

Coláiste Pobail na Mainistreach

Bóthar na Mainistreach, An Pórt Mór, Port Láirge

Príomhpoide: Michelle Jefford
Leas-Phríomhpoide: Colm Rice
Leas-Phríomhpoide: Helen Ní Chonchubhair

Abbey Community College

Abbey Road, Ferrybank, Waterford

Principal: Michelle Jefford
Deputy Principal: Colm Rice
Deputy Principal: Helen O'Connor
Deputy Principal: Laura Fitzpatrick



T 051-832930

F 051-851110

admin@abbeycommunitycollege.com

www.abbeycommunitycollege.com

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Dear Students, Parents/Guardians,

We hope that this email finds you safe and well in these difficult times.

Preparations and planning in Abbey Community College are at a very advanced stage for the safe return to school for all. This letter will update you on some of the changes we have made in getting the school ready for your safe return in line with public health advice and the latest guidelines. The Minister for Education published *The Roadmap for the Full Return to School* on the 27th July and the latest updates are available on our school website under the COVID-19 section.

As per the *Re-opening Our Schools Document* (Pg 10) **it is critical that people stay at home if they are unwell or any member of the household is unwell with symptoms consistent with Covid 19.** These symptoms include the following:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste.

If you or anyone in your household has symptoms of Covid 19 you must isolate and not attend school for a period of 14 days or you may return sooner if you have receive a negative result from your Covid 19 test (see return to school protocol later in this letter).

Travel Outside Ireland:

Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. You are reminded that if you have travelled outside Ireland to an area not on the green list, you must have completed 14 days of self-isolation and/or quarantine prior to your returning to Abbey Community College.

Students in High Risk Categories:

If you have concerns that your child is in the high or very high-risk category and is unable to return to school, please contact your GP and then the principal, if you have not already done so. The HSE has information about these two categories which you can read about at this link:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

We aim to minimise the risk of spread of Covid 19 in our school community through:

- Regular hand hygiene
- Maintaining physical distancing
- Application of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and
- Environmental hygiene.

The DES will have advice available to students and families from today, 24th August at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ao4fc-advice-for-students-and-their-families/>

Induction for all students:

Full induction details for all students will follow in a letter later this week.

Changes to school life in the Abbey in line with government regulations and guidelines are as follows:

Covid 19 Induction Training:

All students will participate in Covid 19 Induction Training on returning to school as part of their induction process. This will include:

- latest up to-date advice and guidance on public health,
- COVID-19 symptoms,
- what will happen if a pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school,
- outline of the COVID-19 Response Plan.

Information Campaign:

- Posters and signage throughout the school.
- A national information campaign to support parents and students will happen in advance of schools reopening on issues such as COVID-19 awareness and to help minimise the risk of introduction and spread of the virus in schools.

Provision of PPE:

- **It is now mandatory that teachers and secondary school students wear a face mask, similar to those worn in shops or on public transport, when a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.**
- **An individual PPE pack will be provided for all students on their return to school** and I thank the Parents' Association (PA) for assisting us in putting our individual PPE packs together. **The PPE pack will consist of one face visor/shield for all students as well as two washable face masks that meet HSE standards.** We strongly recommend that you secure a few replacements in case of damage or loss, or due to personal preference for a different type. I have had many requests from parents wondering if their children are permitted to wear the visor as well as the mandatory mask. The answer is 'yes' the visor can be worn also. There is a list on the HSE website that outlines situations where a person may be exempt from wearing a mask - please contact the school immediately if you think that your child may fall into any of these categories and we can seek further advice/clarification.

I ask that all students have at least one face mask for the day that they return to school.

- **Hand sanitiser is available in all classrooms, at all exit doors and outside toilets.**
- Protection screens in each classroom, teacher to move this as they move between board and teacher's desk.
- There will be a tub of wipes placed in the Trolleys in B1 and B2 for sanitising the IT devices.
- All materials used to clean devices etc. must be placed in the foot pedal bins for disposal.

- If using the school computer room, students will be required to wear their visor and their face mask also.

Enhanced Cleaning Routines in School:

- More regular and enhanced cleaning routines in the school buildings.
- You (the student) are responsible for wiping down your desk, chair, devices both before and after use (we will provide the necessary products).
- Provision of foot pedal bins for disposal of tissues, disposable masks, wipes used to clean surfaces.
- Hot running water in all toilets for hand-washing.

Timetable Changes:

- Breaks and lunchtimes will be staggered (at different times).
- Extended break on Friday during the morning to allow for a longer health break.
- Some students will exit 5 minutes before the bell at the end of the school day. This will be rotated so that the same classes are not impacted on each day (further details will be given to students at induction).

Student Based Classrooms:

- **Students will arrive in the mornings and go straight to their first lesson on their timetable.** No congregating in GPA or the Hub.
- **Teachers will be moving during the school day to reduce the footfall on the corridors as much as possible.** Students will have to move to practical classrooms (**each student will need to bring your own earphones to use on school computers**).

The above two steps have been taken in order to minimise the movement around the school during the school day.

