

All Saints' National School,
Church Avenue,
Mullingar,
Co. Westmeath

20th August 2020

Dear Parents,

The Board of Management and the school staff have been preparing for the children's safe return to school. We are really looking forward to welcoming the children back and it will be wonderful to see their happy faces again.

We have prepared this information in line with the guidelines issued to schools by the Department of Education on the 27th July and we will update it as necessary. All plans are subject to change in accordance with Government Guidance. We will make sure our school is the same safe, friendly place that it always was but there will be some changes made to make it even safer.

Talking about Covid 19

We will talk to the children about Covid 19 and explain to them the changes that we have made and why. We will be focusing on social distancing, cough and sneeze etiquette, hand hygiene, good ventilation and extra cleaning.

Classrooms:

We are very lucky to have big spacious classrooms with good ventilation. We are going to utilize all spaces to maximize social distancing. The classes will be in the classrooms as before. Children from Junior to 2nd Classes will be grouped into small groups / pods. Children in 3rd to 6th Class will be grouped into pods or small groups and there will be one metre distance between each person wherever possible. The children will be assigned to their pods/seats by the class teacher. The children will learn outside where ever possible and we will be making use of our wonderful facilities as much as possible.....garden, basketball courts, shed and all other available spaces to us. We ask that every child comes to school every day with a warm coat with a hood preferably water proof. Please remember that the rooms will be very well ventilated at all times during the day and they may feel a little cooler than usual so please take this into account when choosing suitable clothing for school.

Break times.

The children can play with the other children from their classroom at break times if outdoors but they cannot mix with children from other classrooms. Each classroom is considered a bubble and all bubbles will play separately at break time. Junior Infants to 2nd Class will have their break at 10:30 –

10:45 and 12:15 – 12:45. 3rd to 6th Classes will have their breaks at 11:00 – 11:15 and 12:50 – 1:20. We are fortunate in that we have two yards and each class will have their own yard to play in.

Entering and Exiting the Building.

In order to facilitate separation of the bubbles, each classroom will use an allocated door for entering and exiting the building. The 5th and 6th Class will enter the building via the ramp and into their classroom via the emergency exit door. 3rd and 4th Class will walk down the steps and use the emergency exit into their classroom at the side gate, alternatively they could enter from the side gate using the courthouse footpath. 1st and 2nd Class will come in through the gate at the basketball pitch and walk through the playground into their classroom. Junior and Senior Infants will enter through the front door and into their classroom. Children will go straight into their classroom and sit down in their seat when they arrive in the morning. The class teacher will be in the room to supervise. There will also be staff members in the yard to direct the children into their classroom via the new route.

Children are not permitted to arrive on the school premises before 9am to avoid congestion at the front door. Children can arrive in school from 9am to 9:20am and formal instruction will commence at 9:20am. We wish to ensure that there is no congregation of adults and children at the school entrance. Please observe physical distancing and remind your child to physical distance also. Please move on from the school gate swiftly to avoid congregation.

At home time the Infants will be let out by the class teacher from the Front Door. We would like to remind the parents to observe physical distancing at this time by standing at the cones provided.

1st to 6th Class will leave the school one room at a time maintaining a 2 metre distance. Parents are reminded not to park on the double yellow lines in front of the church gate.

Buses

On the school bus, children are to sit beside other children from their family or from their classroom. Please explain this to your children and remind them of this every day. Bus Éireann rules apply at all times.

Illness management

PLEASE DO NOT SEND your child to school if they are unwell particularly if they have any signs or symptoms of Covid 19. Pupils coughing and sneezing, even with a common cold, should remain at home until they have recovered. Any pupil who has a high temperature in the morning should not be sent to school until they are fever free without medication. Updated advice from the HSE is available on its website. If in doubt please err on the side of caution. This is essential so that we can stop the spread of Covid 19 in our school community. If your child becomes unwell in school we will contact you to collect your child. Please make sure that all contact details are up to date. Please have arrangements made so that your child can be collected promptly from the school if they become unwell. We will not be permitted to place a child who is unwell on the school bus.

