Dear Parents,

I hope you and your family had a lovely summer. In typical fashion the weather is improving as we approach school return. I hope the children can enjoy a few days of sunshine before school return on Tuesday,31st August (8:45 to 12noon)

On Tuesday children will be introduced to their new class and teacher and hopefully all will make a smooth transition.

**On 18 August 2021 DE guidance was issued to schools.**

**The guidance appears to permit schools to retain most of their mitigations that have been in place prior to the summer break.**

**Following discussions with our local Primary Principal’s group and school staff it was agreed considering the high numbers of Covid locally that a cautious approach was essential.**

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| **Guidance** | **Our Procedures** |
| **Social distancing**  The NI Executive has stated class bubbles are no longer a requirement, however, they also state schools may wish to retain class bubbles to strengthen health and safety mitigations. Previous mitigations in place are to remain e.g. spaced seating. | We intend to retain our bubble structure until Halloween both inside and outside. This has been very effective in the last year and allows us to Track & Trace accurately and keep our school community safe.  When appropriate or if we can do so safely, we may introduce some mixing of bubbles. |
| **Indoor / Outdoor gatherings**  Schools are to continue to risk assess for both settings. Caution is advised regarding indoor gatherings e.g. assemblies, and should only take place if essential ensuring social distancing and hygiene practices are maintained. | Assemblies are a very important part of school life and have a positive impact on relationships and behaviour.  We will trial assemblies with a limited amount of classes adhering to all rules i.e. adequate ventilation and spacing of bubbles. |
| **Movement in school**  Schools may wish to continue to use ‘soft changeover’ i.e. no bell to encourage fewer numbers moving in communal corridors / spaces.  Staggered drop off / collection may also be retained in order to reduce potential spread of infection. | For Term 1 we will retain our staggered collection.  Drop off will take place between from 8:45 to 9am.  **Please to adhere to these times.**  **CHILDREN ARE NOT TO BE DROPPED OFF BEFORE 8.45**  All staff will supervise in the playground in the mornings and children have benefited from the fresh air and playtime. They come into school settled and ready to work.  We will continue with our one -way system up the front drive in the mornings. Mr Bradley will greet children at the canteen drop off area.  I have spoken to Grounds Maintenance about putting more permanent traffic control systems in place. An unavoidable minor works form has been filled in and sent to EA requesting that this work be carried out.  Part of this work will include a designated drop off area for children in our ASC & LSC and a more permanent walking lane for children walking up the front drive.  **In the meantime, a temporary ramp has been put in place to slow traffic down approaching the canteen.**  Please adhere to the one -way system, be vigilant for other traffic, children and school staff.  Mrs Ramsey will be at Academy Rd., entrance in the mornings.  P1 children can be dropped off at the Infant Resource Area and will be met by their teacher/LSA.  **Nursery pupils enter via the Nursery Playground.**  **Nursery finishes at 1.30pm (after induction period)**  Afternoon pick up times are as follows:  P1& P2 2:15  Younger siblings will remain with their class teacher until home time for their elder sibling if required  P3, P4 & P5 2:40  P6 & P7 2:55  **Friday**  **P1 & P2 2:00**  **P3 & P4 2:15**  **P5, P6 & P7& LSC 2:30**  **Please maintain social distancing and it is advisable to wear a face covering due to the rise in positive cases.**  **We propose to open up the Brooke Park** entrance after Halloween for parents who wish to access school through the park. In order for this to take place safely work on the path leading to the steps beside the canteen has been approved and I am awaiting Grounds Maintenance to carry this out. |
| **PE**  In order to reduce potential infection, schools are advised to have pupils wear their PE uniform to school on days when PE is to be taught.  Younger pupils may come to school in their trainers. | All children should be dressed in their full school uniform which includes black school shoes or **ALL BLACK TRAINERS.**  We are introducing a PE uniform which will consist of: White Polo Shirt  Plain Grey Tracksuit Bottoms  School Jumper  Children can wear their own trainers on PE days.  These can be purchased in any of the local supermarkets and remove the need for parents to buy branded sportswear. |
| DE has advised that there is little risk of spread of infection on library books / class books and that there is no need to quarantine these items going forward.  DE also advises that children may now bring their school bags and pencil cases to school.  Regular hand hygiene and surface cleaning to be maintained. | Children can bring school bags, lunch bags,  homework and other essential items into school.  Each year group will send out guidance with details specific to their year groups.  Due to Covid we cannot have our usual Parent Information sessions to convey this information to you. |
| **Record keeping / test and trace**  Schools continue to be required to maintain records of staff and pupils who become symptomatic on site.  Schools will also continue to play a role in identifying close contacts of confirmed cases. | In the instance of a positive case within a class bubble children will self –isolate and will be required to take a PCR test on day 2 and day 8. If this is negative on day 2 they can return to school and the same for day 8.  Children who do not have proof of a negative PCR test will have to self-isolate for 10 days.  Please refer to attached Operational Guidance. |
| **Remote teaching**  Teachers will be focused on in-class teaching.  It will be up to individual schools/ teachers to determine if class work can be provided to pupils who may be required to self-isolate. Parents / guardians must be made aware that it is unlikely that remote teaching will be possible.  However, schools are advised to be mindful that full classes / larger school groups may be required to self -isolate and therefore to be prepared to resume a level of remote learning. | Should a whole class group need to isolate the class will use Google Classroom/Seesaw as appropriate. |
| **Breakfast Club/Afterschool’s clubs** | A decision on starting time for Breakfast Clubs will be made asap and we will send out consent letter requesting names.  In the meantime all other afterschool’s clubs will be suspended until it’s safe to begin these again. |

I want to thank all of our parents and carers for your continued support and patience during this difficult time.

Keeping our school community safe is at the forefront of all of our decisions.

I am very much looking forward to a more fluid school year where children can progress and develop and enjoy all the various activities that were in place prior to Covid.