, cough, and sneeze etiquette and about staying within their pods and bubbles.

Cleaning

The school will be cleaned thoroughly every day and this will be supplemented by the caretaking service during the day to ensure that all high touch surfaces are regularly sanitised. All desks, chairs, toilets, doors, handles and high-touch points will be cleaned daily.

All toys will be cleaned on a daily and weekly basis. Sharing educational materials between pods will be avoided/minimised.

The daily 3-step cleaning routine will be (1) Clean (2) Sanitise (3) Each room will then be sanitised with our new fogging machine.

The Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Whilst it is not envisaged that PPE will be worn by staff in general, it may be worn at times where physical distancing cannot be maintained e.g. while checking children's work. Staff who are attending to care needs or first aid will wear appropriate PPE. This is subject to change in line with government advice.

Masks The children are not required to wear masks or face coverings. Staff may wear masks or face visors when social distancing cannot be maintained.

School Bags & Personal Equipment

Children are to bring their own stationery in their own pencil case and are not to share such equipment. **Pencil cases will be kept in school** so please have a spare set of pens and pencils for home.

All items are to be labelled with your child's name for ease of identification.

Parents should ensure that all books, lunch boxes and water bottles are sanitised using alcohol wipes on completion of homework before being placed in schoolbags. Plastic covers on books and copies can be easily sanitised with a disinfectant wipe.

We know how much children love their toys, collectable items etc but please keep them at home this year and your child should only bring items she needs for school in her school bag.

Hand sanitiser & tissues (1st Class -6th Class only)

Pupils in 1st-6th Classes should have their own hand sanitiser and a packet of tissues and these should be replaced when empty. Please provide a small wash bag or zip lock bag labelled with your child's name for storage of these toiletries. Please talk to your child about safe and appropriate use of the sanitiser.

Lunches

Please make sure your child remembers to bring her lunch to avoid drop offs during the school day. Please remind your child not to share her food or drink with other children.

Only send containers and bottles that your child can open independently without teacher assistance. Likewise, your child should be able to eat independently (e.g. Frubes can be very difficult to open – the orange may be difficult to peel!). All leftovers will be brought home in the lunchbox.

Children will eat their lunches indoors at their desks this year while teaching continues, before heading out onto the playgrounds.

School Office

- Online payments have been set up to minimise the handling of cash and we encourage all parents to avail of this option.
- Children will not be sent to the office or to other classrooms on messages.
- Parents are asked to communicate with the school by email or phone-call. Your child's teacher will advise you about home-school communication.
- All communication from the school will be made via text or by email.
- If you need to contact the school please phone 041-6853152 or email us at office@smntardee.ie
- You will no longer be able to enter the school building without prior arrangement, therefore all communication must go through the office.

Collection of Children during the School Day

If an adult has to collect a child during the course of the day, the following arrangements will apply:

- when the adult arrives at the school, they should phone the office or ring the intercom at the front door to alert the office they have arrived
- the child will be brought from their class by a member of staff
- No adult should enter the school building, unless invited to do so

Visitors to School

Necessary visitors such as parents and contractors will be restricted to essential purposes only and limited to those who have attained prior approval from the Principal.

A detailed sign in log will be maintained.

Masks are mandatory.

Often times a phone-call to the office will clarify/resolve a matter. When possible, teachers will offer a phone conference instead of a face-to-face meeting.

Teacher Absence and Substitution

In the event that a teacher is unable to attend school, every effort will be made to secure a substitute teacher for the class. If a substitute teacher is not available, it is not appropriate for a class to be divided into groups in other classes. In such circumstances, it may not be possible for the class to attend that day. If that is the case, as much notice as possible will be given to parents.

Illness and Dealing with a Suspected Case of Covid-19

Keep Calm and Stay Safe: Please talk to your child about feeling sick at school. If she has a sore throat it's okay to tell her teacher. Some child may find this hard and we appreciate this. Know that in cases where a child is displaying a Covid-19 symptom, our staff will deal with it in a calm and reassuring manner. Most times a sore throat or a cough is simply that and we must do all we can to model that in how we make the child feel whilst still following the procedure for a suspected case when a Covid symptom is present.

