



25<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We hope that you and your families are keeping safe and well. Like all schools we are preparing our school for the full reopening in September. It has been an extremely busy time and we are doing our utmost to try to make Coláiste an Chraoibhín as safe as possible for the whole school community. Our Covid Response Plan is currently being finalised and our key decisions are based on two documents provided by the Department of Education and Science

#### **Covid -19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary Schools**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7acad-reopening-our-post-primary-schools/>

#### **Reopening Our Schools: The Roadmap for the Full Return to School**

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b264b-roadmap-for-the-full-return-to-school/>

We would like to emphasise that the following is based on the most up to date information and guidance we have received from the Department of Education and Science as well as the HSE. There are new announcements on a regular basis, so all decisions are subject to change. We aim to follow the socially distancing guidance of increasing separation and decreasing interaction in as far as is possible and practical in a school setting. We would ask that all parents/guardians emphasise to their sons/daughters that the school they left last March is going to be a totally different experience to the one they are returning to. Personal responsibility must be to the forefront of our whole school community and all interpersonal interaction is not without risk. However, our aim of providing a supportive and caring environment for all our students remains the same. We will do everything we can to help your son/daughter to settle into the new norm of school life. We would appreciate it if you would read this with your son/daughter to ensure they understand the changes we have had to make.

#### **Return to school dates**

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> Sept- 1<sup>st</sup> yr, 6<sup>th</sup> yr & LCA2

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept - 3<sup>rd</sup> yr students for one day only

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept -5<sup>th</sup> yr & LCA1 for one day only

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> Sept - TYs and 2<sup>nd</sup> yrs

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> Sept – all students in school**

## **Covid-19**

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. They are:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

If your son/daughter displays any of these symptoms they **must not** attend school. Parents/guardian must contact their doctor and follow HSE guidance on self-isolation.

Students **must not** attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as contact for a person with COVID-19 and follow the HSE guidance on self-isolation.

If your son or daughter is displaying any of the above symptoms while in school, he/she will be taken to one of two isolation rooms we have set aside for this purpose. Parents/guardians will be rung immediately and asked to collect their son/daughter. Parents/guardians must then immediately contact their GP and follow HSE advice. Under no circumstances will a student be allowed to travel home on public transport.

We would also ask parents/guardians to adhere to the government directives on returning from abroad.

## **Wearing of masks/uniforms**

The latest guidelines from the DES (7<sup>th</sup> August) is that all students and teachers in secondary schools must wear a face mask if they are within two meters of someone else. The guidelines do not say that visors can be used instead of masks. All students must wear a mask when they enter the school on their first day. Your son/daughter will receive two reusable masks and a pack of hand wipes from the school. These masks must be washed every night to prevent the possible spread of Covid -19. Our classrooms have been reconfigured to bring them in line with DES guidelines which is that students should be a minimum of one meter apart. This means that masks will have to be worn in class unless students are in a room where two meters distancing is possible. There will be a set seating plan for each class which will be in place for the whole school year. This is to facilitate contact tracing. There has been no government guidance on the wearing of uniforms. Therefore, until such time as we hear otherwise, we expect all students to be in full and proper school uniform on their return. We would ask that uniforms be washed regularly to prevent the possible spread of Covid-19.

## **Entry and exiting the school building**

School starts at 8.39am and finishes at 3.30 pm. School finishes at 1.23pm on Wednesday. Students who have their first class in the main building will enter the school through the front door as usual. Students who have their first class in the extension will use the new ramp entrance. As per the guidelines all students should proceed directly to their classrooms. TY students will be allowed to leave class at 3.25pm to exit the building immediately. The remainder of the school population will have three exit doors- the two doors at the main entrance and the door between Room 19 and Room 41 to the side of the building. Students are encouraged to walk or cycle to school if possible. Parents who drive their sons/daughters to school are not allowed access the school car park after 8.20am. All students must vacate the building by 4pm to allow time to clean the building for the following day.

## **Lockers**

The use of lockers by students is of serious concern due to the high risk of spreading the virus. It is the place where students congregate and at times socialise regularly in the school. We therefore strongly advise parents that your son/daughter does not use a locker. Access to lockers will be strictly limited between the times of 8am and 8.30am in the morning and from 3.30 pm to 4pm after school finishes. Students will not be allowed access at any other time during the day including lunch

times. TY students will not be allocated lockers. These guidelines must be strictly adhered to by students and the Board of Management will keep the situation under review. Teachers will be giving most of the homework on office 365 this year and the use of text books in the classroom will be minimised which will lessen the need for books. Wifi has been installed throughout the whole school so students who own laptops can download digital books. 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and TYs will have base classrooms which will also minimise carrying of bags for these students. There will be no teacher-based classrooms so this will lessen the need for student movement. Wheelie cases may also be used by students. School shelving cannot be used as storage areas for jackets books or personal items. Stationary/books should not be shared between students under any circumstances.

