31.8.2021

Dear Parents & Carers,

Welcome back to our new school year 2021-22. I hope you all had an enjoyable summer and are ready for the start of the new school term.

Following recent updated guidance from the Department of Education I want to update you on some of the measures we will be taking this term in order to ensure the safe operation of the school in light of the continuing risk of COVID19.

Bubbles

Although the use of formal bubbles is no longer required in schools, we will maintain a cautious and measured approach that still seeks to maximise the time where pupils are within a consistent group of pupils.

Primary Pupils will remain in their class bubble for the majority of the school day. They will be at times mixed in larger Key stage groups for example, for assemblies and joint projects, and will join some other classes for outdoor playtime. They will remain in their own classroom for lunch as we have found many benefits for the children in doing this.

Key stage 3 pupils will remain in their form class until lunchtime and will have access to practical subjects and specialist rooms in the afternoons while still with their class bubble.

Key stage 4 pupils will remain in their classrooms until breaktime and have access to a full range of accredited subjects for the remainder of the day. In this case there will be some mixing of KS4 classes to allow them to access the most suitable courses.

Practical Subjects

All secondary pupils will have access to practical subjects such as HE, Music, Science, Art, Technology and Design. On days when pupils are timetabled for PE they may wear their PE kit to school. They must wear the school PE uniform in full. No alternatives will be acceptable. In the case where a pupil comes in alternative kit they will be asked to change into spare kit in school.

Curriculum

We recognise that many of our pupils continue to be negatively impacted by the trauma of the COVID19 pandemic and we are therefore adding a degree of flexibility into curriculum delivery. We will be continuing to deliver a recovery element to the curriculum which will support the mental health and wellbeing of the students, including some additional outdoor play sessions and an afternoon of clubs. We are able to have outside providers delivering projects within the school setting.

Facemasks

Secondary pupils should use these when moving around inside school. We do not expect pupils to wear facemasks in classrooms as many of our pupils have communication difficulties and this would impede their ability to learn.

Social Distancing

We will encourage pupils to socially distance from other as far as possible. In some classrooms we have space to keep seating socially distanced but not in others. Social distancing will be encouraged in particular where classes are coming together but this will not always be possible. We will have the same one-way system of movement and signage around the school.

Hygiene

School will continue to follow DE guidance on personal hygiene by ensuring pupils are paying particular attention to hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene. We will also be continuing to implement additional cleaning and sanitizing routines along with ensuring rooms are ventilated where possible.

Lunches

Primary pupils will continue to have their lunch in the classrooms. Secondary pupils will have lunch in the dining hall in key stage groups. Students will sit with their own class bubble in the dining hall.

Bus Lines: Pupils will be called for their bus as the bus arrived rather than be gathered in bus lines in order to avoid mixing of pupils. Parents collecting pupils should respect the 2-meter social distancing rule for other adults.

Testing

School will continue to take part in the LAMP testing program weekly. I would urge all parents to take part in this programme as it is only fully effective if the whole school community agree to take part.

COVID19 Symptoms

If your child has COVID19 symptoms, i.e. a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

If you child shows any of these symptoms in school we will take the same action as last term where we take the pupil to a protective space of quarantine while we wait for you to collect your child.

You should book a PCR test and remain in self-isolation until you get the result. If the PCR test is negative, they can return to school after 48hours if they no longer have symptoms.

Close Contact of a person who has tested positive

If your child is identified as a close contact in school you will be contacted by school to collect your child and asked to self-isolate and book a PCR test as soon as possible. If the PCR test is negative, they can return to school. You should arrange a further PCR test on day 8 after the close contact was made.

If the young person who is a close contact develops symptoms at any time they should immediately self-isolate and book a PCR test, even if the earlier PCR tests were negative.

If any of the PCR tests are positive, this means they have the infection and they should self-isolate for 10 days, in line with advice for confirmed cases.

If you are unable to get your child tested or they refuse to get tested they must isolate for the full 10 day period.

Children under the age under the age of five

Children under the age of five will be encouraged to take a PCR test but it is not compulsory. They do not need to isolate unless they develop symptoms or have a positive PCR result.

Additional support for families

The Department for Communities (DfC) has allocated additional funding to Councils to support community and volunteer organisations providing food and other essential items. Anyone in need, should contact the COVID-19 19 Community Helpline on Freephone 0808 802 0020, text ACTION to 81025, or email covid19@adviceni.net who will put the individual into contact with suitable local support services.

Contact

We look forward to welcoming you back to school. Should you have any questions or queries you can contact the class teacher via the Seesaw app. We also have a texting service which we use for sending brief information at the last minute. If you need to speak to someone, please contact the school office on 90862743. Please refer to the school website and face book for any updates and announcements.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Laura Matchett

Principal