- Any child who is unwell with a fever, cold or flu, sore throat, respiratory illness or is displaying any signs of Covid-19 is to stay home from school.
- If a child shows symptoms of Covid-19 whilst in school parents/guardians will be contacted by telephone and they will be asked to collect their child as soon as possible. To help us in this regard, parents are asked to make sure their contact details and emergency contacts are kept up to date.

Please have a back-up plan arranged with another family member or childminder in the event that you are unable to get to school to collect your child.

- The pupil will be accompanied to the isolation room at the school office area. A distance of 2 meters will be maintained. A face covering will be provided for the child. PPE will be worn by the staff member looking after the child. A contactless thermometer may be used to take the child's temperature. The child will be encouraged not to touch surfaces, people or objects.
- Parents will be asked to contact their GP by phone to discuss their child's symptoms and we ask that parents follow all advice from their GP and the HSE.
- The isolation area and work areas will be thoroughly cleaned in line with the guidelines.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal will carry out an assessment of the incident which will inform all follow up actions.
- The HSE will inform the school/parents if they have come into close contact with a diagnosed contact via the contact tracing process. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and confidentiality is essential at all times.
- It is important to remember that any of us can get sick or unwell, and if we do, we need understanding and support from those around us. It is essential that anyone who feels unwell makes that known to the class teacher, or to the Principal/Deputy Principal as soon as possible.
- **Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a class:** If the school is notified by the HSE that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19 the parents of all children in the class will be informed by text message. HSE health advice will be sought, followed and shared with parents.

Teaching and Learning – Slow Down to Catch Up!

We are very aware that the children have been away from school since 12th March. We appreciate the time and effort that went into home learning and we fully recognise the challenges that home learning presented for all families.

Each child will be in a different place in relation to her learning, and we wish to assure you that our staff will take that into consideration when planning for teaching and learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

Getting to know each child will be especially important in identifying appropriate starting points for teaching and learning. Teachers will take time initially to assess pupils' needs, and to re-teach, revise and consolidate previous learning before introducing new teaching.

The staff will be prioritising certain aspects of the curriculum including SPHE, Language (English and Irish), PE and Mathematics and mandatory aspects of SPHE such as Stay Safe will be taught early in the year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the coming school year.

Distance Learning Explicit provision will be made for contingency curriculum planning for a situation in which there might be an unexpected period of school closure.

We will continue to build on the experience of digital technology during the school closure period to support contingency arrangements in the event that pupils need to continue their learning remotely and the online learning platform *Seesaw* will be used for this.

Homework

Now for some good news! In an effort to ease the transition back to school and to limit the amount of materials traditionally shared between home and school there will be no homework for the first month of school. The staff will consider the best delivery model for homework. We will also prepare the children for using the online platform "Seesaw" and homework can be set and corrected in this way as the weeks progress.

Finally ...

I'd like to thank you for reading and familiarising yourself with our new procedures. Together we will do our best to make the return to school a safe and enjoyable experience for our pupils, parents and staff.

Take care everyone,



Mrs Deirdre Sweeney
Principal

Ps.....Can you answer our Parent Checklist below?

1. Are you familiar with our drop off and collection procedure?
2. Have you taught your child correct hand hygiene?
3. Have you taught your child coughing and sneezing etiquette?
4. If your child is in any way unwell are you aware that she must stay at home from school?
5. Have you labelled all your child's belongings?
6. Are you familiar with the symptoms of Covid-19?
7. Children deliberately coughing at another pupil or passing comments about Covid to another child is a serious breach of school rules. Please discuss this at home.
8. Are you familiar with the response plan should a child be suspected of having Covid-19?
9. Do you know how to contact the school?
10. Have you ensured the school has current and correct contact information for you and for 3 trusted emergency contact people?

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