

19<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is with great pleasure and relief that we are able to welcome our students back to St. Dymphna's School. We have all missed school greatly and look forward to the start of a new school year. As you can imagine we have been busy preparing the school for the return of our students and we need your help and support in order to remain open. In order for the safe reopening of our school a number of changes and protocols have been put into place as directed by the Department of Education and the HSE.

Please find enclosed/attached the school plan for reopening along with all our present Risk Assessments. They are very comprehensive, but we ask that you read them carefully as they outline our school strategy going forward in our efforts to keep all in our school community safe. Please also pay particular attention to the role of parents/guardians in this strategy. There are now necessary protocols regarding sickness and contactability which must be strictly adhered to in order for St Dymphna's to stay open for all students. Our Response plan will be available on our school website.

As new information comes to the school, we will update you about any changes.

At the end of the document there is a declaration sheet. This must be signed in order for your child to return to school. The declaration states that you agree to follow the guidelines and protocols that the school has put in place and must be returned by the first day of your child's return to school without exception. We apologise for any inconvenience that may arise but there can be no exceptions when it comes to the overall safety of our school community.

If there has been a change to your child's medication or any changes to their medical condition during the school closure please contact the school. It is essential that we are made aware of any medical changes prior to your child starting school.

We are so looking forward to getting our wonderful students back to St Dymphna's. I understand that you may feel worried or anxious for your child and that changes may be difficult for some of our students. Things will of course be different but please be assured that the wellbeing, happiness and safety of our students are always at the forefront of all our planning and we will work extremely hard to help our students feel safe and happy in school.

I thank you for your continued support

Maureen Quinn

Principal

## **Key facts for Parents:**

COVID – 19 is a new illness that can affect the lungs and airways and is caused by a new virus called the Coronavirus.

Coronavirus is spread in sneeze or cough droplets. To infect you, it has to get from an infected person's nose or mouth into your eyes, nose or mouth. This can be direct or indirect (on hands, objects, surfaces). If you come into close contact with someone who is shedding the virus and who is coughing or sneezing or if you touch - with your hands - surfaces or objects that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on, and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes without having washed your hands thoroughly you may contract the virus.

As COVID-19 is a new illness, we are still learning about how easily the virus spreads from person to person and how to control it, so it is important to keep up to date and make sure you are using the most up to date guidance available. This information is available from the following links:

- HSE-HPSC: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>
- HSE Hub: <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Department of Health: <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/7e0924-latest-updates-on-covid-19-coronavirus/>

COVID-19 can be a mild or severe illness. Severe illness is much more common in older people (especially older than 70) and in people vulnerable for other reasons. Severe illness is much less common in children and young adults in good health. (See below)

## **The most common symptoms of Covid 19 are:**

- Cough - this can be any kind of cough, usually dry but not always
- Fever - high temperature over 38 degrees Celsius
- Shortness of Breath
- Breathing Difficulties
- Lack of smell.

Symptomatic people appear to be most infectious for other people in the early days after symptoms begin. Infection can also spread from people in the day or two before they get symptoms and it can spread from some people who get an infection but have no symptoms or such mild symptoms that they take little notice of them (asymptomatic spread). People are no longer infectious for other people 14 days after they have developed symptoms.

## School Response

Detailed information is available in our Response Plan and Risk Assessments which will on the school website.([www.stdymphnas.ie](http://www.stdymphnas.ie)) Please note that these are working documents and are subject to change in compliance with recommendations from the HSE, Department of Education and in order to adhere to changing government guidelines.

Minimising the risk of introduction of Covid -19 into the school community is a key factor in our control measures. It is critical that people (staff and children) stay at home if unwell.

While we cannot eliminate all risk and it is a fact that no interpersonal activity such as school, is without some risk of transmission the measures that we have put in place minimise that risk. In doing so we need the help and cooperation of every member of our school community.

With this in mind, you can help keep everyone safe by keeping your child at home under the following circumstances:

✚ If your child, or anyone in your household have any of the symptoms of Covid-19.

These include:

- Fever- A temperature of 37.5 or above.
- A Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Loss or change to sense of smell or taste.
- Sore throat

If your child is displaying any of these symptoms they should remain off school, seek and follow medical advice and they must not attend school for 14 days and then only if symptom free unless a doctor's note is produced stating the student is safe to return to school.

