



# Coláiste Achadh an Iúir

Virginia, Co. Cavan

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Dear Parents and Students,

We are currently planning to welcome all students back to school at the end of August/beginning of September. We are looking forward to returning to school and seeing everyone back in class. While the circumstances are not as we may have hoped we are making every effort to ensure everyone's safety.

Please see below a Questions and Answers guide for students and parents.

## **Will I be returning to school in August /September?**

Yes, as per the government's Roadmap for the Return to School, all students will be returning to school at the end of August/start of September. The dates for the return to school for all year groups were outlined in the recent letter sent to Parents/Guardians.

## **What measures have school management taken to protect against COVID-19?**

School management are implementing the guidelines recommended by the Department of Education and Skills for a safe return to school for all staff and students. These include:

- Reconfiguring all classrooms to maximise distancing between all students.
- Implementing 1m distancing between students in all classes where possible.
- Designated classrooms for all students when they arrive at school.
- Staggered break/lunch times.
- Staggered finishing times for each year group with assigned exits
- Mandatory COVID 19 Induction for all staff.
- Installing sanitising dispensers outside all toilets and at various locations throughout the school.
- Implementing an enhanced cleaning regime for all classrooms, corridors, toilets etc.
- Providing refillable clip-on hand sanitisers for each student and staff member.
- Providing face shields/visors for each student and staff member.
- A one-way system of movement in as much of the school as possible.
- Installing perspex screens where necessary

- Providing an isolation area for students/staff who feel unwell during the day
- Reducing class sizes where possible
- Recruiting additional teaching staff, cleaning staff, and supervisors
- Risk assessments have been carried out in line with Department requirements.
- Covid 19 policy statements have been drafted.

### **Do I have to wear my school uniform?**

Yes, all students will have to wear a school uniform as normal. There has been no advice from the Department of Education and Skills or the health authorities to say that students should not wear a school uniform. School uniform does not have to be washed each evening and there is no advice to that effect.

### **What will the structure of my day look like?**

The structure of the school day will be much the same as last year apart from the following changes:

- Each class group will have a designated classroom / area on their arrival to school. This will be explained to students at the assemblies at the beginning of the term.
- As it is recommended that students do not use their locker, we will not be providing lockers for students until we are advised that it is safe to do so. Students will carry their books with them where necessary – we will be making arrangements to reduce the number of books students have to carry.
- Students will move from classroom to classroom using the one-way system and will be encouraged to wear face covering while moving.
- There will be staggered break times, and this will be explained to students when school resumes.
- There will be no canteen facility for the initial week of school resumption. Students will bring lunch and water to school and eat lunch/snacks in their classroom. Rubbish should be brought home. We hope to open the canteen facility within two weeks as long as appropriate social distancing measures can be put in place. Students will not be allowed leave the school campus during break time.
- Students will be required to sanitise their desktop at the start of each class and also sanitise any school equipment they use.
- Students will not be allowed share any equipment including books and pens etc.
- Students should not engage in any physical contact such as hand shaking, hugging etc.
- Students as asked to practice good hygiene practices and observe respiratory etiquette at all times.

**Will I have a locker?**

As it is recommended that students do not use their locker, we will not be providing lockers for students until we are advised that it is safe to do so. Students will carry their books with them where necessary.

**Will the curriculum change to take account of the school closure last year?**

Schools have some autonomy in deciding how to sequence and pace learning for students in their schools and at this time the Department does not propose to adjust the curriculum. Further guidance will issue to school in the coming weeks from the Department of Educations and Skills, the State Examinations Commission and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

It is considered that the most appropriate way to reflect the challenges that have occurred for students in 2019/20 and potentially in 2020/21 is to incorporate adjustments into the certificate examinations in 2021. These changes are outlined in the Roadmap for the Full Return to School which is available on the website.

*Junior Cycle*

- The number of Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) to be completed by those entering third year has been reduced and the dates for completion of some elements extended into the new school year.
- Detailed arrangements in relation to the Junior Cycle certification examinations in 2021 will be made available shortly.

*Senior Cycle*

The senior cycle programme (Leaving Cert, Leaving Cert Vocational and Leaving Cert Applied) will commence as per Department guidelines

*Transition Year (TY)*

We have restructured our TY Programme to take account of the current situation. Students will have a range of learning experiences available to them. The central aim will be focus of preparation for further learning and guidance. Unfortunately, the trips associated with the TY programme will not take place, but we will endeavour to make the TY Year as active and rewarding as possible.

**Will there be extra-curricular activities?**

Our priority is ensuring all students return to school safely and current guidance advises that extra-curricular activities (e.g. football, handball, basketball etc) should not take place before November.