### **School visitors**

Visits to the school will be reduced to essential visits and only in cases when the issue cannot be dealt with by phone or email and if possible outside of school time. Parents/guardians/visitors must make an appointment if they wish to see someone in the school. If an appointment is necessary, then visitors must wait in the porch area at the main entrance before being allowed into the building. Masks must always be worn. A contact log must be filled out before exiting the building. Collection of students for appointments must be done in the usual manner i.e. parent/guardian inform the year head via note in journal and parents/guardians must wait for their son/daughter in the porch area.

### **Break times and canteen service**

1<sup>st</sup> yrs and TYs will have their morning break 20 minutes before all other classes to reduce the numbers in the corridors during this time. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> yr students will have designated areas in the school building during break times. Our school yard will be available for students during the morning break and we will also allow access to our outdoor area at the back of the school during the lunch break. We will be encouraging students not to stay in the building during the breaks as it will give them a chance to socially distance safely and not wear a mask.

Senior cycle students will still be allowed to the shop during their lunch break if they have a pass. TYs will be allowed to leave 5 minutes before the rest of the school at lunch time and also at the end of the school day. All floors will be used in the extension so as to spread out the school population as much as is possible

### **School canteen**

Breakfast club will continue as normal between 8am and 8.30am. Lunch bags will be delivered to classrooms for the morning break and only fruit will be served in the canteen at this time.

For the lunch break hot food will not be served and sandwiches and rolls will be available. We will review this situation as time goes on. As per HSE guidelines there will be no water dispensers in the school. Students should bring in their own water bottles with their name on it. Sharing of water bottles is strictly prohibited. Special diets (coeliac etc) will be catered for in the canteen.

### **Signage/one way system**

Throughout the school there will be signage reminding students of the importance of social distancing and practicing good hand hygiene. A one-way system will be in operation in both buildings

### **After school study/homework club**

There will be no after school study/homework club. This will be reviewed at the end of September.

### **Extra-curricular activities**

There will be no extra-curricular activities. We have two reasons for this

- We are trying to minimise the amount of contact our students and staff have with possible Covid-19 cases. Extra-curricular activities increase that risk.
- Our students and teachers have been away from their classrooms since last March. We feel it is important that we prioritise classroom based activities for the moment.

We would hope to hold school based activities and also use our pitch for in house games.

We will review this situation at Christmas.

### **PE**

PE classes will take place in our gym as we are not using it for classroom space.

### **Medically vulnerable students**

We would ask parents/guardians whose sons/daughters may be medically vulnerable to contact us so that arrangements can be put in place.

### **Cleaning/personal hygiene**

There will be ongoing cleaning throughout the school during the day focusing on frequently touched surfaces eg door handles, handrails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities. Students will be asked to wipe their work stations/desks before use. The school building will close at 4pm to facilitate a complete clean. Every room has a hand sanitiser dispenser and students will have to sanitise their hands on entering and exiting the building and classrooms. All students should practice the following

- Regular hand hygiene and hand washing
- Maintaining physical distancing;
- Application of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette

### **Covid Tracker App**

We would ask that all students download the Covid Tracker App and that they “check in” daily.

### **Code of Behaviour**

We are currently updating our Risk assessment as well as our Health and Safety Statement to reflect the new reality of Covid 19. Our Code of Behaviour has also been reviewed and the following has been added with the approval of the BOM:

*All measures introduced to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff during this Pandemic must be adhered to. Specific sanctions up to and including exclusion from the school will apply.*

We fully appreciate that students will find it extremely difficult at times to adhere to the measures and we know that mistakes will be made. We are asking that students do their best on a daily basis and that they appreciate any measures we have put in place is for the health and safety of everyone. It is certainly not the experience that any of us want for our school community. However, all decisions have been made with the health and safety of everyone in mind. We look forward to seeing all our students in September and we would like to assure you that we will do our very best to make it a positive experience for your son/daughter.

If you have any queries please ring us at 025 31633 or email [office@colchraoibhin.ie](mailto:office@colchraoibhin.ie) . Any further updates will be on our school website [www.colaisteachraoibhin.ie](http://www.colaisteachraoibhin.ie)

Yours sincerely

Christy Healy (Principal)