## **St Aidan’s Comprehensive School Cootehill - August 2020**

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Will I be returning to school in August /September?

Yes, as per the government’s Roadmap for the Return to School, all students will be returning to school at the end of August/start of September. The dates for the return to school for all year groups are outlined in the email sent to parents / students.

Where will I go on the first day back?

On the designated day for your return when you arrive to the school you will go straight to the gym. Here you will be met by your Year Head.

Do I have to wear my school uniform?

Yes, all students will have to wear a school uniform as normal. There has been no advice from the Department of Education and Skills or the health authorities to say that students should not wear a school uniform. School uniform does not have to be washed each evening and there is no advice to that effect.

Will the structure of my school day change?

The structure of the school day will be much the same as last year apart from the following changes:

* All students will follow their normal timetable which will be issued on their first day back to school.
* As it is recommended that students do not use their locker, we will not be providing lockers for students until we are advised that it is safe to do so. Students will carry their books with them where necessary – we will be making arrangements to reduce the number of books students have to carry.
* Students will move from classroom to classroom using the walk on the left system and must wear face covering while moving / in class and outside if not 2 metres apart.
* There will be staggered break times, and this will be explained to students when school resumes.
* The canteen facility will be open with a reduced menu, prepayment / pre-ordering.
* Students are strictly not allowed leave the school grounds during break or lunch time. Any student found to have left the grounds without permission will be immediately suspended.
* Students will be required to sanitise their desktop at the start of each class and also sanitise any school equipment they use.
* Students will not be allowed share any equipment including books and pens etc.
* Students are not allowed to engage in any physical contact such as hand shaking, hugging, horse play etc.
* Students are asked to practice good hygiene practices and observe respiratory etiquette at all times.

Will I have a locker?

As it is recommended that students do not use their locker, we will not be providing lockers for students until we are advised that it is safe to do so. Students will carry their books with them where necessary.

No bags / jackets / books may be left in school overnight. The school has to be fully cleaned each night and any items left behind will be disposed of.

Will the curriculum change to take account of the school closure last year?

Schools have some autonomy in deciding how to sequence and pace learning for students in their schools and at this time the Department does not propose to adjust the curriculum. Further guidance will issue to school in the coming weeks from the Department of Educations and Skills, the State Examinations Commission and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. It is considered that the most appropriate way to reflect the challenges that have occurred for students in 2019/20 and potentially in 2020/21 is to incorporate adjustments into the certificate examinations. These changes are outlined in the Roadmap for the Full Return to School which is available on the website.

Junior Cycle

* The number of Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) to be completed by those entering third year has been reduced and the dates for completion of some elements extended into the new school year.
* Detailed arrangements in relation to the Junior Cycle certification examinations in 2021 will be made available shortly.

Senior Cycle

* The senior cycle programme (Leaving Cert, Leaving Cert Vocational and Leaving Cert Applied) will commence as per Department guidelines.
* Transition Year (TY) We have restructured our TY Programme to take account of the current situation. Students will have a range of learning experiences available to them. The central aim will be to focus on preparation for further learning and guidance. Unfortunately, the trips associated with the TY programme will not take place, but we will endeavour to make the TY Year as active and rewarding as possible.

Will there be extra-curricular activities?

Our priority is ensuring all students return to school safely and current guidance advises that extracurricular activities (e.g. football, handball, basketball etc.) should not take place before November.

Will we have PE classes?

PE will be timetabled for all students. However, students will not be allowed to use the changing rooms. Students will wear their PE uniform to school on days they are timetabled to have PE.

What is happening for practical subjects like Home Economics, Art, Engineering etc.?

Practical classes will go ahead as normal; however, students will not be allowed to share equipment and all school equipment will be cleaned / sanitised at the end of each class by students. Students should have their own equipment/materials as required e.g. Art packs, TG boxes.

Will the school buses run as normal?

While we do not get any communication from Bus Eireann the Roadmap for the Full Return to School provides information and guidance for schools. New rules will also be in place for children using school transport which include:

* Maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport
* Always sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or child from your class group (this should be the same child at all times)
* Use hand sanitiser on boarding the bus
* Always observe respiratory etiquette while waiting for and on-board transport services ➢ Disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
* All post-primary students must wear a face masks while waiting for and on-board transport services with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs cannot wear face mask.

Will Transition Year students have work experience?

Work experience is a component of the TY, however at this stage work placement has been postponed until further notice.

Will there be school tours?

There will not be school tours or trips in the early part of the school year.

