



# Newtownhamilton High School

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Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

I have now received the 'Revised COVID-19 Guidance for the New Academic Year' from Education Minister Michelle McIlveen, which clearly outlines how schools should plan ahead for the return of pupils. This guidance has been developed in close partnership with the Department of Health and allows flexibility for Principals to determine their own individual circumstances when deciding what measures are needed to ensure that children can access education in a safe environment.

Having read the contents of this document and considering both the increasing number of positive cases province wide and our COVID-19 experiences in June, **I have made a decision to proceed with caution up until the mid-term break at the end of October.** Therefore, please see below some key information which you should share and discuss with your child in advance of their return to school:

### **Start Dates (No Changes)**

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> August:** Year 8 Induction (9am-3pm – No EA buses or canteen available)

**Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September:** Year 9-12 pupils return (EA buses and canteen available)

### **COVID-19 Symptoms**

**Pupils that are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms at home should not attend school and follow PHA guidance.** If a pupil feels unwell during the school day, they should report this information to a member of staff immediately and appropriate action will be taken.

### **Home to School Return Transport**

It is **mandatory for all post-primary school age pupils to wear a face covering on all public and school transport** unless they have a reasonable excuse not to. Where it is possible to socially distance on school transport, pupils should do so.

### **Arrival at School**

On arrival at school, pupils should wash/sanitise their hands before reporting directly to their Form Classroom. Pupils should not congregate in corridor/toilet/communal areas.

### **Hygiene**

Good hygiene is essential at all times during the school day with numerous sanitising stations and hand washing facilities available. **Pupils are also strongly encouraged to bring their own personal pocked sized hand sanitiser.**

### **Face Coverings in School**

It is **strongly recommended that post-primary pupils wear a face covering at all times when inside school buildings, including classrooms, corridors and confined communal spaces such as toilet areas.** The Executive agreed on 12 August the requirement for post-primary pupils to wear a face covering in classrooms would, subject to review, apply until 8 October.

### **Social Distancing & One-way System**

Social distancing (of 2 metres) remains a key aspect of measures to be taken in school to mitigate the risks of virus transmission. While the Executive agreed that the stringent application of social distancing requirements between pupils would be relaxed from August 2020, we will continue to implement it as

much as is practical and where physical capacity and curriculum delivery permit. To facilitate social distancing, a one-way system with floor markings and signage will be in operation throughout the main building (from 8.40am to 3.05pm). This system with entry/exit arrangements will all be explained to pupils during their induction.

### **School Uniform & PE Wear**

Correspondence was issued in June 2021 to the then Year 8-11 parents stating that our uniform standards had slipped towards the end of last year as some pupils took advantage of the loop hole for schools to show uniform flexibility following lockdown. As explained in my letter, we will be returning to our full school uniform standards with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September and this includes adherence to rules on jewellery, piercings, make-up and hairstyles.

Pupils will therefore **be expected to wear full school uniform as normal each day except on PE days when they can wear their school PE kit** (plain dark coloured leggings/tracksuits bottoms permitted) as I have made a decision not to return to the use of changing rooms at this stage.

### **Equipment**

While the latest Public Health advice is that the risk from sharing equipment and resources is extremely small, pupils should still have all their own stationery equipment.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

All indoor and outdoor extra-curricular activities will resume in school with safety measures in place.

### **Educational Visits**

Both day and residential educational visits are now able to take place (with risk assessments). Educational visits outside of Northern Ireland remain paused.

### **Canteen**

Our canteen service will be available to provide break and lunch from Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September with a staggered intake and adherence to hygiene regulations. **Year 8 pupils attending on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> August should bring a morning snack and packed lunch.**

### **Visitors**

Parents/Guardians and other visitors should contact the school office (02830 878246) in advance of any necessary visit. On arrival, visitors should report to the office window located beside our main entrance.

### **Preparation for Remote & Blended Learning**

Unfortunately, the increasing number of cases within the community means that it is inevitable that some pupils will be learning remotely. It is therefore important that pupils know how to access the relevant online learning materials by noting the different subject access usernames and passwords. Our teachers will be sharing this information with pupils early in the new term.

### **Pupil Adherence to COVID-19 Regulations**

Pupils who willfully refuse to adhere to our COVID-19 regulations/guidance will be dealt with in line with sanctions identified in our Positive Behaviour Policy.

To conclude, I hope that the above arrangements are clear and that you have support for our procedures. There is no doubt that our experiences in June 2021 were extremely challenging for everyone involved and therefore with pupils, staff and parents all working in partnership I am confident that we can continue to offer our pupils a high quality learning experience in a safe environment.

Finally, I trust that everyone will enjoy the last few days of the school holidays. I will be available onsite until 5.00pm on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August and will thereafter be checking my emails ([nmegaw549@c2kni.net](mailto:nmegaw549@c2kni.net)) at regular intervals over the Bank Holiday weekend.

Yours faithfully

*Neil Megaw*

Principal