

14th August 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian,

As the long awaited return to school rapidly approaches, we would like to inform you of the preparations we are putting in place and what will be required of you and your children as we work together to ensure a safe and successful reopening.

In line with the guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) we have implemented a number of measures and requirements to protect against Covid 19 transmission upon our return to school. These are as follows:

- **Hygiene:** All students are asked to come to school with a face covering, a small bottle of hand sanitizer, a pack of tissues and anti-bacterial wipes. All of these will be available in school but we feel that it is prudent that all students have their own personal supply. As per DES guidelines all students and staff will be asked to wear a face covering at all times when in school. All drinking fountains will be disabled and no sharing of equipment or ingredients can be permitted. We will be building “mask breaks “ into the day, when students will be brought outside and at 2m distance from each other, will be able to remove the masks for a short period of time. Classroom doors will be propped open at all times to minimise transmission risks. Hand towel dispensers have been replaced with hand driers in most locations.
- **Student Health:** Students are reminded that they have a responsibility to maintain good respiratory hygiene and regular hand washing as the first method of combating the transmission of Covid 19. If a student has any symptoms of Covid 19, they must not attend school. If a student presents with symptoms while in school, we have made arrangements for isolation and we will contact you immediately. Any confirmed cases must be reported directly to the school without delay. A form is attached with this email, asking for current contact details and any medical issues your child might have. Please complete and return to class tutor on the first day of term. A number of students may be unable to return to school due to specific high-risk health conditions. Please contact Mr Keegan in confidence if this applies to your son or daughter.
- **Hand Sanitisation and PPE:** We have ordered 57 hand sanitisation stations, hand sanitising gel and sufficient PPE. The first delivery has already arrived and we expect the next delivery on the 19th of August. We are confident that we will have sufficient PPE, signage and hand sanitisation to meet the needs of all students and staff at this school.

- **Cleaning:** The school has been thoroughly disinfected over the summer. We have a comprehensive cleaning regime in place and additional cleaning staff have been employed to ensure that the necessary standard of cleanliness and sterilisation is maintained on a daily basis. Students will have a significant role to play in maintaining the cleanliness of their base class and the school as a whole. They will receive detailed information about this on their induction day.
- **Social Distancing:** As per the DES guidelines all students must stay 1m apart when in class, while wearing a face covering. To ensure this, we have rearranged all classrooms to allow for 1m space between students and 2m between the teacher and students. All students will also remain in their base rooms with teachers travelling between classes. This is to reduce the amount of student movement and interaction. Students will only leave their base rooms when travelling to practical rooms such as Home Economics, Art, Woodwork etc. While in those classes, they will be seated beside students from the same base class. Students will have to maintain social distancing outside the classroom. Lunch breaks will not be staggered, but access to outside recreational amenities will be timetabled for each year group. Students will eat their lunches in their base rooms.
- **One Way system:** We will be implementing a one way system for travelling around the school building. This will be explained to all students upon their return to school. A map will be provided and a video will be produced to ensure that all students are fully informed.
- **Increased Teacher Allocation:** The current Roadmap for the Full Return to School from the DES has provided us with additional teachers and supervision hours. We have been able to recruit an additional three teachers who will be able to provide increased supervision to help with social distancing and the one way system.
- **Review of back to school schedule:** In order to ensure that all students and staff are given the appropriate training, including mask etiquette and the importance of social distancing, to prevent the spread of Covid 19 in NCC we have revised the schedule for re-opening as follows:

Monday 31st August- 1st and 6th years only for induction - Start at 8.50am
Finish at 1:20pm

Tuesday 1st September- 3rd years only for induction- Start at 8.50am Finish at 1:20pm

Wednesday 2nd September- 1st, 3rd and 6th Years for class. 5th years for induction. Start at 8.50am Finish at 1:20pm

Thursday 3rd September - 1st, 3rd and 6th Years for class. TY for induction - Start at 8.50am Finish at 1:20pm

Friday 4th September- 1st, 3rd and 6th Years for class. 2nd year for induction.
Start at 8.50am Finish at 1:20pm