### **Will we have PE classes?**

PE will be timetabled for all students. However, students will not be allowed to use the changing rooms. Students will wear their PE uniform to school as usual on days they are timetabled to have PE.

### **What is happening for practical subjects like Home Economics, Art, Engineering etc?**

Practical classes will go ahead as normal; however, students will not be allowed to share equipment and all school equipment will be cleaned / sanitised at the end of each class by students. Students should have their own equipment/materials as required e.g. Art packs, TG boxes.

### **Will the school buses run as normal?**

While we do not get any communication from Bus Eireann the Roadmap for the Full Return to School provides information and guidance for schools. New rules will also be in place for children using school transport which include:

- Maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport
- Always sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or child from your class group (this should be the same child at all times)
- Use hand sanitiser on boarding the bus
- Always observe respiratory etiquette while waiting for and on-board transport services
- Disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
- All post-primary students must wear a face masks while waiting for and on-board transport services with the exception of children who for medical or special educational needs cannot wear a face mask.

### **Will Transition Year / LCA/LCVP students have work experience?**

Work experience is a component of the TY, LCA and LCVP programmes. Students are still encouraged to participate in work experience while adhering to COVID19 safety guidelines.

### **Will there be school tours?**

There will not be school tours or trips in the early part of the school year.

### **Will I have to wear a mask or visor at school?**

- On Friday August 7th the Department of Education and Skills (based on the latest health advice) recommended that students wear face coverings.
- Face coverings e.g. visors/masks are recommended that are reusable and washed/disinfected once every day as is consistent with the recommendation to wear face coverings in other contexts such as on public transport, in shops and indoors where a 2m physical distance cannot be maintained.

- Students at post primary level, apart from specific exemptions will be required to wear face coverings in the classroom.
- Staff, including teachers at both primary and post primary levels, who cannot maintain a 2m distance from students or other staff will be required to wear face coverings.
- All SNAs will be required to wear face coverings, or in certain situations clear visors, in the classroom.
- Other staff, e.g. bus escorts, who have close contact with students will be required to wear face coverings.

In conjunction with this recommendation the school will be providing all students and staff with visors when school resumes.

### **What are the arrangements for using toilets and maintaining social distance?**

A maximum of three students may use the bathroom at any one time. Students should sanitise hands before entering and wash hands thoroughly before leaving the bathroom.

### **Will the school canteen be open?**

There will be no canteen facility for the initial weeks of school resumption. We cannot say exactly when the canteen will resume lunches, but it will be as soon as possible. Students will bring lunch and water to school and eat lunch/snacks in their classroom. Rubbish should be brought home. We hope to open the canteen facility when social distancing measures can be put in place. Students will not be allowed leave the school campus during break time.

### **Can parents contact the school?**

Parents can contact the school office as normal if they wish to speak to a staff member or leave a message for their child. It is recommended that parents do not call into the school office unless they make an appointment. It is also recommended that if parents are calling to the school for their appointment that they wear a mask or a visor.

### **If I forget something can my parents bring it to the school?**

If you have forgotten something and it is absolutely essential, then parents can bring this to school and leave it in the school porch area.

### **Can I bring my mobile phone to school?**

School policy is that phones are not allowed in school and this policy continues. Please do not bring mobile phones to school.

### **What happens if I am feeling unwell or displaying COVID19 symptoms?**

If a student is feeling unwell or displaying COVID19 symptoms, they are to go to the secretary's office and a member of staff will take care of them. Where a student is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, the COVID-19 Response Plan sets out steps the schools should take as follows:

- Bring the student to the designated isolation area available in each school.
- Contact the parents of that student.
- Facilitate the person remaining in isolation until they are collected from school.
- Support the making of arrangements for transport home or if they are too unwell to go home to contact 999 or 112 to advise it is a COVID-19 suspected case.
- Make arrangements for the appropriate cleaning of the isolation and work areas.

#### **What if I am feeling unwell before I come to school?**

If any student or staff member is feeling unwell or having COVID 19 symptoms before leaving home, they should not come to school and should seek medical advice.

#### **If I am absent for a long period of time can I access classwork?**

We will continue to utilise Teams as part of teaching and learning on a daily basis. Students will be able to access work on Teams and continue learning.

#### **If a student or students test positive for Covid 19 what will happen?**

Once we are notified of a positive case we will work with and be advised by the HSE in relation to contact tracing and procedures for dealing with cases. It is the intention of the Department of Education and Skills that schools will remain open and cases will be dealt with in line with HSE protocols.

Please see the link on the website if you have any other questions you would like answered. If appropriate we will add the questions to this page. The minute detail of day to day life in school will be explained to students when school resumes.

If you have any further concerns or queries, please contact the school and we will endeavour to assist you.