Lockers/Cloakrooms/School Bags:

- **Students will not be given access to lockers or cloakrooms until further notice.** This will be reviewed in line with national guidelines.
- **Students can carry their school bag to class** to store all their property.
- **Students are not expected to have every book for every subject in school every day. Teachers will be working with students to minimise the amount of books / copies brought into school on any one day.**

Evening Study:

There will not be *Evening Study* for the month of September. We will be reviewing the situation at the end of September and this may change – we will be in contact with the people involved.

- Buildings will be closed for students after school. If this poses any particular difficulty for a parent, please contact the school.

PE Classes / Uniform:

- **Students are permitted to wear their full PE uniform on the day that they have PE as the changing rooms will not be in use. Full uniform must be worn on all other days.**

Moving between the School Buildings:

In line with Health and Safety regulations in relation to Covid 19, we will have a new *traffic* flow system for moving around, entering and exiting the school buildings. This will allow for the safe flow / movement of students / teachers in the school building. Students will receive information on this at induction when they arrive back to school.

- Flow of traffic in buildings to be **one way** as much as possible.
- General rules: Walk on the **right-hand side** of the corridor at all times, middle Stairs: UP ONLY and top and bottom Stairs: DOWN ONLY.
- POD staff will guide students around the POD in a manner that best suits the students themselves.
- Area at the back door of *Teach Mhuire* has been cleared to allow for separate entry and exit points.

First Aid:

- There is a new (second) first aid room, First Aid 2 at the back on B2 (behind Eng. 2 and WW2).
- If a student is suspected of having symptoms, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately to collect the student from this room.
- These symptoms include the following:
 - *High temperature*
 - *Cough*
 - *Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties*
 - *Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste.*

When collecting the student that has displayed any of the above symptoms, we ask you to drive around to B2 and collect your son / daughter directly from First Aid room. You must then follow HSE advice for all suspected Covid cases in line with national guidelines (available on HSE website).

NB: For any student that is returning to school after a suspected case of Covid 19, we ask that a parent/guardian presents with the student at 8.35am at the front office in B1 and meets a member of management before the student re-enters the classroom.

- The First Aid room used will be deep cleaned once the student has left the area.
- EPIPENs and any other personal medication must now be kept on the student / in their bag as we will no longer be able to store items in the First Aid Room. If there is any parent that needs to contact us re. their specific situation, please contact us as soon as possible.

Library:

- The Library will be in use but access will be limited (further guidelines will be issued).

Canteen:

- Canteen will be in operation. There will be no seating area for students in the Hub/GPA/TM and they will have to take food back to their base classroom or they may eat outside.
- An online pre-ordering facility is now available from our catering company (further details to follow).

Water Fountains:

- Will not be in use for the foreseeable future in line with guidelines. We ask all students to bring their own water to drink.

Work Experience:

- We will speak to the students involved with work experience during their induction and we will follow guidelines available to us in relation to same.

School Transport:

- Transport: see information provided by your transport provider.

School Trips:

- We will follow guidelines in place at the time of the trip and will update nearer the time that the trip is scheduled.

Please remember that parents must contact the school via 051-832930 or info@abbeycommunitycollege.com before visiting the school.

Mobile Phones:

- **As lockers will not be available for students, we will not be able to guarantee the security of their phones. Each student is responsible for the security of their own phones as they cannot be locked into a secure locker.** We advise that students do not bring phones into school unless necessary and if they do have to bring a phone into school to contact home, that they mind them carefully. You will be permitted to have your mobile phone in your school bag or on your person. They may be used in class **ONLY BY PRIOR INSTRUCTION OF YOUR TEACHER IN ADVANCE.**
- **As always, our *Code of Behaviour and ICT Acceptable Usage Policy* will be applied stringently to all misdemeanours with phones in relation to using phones in class without permission, to taking unrequested photos, sending/receiving messages etc.**

We look forward to welcoming you back to the 'new normal'. We all have a responsibility (student/parent/teacher) to ensure that we are all doing our best to reduce the risk and spread of Covid 19 in our school community. We ask that all parents / guardians encourage their sons / daughters to follow the guidelines at home and in school in relation to hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing.

There is a lot of information to process, so please, take the time to read this document carefully with your daughter/son. You will most likely need to read it a few times to familiarise yourself with the new procedures. Your son/daughter will receive a thorough induction course in relation to the new guidelines for Covid 19 on their return to school.

Parents / guardians please update phone numbers if you have changed your number recently. You can email the updated numbers to info@abbeycommunitycollege.com Please be reminded that you may nominate someone to collect your son/daughter if they are unwell.

Please note, that if we cannot contact a parent/guardian if the student is very unwell and there is no one available to collect the student in question, the school may have to contact the emergency services at 999 in line with the guidelines.

As the weeks progress, we will continue to monitor plans and will amend them as issues emerge over the course of the next few months. We ask you to work with us and we will work with you in doing our best to reduce the risk and spread of Covid 19. As always, we will work with you to do this, *'Together towards Excellence'*.

Yours faithfully,



Michelle Jefford