We are not staggering the start times for students as the bus operators are contracted to deliver students at the regular opening times. Additionally, they will not collect students at 1.20pm on Monday-Thursday of the first week of school, so parents will need to make alternative arrangements for the first week of term. After 7th September school buses will run as normal. Full timetable for all students will then resume on Monday the 7th of September

- **Homework:** With the exception of 3rd and 6th years there will be no written homework assigned to students until after October mid-term. This will allow students to settle back into the routine of school, after a long absence, without the added pressure of homework. We need to be mindful of the wellbeing of students as they return to school. We feel that a concentration of work during school hours coupled with a complete break at 4pm will aid a successful return to the demands of full time schooling. This decision will be monitored and evaluated during the stated time period.
- **Extra-Curricular Activities:** There will be no extra-curricular activities scheduled until after October mid-term. This will give students a chance to focus on their academic progress and to settle back into the school routine without interruption.
- **Cashless Payment:** We are in the process of establishing an online payment system called Way 2 Pay for all school expenses. This will be available to all families in the coming weeks. More information will follow in due course. If Way 2 Pay is not fully operational by the start of term we ask that the Admin Fee be paid on the first day of term to the class tutor in a sealed envelope, with student's name clearly marked. A receipt will be issued the following day.
- **Reducing the number of visitors to school:** In the initial two months of school opening, we ask that all meetings be conducted by phone or video conferencing where possible. Any request for a meeting without prior organisation will not be facilitated during this period. Forgotten items should only be dropped into the school in exceptional circumstances. Students will not have homework during this period, so they should have the time to organise themselves properly in advance.
- **Drop off of students:** If you are driving your child to school you must drop them off at the roundabout, as there will be no access to parking, unless your child has a specific requirement.

- **Student Property:** All student property must be clearly labelled with your child's name, including all lunchboxes, bottles, clothing etc. There will not be the same ability to store lost property as previously existed.
- **Uniform:** We have not been told by the DES or NPHEA that uniforms must be washed daily. We will update you if there is any change to this advice.
- **School Transportation:** Masks/face coverings must be worn on all school transportation to and from school. Students must cooperate fully with the directions of the bus providers. We will continue to provide a shuttle bus for Transition Years to Piper's Hill on Monday and Tuesday mornings. Masks/face coverings must be worn on this bus. Additionally, 1st and 2nd Years will have PE in the GAA on a Thursday or Friday and they will be bussed to that location. Masks/face coverings must be worn.
- **Board of Management/Parents Association:** Full details of the NCC Covid 19 Response Plan will be submitted for approval to the school Board of Management on Thursday 20th August and thereafter to the Parents' Association.

All of the above arrangements are subject to change as this fluid situation evolves over the coming weeks. We will follow the recommendations of the DES, NPHEA and Kildare and Wicklow ETB as the school reopening process evolves. At all times the health and wellbeing of the students, staff and wider school community will be foremost in our minds as we plan for the successful reopening of our school.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff, students and parents of NCC for their patience and cooperation over the last six months. It is extremely important for the educational attainment as well as the mental and social wellbeing of our students that we are successful in the reopening of our school. That can only happen if we all work together and do what is required of us.

There are very clear guidelines from the DES and NPHEA about what to do in the case of students at our school contracting Covid 19. We will follow those guidelines to the letter and we will make them available for all parents on the school website. In the event of a school closure, we are ready for an immediate move to online learning. We are confident that our contingency plan will provide the same structure and student engagement that our students will need. Hopefully, we won't need to use that contingency, but it is there if needs be.

It will not be easy and there will be times that students and staff and parents will find these changes onerous or difficult, but the prize will be worth the effort. We all need the school to reopen successfully and to stay open. For that to happen we must all take responsibility for our own health and the health of others around us.

As the guidelines say:

"School communities will rise to this challenge, and the key themes of the Public Health Advice necessary to keep us safe will permeate through the school community, with everyone:

Applying common sense,
Adopting a balanced approach,

Doing everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school,

Being aware of

- what we can all do to protect ourselves and each other
- how to recognise and report the symptoms of COVID-19, and
- the need to stay at home if we feel unwell, and

Continuing to observe physical distancing, good hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette.”

¹

If you have any queries please email us at nasscc@kwetb.ie.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Kind Regards,



Ciarán Keegan
Principal
Naas Community College