

Return to School-March 2021



Iontaobhas Scoileanna Éamainn Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust

PARENTS' INFORMATION

The information contained in this booklet on 26th February 2021 is subject to change in accordance with HSE/DES advice. We will update you on any changes as they arise.

Thank you for your patience and understanding in working with us over the past few weeks as we made our way through the various requirements which were necessary to help us to reopen safely.

Covid Response Plan and Policy Statement.

St Kevin's College Board of Management has a Covid 19 Response Plan and Policy Statement and will be available to our school community on the school website. Parents and students should familiarise themselves with the plan during the coming weeks.

Before Coming in to School

Before you come in to school, you must complete the following steps:

1. Fill in the Return to School Form (you will receive this by text).
2. Check that your child displays none of the symptoms of Covid 19. If your child displays **any** of these symptoms, they must not come to school. These symptoms are
 - a. **a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)**
 - b. **a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry**
 - c. **shortness of breath or breathing difficulties**
 - d. **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal**
3. Look through the various training and information resources available at this link from the Department of Education and Skills.
4. Read and familiarise yourself with the school's Covid 19 Response Plan which is available on our website.

Worry/Stress/Feelings of Anxiety

If your son is feeling anxious or worried about Covid 19 or anything related to it, our Guidance Counsellor and Student Support Team is available to support. We expect that the Department of Health will release a document before schools reopen that will contain vital information for you and your son about returning to school and staying safe. There will also be a national campaign to support you and your son in order to keep you informed about Covid 19 and to prevent it spreading. It is important that you read this document when it is published. Further information will be available from the DES website- <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/>

Wellbeing

All of us have experienced Covid 19 in our own ways within our family and social groupings. We are aware that the changes in how our school operates will be quite difficult for many and that people may feel quite anxious and uncomfortable in that space. We know that many of our school community have experienced job losses, financial hardship, family difficulties, illness and bereavement throughout this pandemic.

As a school which professes to be a caring school community as one of our core values, we will do our best to care for each member of our community. To date, we have taken some concrete steps to meet this aim:

- We have sought to increase student access to counselling
- We have introduced wellbeing lessons for all class groups which will be taken during SPHE class in our opening weeks.
- We have increased the time span through which Transition Year parents pay their TY fees and given greater flexibility in the payment options available to them.

As ever, we will endeavour to be responsive in meeting the welfare needs of our staff and students and provide support wherever we can.

Online Training on Covid 19 Prevention

The DES has advised that all students will be required to complete online training on the prevention of Covid 19. The information is available on the following website <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a04fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/>.

Very High Risk and High Risk Students

The link below contains a list that shows what a very high risk and a high risk person is:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>.

If your son is in either category, you must contact his Year Head at info@stkevinscollege.com to let them know. Any student in these categories cannot return to school without first consulting with the Deputy Principal or the Principal. Your GP or consultant should be consulted with prior to any discussion with the school. The school is not in a position to provide medical advice to individual students.

Keeping Safe

All official guidelines from the Government and the HSE must be followed. These guidelines are likely to change and we will communicate any changes if and when they occur.

Your son must maintain social distance and follow recommendations carefully. Where possible, this means keeping two metres apart from other students. In classrooms, your son must keep one metre social distance from other students around him and two metres between himself and the teacher at the top of the room. Our desks and chairs have been marked out to indicate the distances necessary in classrooms.

Facemasks

Your son is required to wear a face mask in order to minimise the risk of spreading infection. We recommend that he has a reusable face mask that can be washed at night and re-used during the week. We recommend that he has a number of these masks in case he needs a replacement one urgently.

Neck scarves, bandanas, face scarves/snoods or other items of cloth will not be permitted to be worn as face coverings. It may be difficult for your son to get used to wearing a face mask for a long period of time so we recommend that your son practices wearing them if you think that this difficulty is likely.

In acknowledging that this is a new practice for students, if your son forgets his face mask in the first week, he will be able to get a disposable one from the school office. However, the face mask is an essential piece of equipment and it is advised that if your son refuses to wear or repeatedly forget his face mask, he will not be permitted to enter the building. In addition, any student who interferes with

another student's face mask will face serious sanctions under our Code of Behaviour. We ask for your support in encouraging your son to wear his face mask as an essential part of school life at this time.

Hygiene

Students entering the school building must sanitise their hands.