✚ If your child or any member of your household has been in close contact with a confirmed case of Covid 19, regardless of whether or not they themselves have symptoms, they must not attend school for 14 days and then only if symptom free.

✚ If your child or any member of your household is awaiting a test for Covid 19, or the results of a test. The results of the test will determine the timeframe for return to school (See below)

✚ If your child or any family member has undertaken foreign travel to or from a country other than the Green List in the past 14 days and are required to restrict their movements.

Hand Hygiene is one of the important measures in preventing the spread of infection. We will be working with our students to encourage and promote their hand hygiene skill and we ask that you do the same at home. We also ask that your **child washes and sanitises their hands prior to pick up by the school bus and travel to school.**

If your child is unwell/displaying symptoms on the bus, he/she may be brought directly back home, or may need to be collected on arrival to school if closer. Please be aware they will not be allowed into school building if that is the case.

If your child feels unwell in school or develops symptoms during the school day, we will follow a number of steps:

- Your child will be moved to an isolation area.
- The parent/guardian will be contacted immediately and the child must be collected from school as soon as possible.

For this reason **you must provide the school with a working mobile number and ensure that while your child is in school that you are always contactable. We ask that you have a procedure in place to have your child collected should the need arise.** This inconvenience is necessary to ensure the safety of our students and staff and to avoid further school closure. Please be aware that the school bus will not collect the student the following day and parents/guardians must contact the school to determine a course of action before the bus will do so.

- We will endeavour to make our students feel safe and comfortable if any of the above arises. The level of care your child receives will not suffer as a result of the new necessary procedures.

As a school are only in a position to ascertain that a child has observable symptoms that may or may not be consistent with Covid19. School will not be communicating with the families of other children in the class grouping of a child who has displayed symptoms.

It remains the responsibility of the G.P. to make the determination if symptoms merit a referral for testing. If a child is referred for testing then they will be required to remain off school until the results of the test are received. If these results are negative the child can return to school once they are well (symptoms are gone). If the result is positive then they will be required to remain off school for a **minimum** of 14 Days and they are symptom free for a period of 5 days.

If a child tests positive then Public Health Representatives will be in contact with the school to establish those who would be considered to be a Close Contact. Any such Close Contacts will be contacted by public health (not the school) and advised as to the course of action.

### **Student Return Dates.**

**New students will be returning the week of 31<sup>st</sup> August and we will inform you which day your child will be starting school that week.**

**Class 2,3,4 will be returning on the 27<sup>th</sup> August as class sizes are small.**

**Half of Transition Class will be returning on 27<sup>th</sup> August with the remainder of the Class returning on 28<sup>th</sup> August. This class is at maximum enrolment with 11 pupils.**

This staggered re commencement of school for some of our students is to allow for our students to be orientated into the new protocols and procedures around social distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and the role that they can play in keeping all the school community safe. This will then be followed by supporting New Entrants.

We will be in contact with you to let you know which class your child will be in this year. Your child's class teacher will be contacting you before Thursday.

Class 1- Mrs Murphy

Class 2- Miss Ruddy

Class 3- Mrs Shevlin

Class 4- Miss Kilgannon

Transition Class- Miss Quinn

### **Transport and start/finish time.**

**We have received no official information to date on how school transport will operate but will inform you when we receive any information from Bus Eireann or the Dept. of Education.**

**Pupils should wash their hands before getting on the school bus.**

**We will be staggering the times pupils enter and exit the building to avoid** gatherings of staff and students on school corridors, to allow for social distancing and as there will be no assembly until further notice, to create a safe calm environment for your child to get to his/her classroom.

Parents who are bringing or collecting their child from school should remain in their car with their child till 9.10 am and an SNA will come out to meet their child.

If a child is late arriving at school parents should remain in their car with their child and telephone the school and wait for an SNA to collect their child. More details on this is in our Response plan

Please be aware great effort will be made to minimise the disruption to your child and to maintain as much class time as possible.

### **Social distancing and face masks**

The use of Class Bubbles will be implemented in our school. Your child will mostly be unaware of this as the groupings will likely feel very natural. The use of Bubbles will limit the interactions of your child to the wider school community therefore limiting the risk of transmission to students and staff. It will also allow for easier contact tracing if needed.

