

12/8/2020

Dear Parents / Guardians,

We hope you are all keeping well. This is the second of four letters I will post on the website for Parents/Guardians prior to school reopening on August 31st. In this way I hope to keep you informed and up to date with what is happening in the school as we prepare for reopening.

The second lockdown in Kildare hasn't been a pleasant experience for any of us but by working together, we will get through it and become stronger and more resolute by the experience.

Our aim in Scoil Mhuire is that after day one on August 31st when we will be having a staggered start for each class level, every child can subsequently attend school every day from 9.00am to 2.40pm. Current Government guidelines on the reopening of schools instruct that children from 3rd to 6th class should in so far as possible be kept 1 metre apart, particularly in the classroom, so we are planning and working hard to put measures in place to ensure as much physical distancing as possible both in the school building and on the playground. We will apply physical distancing in a practical and sensible way, recognising that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue.

Physical distancing within the classrooms will be achieved by re-configuring the seating to maximise the distance between pupils. Government documentation refers to each class as a **bubble** and we will ensure until we are instructed otherwise that there is as little contact as possible between children in different classes (bubbles) during the school day. Within the bubbles, children may be organised into **Pods**. A pod is a group of children who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom. So in the future if we refer to bubbles and pods everyone will hopefully understand what we are talking about.

We will be decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. We are fortunate that each class has its own outside door. Each class will enter and exit the building via its own door. Each class also has two toilets specific to the class. There will be two little lunch breaks and two lunch breaks with only half the children on the yards at any one time.

While all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents that, where children are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school.

Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period.

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. We would be grateful if you could also emphasise safe behaviour in this regard to your children at home as part of the preparation for returning to school.

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner. Above all else we want the children to feel safe and relaxed and reassured. It will be difficult but I believe it is achievable if we all work together to achieve this common goal.

Yours sincerely,

Gerry King,
Principal