Your son must continually sanitise his hands throughout the day, especially when moving to a new classroom, before and after eating or using the toilet facilities. All toilets now have hot water, soap and disposable paper towels. In order to ensure social distancing, only ten students are permitted to be in the toilets at any time. It is recommended that your son does **not** wear gloves in school as routine use of gloves does not protect the wearer and indeed, may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Regular hand hygiene is recommended as best practice.

The following steps are recommended by the HSE for effective hand hygiene.

1. Wet your hands with warm water and apply soap.
2. Rub your hands together palm to palm until the soap forms a lather.
3. Rub the back of one hand with your palm and fingers spread so you wash between fingers. Repeat with the other hand.
4. Interlock the top of your hands and rub your fingertips - this cleans your fingertips and knuckles.
5. Then finally grasp your thumb tightly and twist to make sure your thumbs are cleaned. Repeat with the other hand.
6. This should take at least 20 seconds.
7. Rinse your hands under running water.
8. Dry your hands with a clean towel or paper towel.

If you have dry skin or a skin condition, apply moisturiser after washing your hands and at night.

Helping Prevent the Spread of Covid 19

In the school, we have put many new facilities and practices into place to help us prevent the spread of Covid 19. We advise the following for students in the school

- Refrain from all physical contact.
- Wear face masks at all times in the school building and grounds where 2m distancing cannot be maintained.
- Practice regular hand hygiene.
- Wipe down their desks in the event that another student has sat at that desk.
- Do not share equipment, food or any other item.
- Adhere to social distancing.
- Stay in your seat during and between classes.

- Follow the one-way system in the school.
- Do not congregate in corridors or in the toilets.
- Use the appropriate entry and exit points.
- Cycle/Walk to school.
- Avoid public transport if possible.

We have purchased a large amount of hand sanitisers and each classroom will have a hand sanitiser at the door and a box of wipes to clean desks. We also will have additional cleaning staff on the school premises during the day. However, all students must have their own bottle of hand sanitiser and a box of disinfectant wipes.

As an essential step in managing the risk of spreading Covid-19, your son should also follow good respiratory hygiene, which means:

- avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth
- cover coughs and sneezes with an elbow or a tissue
- dispose of tissues in a nearby bin and wash or sanitise your hands immediately afterwards.

Temperature Check

We ask that before coming to school each morning, you take a temperature check of your son. If they have an elevated temperature of **38 degrees Celsius or above**, you must keep them home and contact your GP.

Procedures if Your Son Displays Symptoms of Covid 19

First, be aware of the symptoms of Covid 19, which according to the HSE are:

- **a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)**
- **a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry**
- **shortness of breath or breathing difficulties**
- **loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal**

If your son displays any of these symptoms while at home, **they must not come to school**. They must self-isolate, you should contact your GP immediately and follow their advice. We ask that you inform either the Principal or Deputy Principal when you have received advice from the GP.

If your son experiences any of the symptoms of Covid 19 while in school, we have a plan in place to respond and we will follow those steps carefully. It is important that you and your sons are familiar with these steps before coming back to school so that you understand what is happening. Please read this information on the link below:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48037-dealing-with-a-suspected-case-of-covid-19-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

If your son has been in contact with someone who has been confirmed with a Covid 19 diagnosis, he must not return to school for two weeks. Instead, he should follow the HSE's guidelines below:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html>

If you need to contact us outside school hours, please email info@stkevinscollege.com. If any family member is being referred for a test or waiting for the result of a test for covid 19, please keep your son at home and communicate with us. We need to work together during this time – please tell us as soon as possible if any member of your family is being tested and please communicate the test result to us.

Steps Taken to Help Prevent the Spread of Covid 19 in our School Community

In order to help to prevent the spread of Covid 19 in our school community, the following measures have been taken:

- We have repurposed a number of rooms as classrooms to ensure that we can maintain recommended student numbers and social distancing in line with DES guidelines.
- Classrooms have been reconfigured to comply with the DES specifications.
- Students are now based in classrooms with the exception of option blocks.
- Years are largely confined to blocks in the school with the exception of option classes. The crossover of year groups is kept to a minimum.
- We have staggered our morning break and lunch break to restrict interactions between students and year groups.
- Hand sanitisers have been procured for each classroom.
- Sanitising wipes have been purchased for each classroom.
- Toilets have been equipped with hot water, soap and disposable hand towels.
- Isolation rooms have been designated and equipped with PPE.
- Face masks and PPE have been procured for all staff.
- Posters have been placed around the school to enhance awareness of new systems
- We are working towards the electronic submission of work – all teachers now have a device that will allow them to correct student work on a screen with a stylus. Teachers are currently being trained in the appropriate use of such devices.
- All visits to the school will be by appointment only.
- All financial transactions will be cashless.
- All communication with home will be done via phone, email, the school app or VS Ware.
- We have procured face shields and masks for each staff member.
- Supervised Study and Homework Club will be deferred until further notice.
- Our school will open to receive students from 8.20 am. For those boys who live locally we ask that you try to arrive at school after 8.30. Please note that during the phased reopening of the