Social distancing will be implemented through classroom layout and structured areas for activities, timetabling breaks and staggered arrival and departure from school. Social distancing will be adhered to where possible. We do ask that your child refrain from handshaking high fives etc if possible and this will be reinforced and taught in the classroom. While structural social distancing measures have been implemented in all areas of the school and social distancing will be encouraged and promoted at all times, staff will not be in a position to enforce this nor is it practical or reasonable to do so especially in Class 1.

Face coverings

Staff

Face coverings are required by staff for intimate care and toileting and visors will be worn by staff when a distance of 2 meters cannot be maintained. As teachers and staff will be wearing face coverings or face shields it might be useful to discuss this with your child

Students

Although the general advice is that face coverings should be worn by students over 13 years of age the **Minister has stated that no child in Special settings will be required to wear one in school. We will abide by any further advice issued in this area.**

We have not received any official notifications with regard to this and will not be enforcing this in school as it would not be feasible for most of our students. If parents wish their child to wear a face covering in school, we have no objection.

Hand washing and respiratory etiquette will continue in school please encourage this at home.

## Curriculum

In line with recommendations and guidelines from the Department of Education the curriculum for the reopening of schools will have a more streamlined focus. There will need to be a settling in period to avoid students becoming anxious or overwhelmed. To begin there will be a focus on Social Personal Health Education (SPHE), Physical Education (P.E.), Relationships and Sexual Education, Maths and Language. Wellbeing will be at the core of all of this, giving the students opportunities to express themselves, discuss worry or anxiety, to relay experiences and to feel part of the school community again. The curriculum will steadily broaden as the year progresses.

## Continuity of Learning

St Dymphna's made every effort to ensure that all our students were provided with assignments and schoolwork that was appropriate, during school closure. In the event of further school closure St Dymphna's will endeavour to continue this. Individual teachers will contact parents to discuss how best to distance learn in the event of partial/full closure. A workable email address would greatly assist class teachers in this matter. A valid email will also assist me in being able to share larger documents/ information with you as opposed to text messages. *Please provide your email address and we will be sending you a consent form in relation to online learning.*

## School Materials and Lunches

Please limit the number of items in your child's school bag as it will be needed to store their coat and lunch etc. Pupils who are bringing their lunch to school should have their own cutlery in their lunch box

Please make sure your child has the following items on their return to school:

A pencil case with pencils (pens if Transition Class students), rubber, topper, ruler, pritt **stick, colouring pencils/crayons. This Pencil case and items will remain in school.**

All other resources will be provided by the school.

### **Homework/ Communication books**

As books can no longer be sent to/ from school and home we will be contacting parents by email or sending home a note. We will issue details on homework once the pupils have settled back into school.

### **Change of clothes**

If your child will/ may require a change of clothes in school. These should be sent in a plastic bag inside the school bag. After 72 hours the clothes will be kept in a secure and safe location for your child

### **Tissues**

As we can no longer supply classes with boxes of tissues, we would ask parents to include a box of tissues in their child's school bag that it can remain in their box in school solely for their use.

### **School Uniform**

Students uniforms must be clean and washed at least twice a week, as a child may have coughed or sneezed into their sleeve as per coughing protocols.

The school has no objection to pupils in any class wearing their own clothes to make the washing and changing of clothes manageable. Please ensure that your child has shoes that they can remove/put on themselves so that the tying of laces does not become an issue.

As classrooms and work areas need to be ventilated, we ask that pupils come to school appropriately dressed in the necessary base clothes to allow this to happen.

## **Declaration of Parent/Guardian-September 2020.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understood the School Plan for reopening for 2020- 21 and agree to the protocols and conditions of my child returning to school.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

## **Return to school declaration**

Please answer the following questions (circle yes or no) on behalf of your child (1 per child)

Childs name \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe your child currently has Covid-19 Yes / No

Has your child had any of the following symptoms in the last 14 days

High temperature (i.e. over 37.5°C) Yes / No

A new continuous cough Yes / No

Unexplained shortness of breath Yes / No

Loss of sense of smell, of taste, or distortion of taste Yes / No

Sore Throat Yes / No

Has your child or any member of your household been in close contact with a confirmed case of Covid 19 in the past 14 days? Yes / No

Is your child or any member of your household awaiting a test for Covid 19, or the results of a test? Yes / No

Has your child or any family member undertaken foreign travel to or from a country other than the Green List in the past 14 days? Yes / No

*If you have answered yes to any of these questions your child must not come to school, please phone/ email the school to discuss procedure.*

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please be aware failure to return this form to school with your child may result in your child being unable to enter school building**