Will I have to wear a mask or visor at school?

* On Friday August 7th, the Department of Education and Skills (based on the latest health advice) advised that students must wear face coverings.
* Face coverings e.g. masks are recommended that are reusable and washed/disinfected once every day as is consistent with the requirement to wear face coverings in other contexts such as on public transport, in shops and indoors where a 2m physical distance cannot be maintained.
* Students at post primary level, apart from specific exemptions will be required to wear face coverings in the classroom.
* Staff, including teachers at both primary and post primary levels, will be required to wear face coverings.
* All SNAs will be required to wear face coverings, or in certain situations clear visors, in the classroom.
* Other staff, e.g. bus escorts, who have close contact with students will be required to wear face coverings.

What are the arrangements for using toilets and maintaining social distance?

A maximum number of students may use the bathroom at any one time. Students should sanitise hands before entering and wash hands thoroughly before leaving the bathroom. The specific number allowed in each bathroom at any one time is displayed on the door.

Will the school canteen be open?

Yes, however the canteen will operate on the basis of pre-ordering / prepayment with a reduced menu.

Will Afterschool Study take place?

The Afterschool Study facility will not proceed in the initial weeks after opening. We hope to open it later in the term.

Can parents contact the school?

Parents can contact the school office as normal if they wish to speak to a staff member or leave a message for their child. It is recommended that parents do not call into the school office unless they make an appointment. Parents must wear masks if they are calling to the school for their appointment.

If I forget something can my parents bring it to the school?

If you have forgotten something and it is absolutely essential, then parents can bring this to school and leave it in the school porch area.

Can I bring my mobile phone to school?

Mobile phones are not allowed. If you need to contact home or they need to contact you – use the general office phone (049 5552161).

Are there any new changes to the rules/Code of Behaviour?

Yes. All the staff are looking forward to welcoming students back to school however, this must be done safely. If any student behaves in a reckless manner, they will be suspended from the school for a defined period of time. Also there is disruption of Teaching / Learning through the use of masks or

* Failure to follow St Aidan’s Covid-19 procedures / protocols and/or follow the direction of staff.
* Inappropriate threatening behaviour may lead to Suspension & Expulsion or depending on frequency & severity of behaviour.

What measures have school management taken to protect against COVID-19?

School management are implementing the guidelines recommended by the Department of Education and Skills for a safe return to school for all staff and students. These include:

* Reconfiguring all classrooms to maximise distancing between all students.
* Implementing 1m distancing between students in all classes were possible.
* Designated areas for all students when they arrive at school.
* Staggered break/lunch times.
* Assigned exits for each year group.
* Mandatory COVID 19 Induction for all staff/students.
* Installing sanitising dispensers at various locations throughout the school.
* Implementing an enhanced cleaning regime for all classrooms, corridors, toilets etc.
* Providing face shields/visors for each staff member.
* A walk on the left system of movement in the school.
* Installing perspex screens where necessary.
* Providing an isolation area for students/staff who feel unwell during the day.
* Designated social areas internally / externally.
* Walk on the left system.
* Base rooms assigned to year groups.
* 58-minute-long classes designed to reduce movement.
* Recruiting additional teaching staff, cleaning staff and supervisors
* Risk assessments have been carried out in line with Department requirements.
* Covid 19 policy statement has been drafted and other policies amended to include Covid-19 procedures / protocols.

What happens if I am feeling unwell or displaying COVID19 symptoms?

If a student is feeling unwell or displaying COVID19 symptoms, they are to go to the Main Office and a member of staff will take care of them. Where a student is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, the COVID-19 Response Plan sets out steps the schools should take as follows:

* Bring the student to the designated isolation area available in each school.
* Contact the parents of that student.
* Facilitate the person remaining in isolation until they are collected from school.
* Support the making of arrangements for transport home.
* Make arrangements for the appropriate cleaning of the isolation and work areas.

What if I am feeling unwell before I come to school?

If any student or staff member is feeling unwell or having COVID 19 symptoms before leaving home, they should not come to school and should seek medical advice.

If I am absent for a long period of time can I access classwork?

Teachers will continue to utilise Teams & OneNote as part of teaching and learning on a daily basis. Students will be able to access some work on Teams and continue their learning. Students should also contact their friends to update them on work.

If a student or students test positive for Covid 19 what will happen?

Once we are notified of a positive case we will work with and be advised by the HSE in relation to contact tracing and procedures for dealing with cases. It is the intention of the Department of Education and Skills that schools will remain open and cases will be dealt with in line with HSE protocols.