school, 8:42 form class will not take place. Start time will be 8:50. When they arrive, the boys must go directly to their assigned classroom and occupy a socially distanced seat. The boys may not congregate around a desk or stand beside the desk of another student.

- Full uniform must be worn – facemasks must be worn before entering the school. A very limited number of students have been pre-approved for a medical exemption from wearing a mask. These students must wear visors to school.
- For the moment, all school “in person” meetings, parent-teacher meetings, parent coffee mornings and other events have had to be postponed. We will seek to organise online equivalent meetings at the earliest possible opportunity.
- On wet days, the boys must remain in their classroom during break or lunch. Senior students may leave the school at lunch time but it is their responsibility to remain socially distanced from their friends.
- In the yard, teachers will encourage social distancing. Your son is responsible for maintaining his own personal space and social distancing.
- We are trying to keep a sense of normality for our students. We have worked hard to reconfigure our programmes and curricula to adapt to this new environment. While we cannot engage in group work etc as we used to, we are looking for new ways to allow the boys to collaborate.
- All induction assemblies and future assemblies will be conducted through zoom – the boys will watch the live event online with their tutor and will be given the chance to ask questions afterwards.
- Our teachers have worked hard to adapt to the current climate to make your sons feel more comfortable – they may remind your son on a regular basis about social distancing and appropriate mask wearing – this is a welfare concern and should help us in our aim to reduce the spread of covid-19 should it enter our school community.

Break Times and Lunchtime

In order to ensure minimal interaction between different year groups, we intend to stagger the morning break as follows:

- 1st, 2nd and 5th Years will take their morning break as normal at 10.50 (after the third class) and at 1.05 (after the sixth class)
- Transition Years, 3rd Years and 6th Years will take their morning break at the beginning of third class (10.10am) and their lunch at the beginning of the sixth class (12.25pm)

Students who remain on the premises are reminded that unfortunately, they cannot share food or equipment with their friends. While this is contrary to our ethos, it is unfortunately necessary to ensure that we minimise the risk of spreading infections. Students are asked to ensure that lunches are carried in ziplock bags and, where possible, not to use lunch boxes. Water fountains are no longer available so students should ensure that they have sufficient food and drink for the day.

Teaching and Learning

We are aware that as school has changed, how we teach and learn will inevitably have to adapt to reflect the new environment. All staff members have now received devices and are setting up Microsoft Teams for their classes. We are asking all students to download the relevant Microsoft apps on their phones so that in the event of a sudden closure, teachers will be able to begin blended learning straight away. All subject departments have begun planning material that can flip to remote learning should the school have to close.

There is a limited number of students who we can have in classrooms when school reopens in order to meet physical distancing requirements. We have repurposed our Library and Canteen to ensure that we have maximised our space to have all students in a given class for their lesson. However, for a small number of lessons in 2nd Year and 3rd Year, we will require students to go to a satellite classroom located near their base classroom where they will sit and participate in their lesson via a live stream. We will provide a device and supervision for that lesson. This will only happen in a small number of classes and students will be advised of which classes this protocol refers to when they have their induction day. Students to whom these new protocols apply will be rotated in the Satellite Rooms to ensure that no one student is consistently using the Satellite Room.

Over the past number of years, we made a welcome change to teacher based classrooms. However in order to minimise the potential of Covid 19 in the school, we have had to revert to student based classrooms which means that students will largely be taught in a base classroom for the majority of the day. In order to ensure that we minimise the risk of the spread of Covid 19, the following practices will be implemented:

- All classes will have a seating arrangement which must be adhered to by all students.
- In an elective subject, students will be seated with students of their main class cohort.
- Face masks must be worn at all times in the classroom.
- Students must be 1m away from the nearest student (shoulder to shoulder).
- Students must use their own equipment and must not share equipment.
- Students must stay in their own seats at all times (including during break of class)
- Students must not use the toilets without the permission of their teacher.
- Students must refrain from any physical contact with another student and their belongings.