If your child displays or complains of Covid 19 symptoms during the school day. They will be taken to the designated isolation area in the school by a staff member. You will be contacted immediately. The child will be provided with a disposable mask which they should keep on until they reach their home and you will be advised to contact your GP.

Hand Hygiene.

The school will be deep cleaned in advance of reopening after the prolonged closure. Teachers will wear either a face mask or a shield during the school day.

Daily cleaning will take place in all areas of the school following Department of Education and Skills Guidelines. Particular attention will be focused on frequently touched surfaces, door handles, handrails, chairs, sink and toilet facilities. Each class teacher and SNA will have a Perspex barrier on their desk when working with pupils on a one to one basis or small group situation. Each pod will be only able to access their own resources and children are **not** permitted to share any of their belongings. Each child should have their **own pencil case** that can be left in school each day in their box.

Each evening the classroom will be completely sanitized using a portable Sanitary System specifically for the sanitization for large areas. The Ozone Generator - Sanitary water plus guarantees a complete inactivation of all the micro-organisms and the removal of toxic noxious organic and inorganic residues in the air, on surfaces and on water. This is 100 percent ecological. This system is widely used in hospitals, nursing homes, business, creches, schools and universities.

Signage will be placed and all staff will be trained in protocols from the Department of Education and Skills prior to returning to work.

We will be encouraging the children to practice good hand hygiene. There are dispensers with hand sanitizer at each entry/exit point in the school and in each classroom. Children also have access to sinks with hot water and soap throughout the day. Children will be asked to wash/sanitize their hands on arrival at school, before and after eating, after playtime, before leaving school and at other times during the day depending on the activities in which they are engaged. Each child should have their own wash bag with hand sanitizer and tissues.

Face Masks.

The current public health advice is that children under 13 years of age are not required to wear a mask at primary school. However, if you want your child to wear a mask in the school building then please make sure that your child is competent and confident in putting on and taking off their mask. Your child will need a plastic Ziploc bag in which to store the mask when not in use. Your child will be responsible for their own mask and may need to have spare ones with them.

We will be keeping up to date with Public Health Advice and we will change our plans and practices as needed. We will keep you informed of any changes by email so please ensure you check your emails daily and if you change email address please let us know immediately. Any changes will also be communicated via the website.

Access to the school

Access to the school and playground is very restrictive. This is to protect the pupils and staff. Parents and visitors to the school will be restricted to essential purposes only and limited to those with prior approval. Anyone who visits the school will need to fill in a contact log and nobody other than the pupils and staff is permitted to enter the school building without the prior permission of the Principal or Deputy Principal .If you wish to speak to a member of staff please contact the school office by phone or by email at allsaintsns@gmail.com. Please ensure that your child has all their belongings before coming to school each day e.g. lunch, coats etc.

There is no need to worry about school work completed or missed during the lockdown. The teachers have lots of fun activities planned to ensure the children will settle back to school quickly. The content and approaches in teaching and learning will take the long absence from school into account. For the first few weeks the emphasis will be on well-being and settling back in. We will be focusing our teaching on the curriculum areas of Language, Numeracy, Social Personal and Health Education and PE in line with Department of Education guidelines on reopening.

School Bags

All children will be provided with a plastic box with a lid on it in which to put their books and belongings in. This box will be kept under their table. Please ensure that all stationery, coats, lunch boxes are labelled. Pupils will not be allowed to share their belongings with other pupils.

Children from Infants to 2nd Class will not need school bags. All they will need is their packed lunch. They will receive a folder with homework for the week in it on a Monday and they will return this folder to school on a Friday.

Please ensure that all your child's belongings are labelled and covered in plastic.

Reminder to anyone attending school who has travelled abroad:

Government policy which is based official public health advice continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland from locations other than those with a rating of 'normal precautions' ('green') to restrict their movements for 14 days and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

Further information on protecting your child from Covid 19 and on speaking to your child about Covid 19 can be found at

<http://www.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protecting-your-child.html>.

We are really looking forward to welcoming back you all to All Saints' National School and if you have any queries or concerns regarding your child returning to school please do not hesitate to contact me via the school email. allsaintsns@gmail.com

With my very best wishes to you all,

Lesley Denniston

Principal.