Induction for Students:

Your child will receive a refresher induction upon his phased return to school in March/April. This allows us to communicate the new arrangements more effectively to them and also allows us space to hear their opinions on these issues.

Communication with the School Community

In order to ensure that information reaches you in a timely manner, updates will be posted on the website and texted to you. You are requested to check these regularly. As we will not be able to communicate with you via the school journal, we will expand our use of VS Ware which will allow you to view your son's progress and any communication from teachers and Year Heads in relation to your son.

Normally with an absence, your son would be required to present an absence note in his journal. In order to minimise interactions, we request that you email an explanation for your sons absence to juliehoey@stkevinscollege.com

Facilities

- **Classrooms/ /Library/Canteen** have all been repurposed and are now configured in line with DES specifications. Lockers and excess furniture have been removed to maximise space for social distancing. The Sports Hall will remain in use for PE.
- **Cleaning:** Cleaning and sanitising of the school has been ongoing since the summer. A new daily clearing regime will be implemented in line with DES guidelines.
- **PPE:** A large stock of PPE has been ordered in accordance with DES guidelines. This includes hand sanitisers, masks, visors, soap, signage, aprons, gloves and other items necessary for reducing the risk of Covid 19 in our school.
- **Lockers:** Unfortunately, we are unable to provide lockers to students as we cannot ensure social distancing or effective sanitisation of lockers. We will keep this under review. This will require your son to be well organised at home and to ensure that he has all necessary equipment prepared and ready the night before he comes to school. For the moment, we are asking that students do not bring their books to school. Students can store their jackets in their bags.

PE

In light with public health advice, no sporting activities will take place when level 5 restrictions are in place. In line with DES advice, your son will not have access to changing rooms in the school. For the moment students, will not be changing for PE and we will use this time to allow the students to be/walk outside and have a break from wearing a face mask. This will be reviewed in due course.

Extra-Curricular Activities

While our aim is to ensure that extra-curricular activities proceed in the school, we will have to follow both the public health advice and the individual advice from the various organisations in deciding which extra-curricular activities can proceed this year. It is sadly inevitable that many extracurricular activities may not be able to proceed in light of the public health advice and increase demands on substitution in

our school. For the month of September, our primary focus is teaching and learning in the classroom and we will re-evaluate our position on extra-curricular activities in due course.

Appropriate Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour is being revised so as to incorporate the school's expectations and requirements of all students to ensure a safe school environment for everyone. All students have a responsibility to engage in physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene. Any misbehaviour which runs contrary to the school's efforts to provide a safe school environment will be dealt with as a serious offence under the school's Code of Behaviour.

Students have been informed at induction that their behaviour during and between classes will contribute directly to our ability to reopen the school safely. Students cannot be sent to their year head or form tutor if difficulties arise – instead they will have to be sent home. Please discuss with your son the importance of behaving well and following any safety instructions. If we all work together we can try to keep each other and our families safe.

Travel To and From School

In line with the public health advice, we ask that you consider encouraging your son to walk or cycle to and from school if it is safe to do so. Of course, we understand that some students must travel by public transport. We do not yet know how easy or otherwise it will be for students to travel on public transport when schools reopen. Our Year Heads will be liaising with students who travel by public transport and taking into account the difficulties that may arise.

If you drive your son to school, please be advised that you must not enter the school grounds when you do so.

Visits/Access to the School by Visitors/Parents

All access to the school by anybody other than staff and students will be by appointment only and restricted to **essential** visits only. Unfortunately, in the context of a pandemic, dropping lunches, equipment or books to the school would not be classed as an essential visit and we ask for your support and understanding in this matter.

Communication with the school will take place via email or phone instead.

Contact Tracing

All essential visitors to the school will be required to provide name and contact information on arrival for contact tracing purposes. This information will be kept and processed in accordance with the school's Data Protection Policy.

Conclusion

The reopening of our school in the context of a new variant is a huge challenge but one which we can rise to. Many of the actions and our plans may need to be revisited as we move through the various stages of this pandemic. We are all learning together and are working hard to allow St Kevin's College to reopen and remain open. We ask for your support, partnership and understanding as we adapt to this challenge. So far, the boys have seemed very happy to be back at school and have responded well to our requests and new routines. Please encourage them to continue to do so over the weeks ahead. We will follow all public health advice at this time.