

18th August 2021,

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope this letter finds you safe and well after another unprecedented year. We have all become accustomed now to the new normal but I am pleased to say the future is looking a lot brighter now than it did a year ago. Public Health advice and the instructions from the DES tell us that we are not out of the woods yet and that the Covid procedures that were in place last year must continue in place in schools until further notice. Please read the attached documentation.

During the Summer months every classroom has been painted and we now have 3 fully refurbished Science labs. Our planned All weather pitch was slightly delayed but should get underway in the coming weeks. I wish to thank the Board of Management who have worked tirelessly over the last two years planning this fantastic investment in the school. They have worked on your behalf to improve the facilities for your son and to enrich the learning environment as much as possible. Stage 1 of our new extension is now complete and submitted to the Department of Education so the future is looking very bright for the facilities on offer here in the High School.

Like last year Junior classes will stay in one classroom for all subjects with exception of moving to specialist rooms. This limits the number of people they encounter. Senior student classes have been divided into pods to limit the movement between a set number of classrooms. Single desks remain and **masks are required to be worn by both staff & students on the grounds of the school and if gathered outside the gates.** Distancing continues to be ensured as far as possible and we will continue to monitor and review our procedures as public health advice dictates. Students will not be issued with a locker initially and this has been reflected in the mandatory fee. This is not ideal but due to space restriction and numbers it is not possible to allow students to gather at lockers. Students will be asked to leave their books at home initially and as the weeks progress teachers will make local arrangements with students in this regard. We will continue to use Google Classroom and this will be the preferred method of submitting homework as it reduces the need to collect copies, pages etc.

Students will enter and exit through specific doors in the morning, at breaks and in the afternoon. It is essential that students stick to the allocated entrances and exits. We continue to stagger break times and lunchtimes in order to reduce numbers around the school and help with social distancing. This means that lunchtime will continue to be 40 mins (12:25-1:05 & 1:05-1:45) and school will finish at 3:45 on Monday & Tues and 3:05 on Wed, Thurs & Fri.

Morning Break: 10:10-10:25- TY, 5th & 6th Yrs, class resumes at 10:25

10:25-11:05- 1st, 2nd & 3rd Yrs, class resume at 11:05

Lunch Break: 12:25-1:05- TY, 5th & 6th Yrs take lunch, Period 6 begins at 1:05

1:05-1:45- 1st, 2nd & 3rd Yrs take lunch, Period 7 begins at 1:45

Please note that 1st, 2nd & 3rd will remain on school grounds for lunch. They are not allowed to leave the school premises at lunchtime. Packed lunches must be brought to school each day.

On dry days students will take their breaks outside to get as much fresh air as possible. On wet days they will stay in their classrooms. There will continue to be enhanced supervision during these times and students will have to take responsibility also for appropriate behaviour whilst in classrooms as it won't always be possible to have a teacher with them at all times. It must be noted that the student body were exceptional last year in their cooperation with all Covid procedures and we were in awe of their ability to adapt and get on with things.

PE will continue and students should wear their PE clothes coming in on the day they are timetabled for PE. Hopefully we will be in a position to open up our extra curricular activities slowly also.

Evening Study will begin the week of 13th September for 3rd & 6th Years initially. This can be paid for on Vsware should your son wish to avail. We will review numbers at that point and hopefully make it available to other years.

The last two years have been difficult on our young people. Socialising & friendships are so important at this stage in their lives and they have been robbed of many experiences. We appreciate that people have responded to this experience in different ways and many of our students have experienced loss in some way. It has also created anxieties in many people and our counselling staff remain available to our students on their return to support them in the reintegration with the school process. If you are worried about your son and feel that he may need support please do not hesitate to contact your son's Year Head and they will make the appropriate referral.

We would ask you to continue to refrain from visiting the school except in the case of emergencies. This means that you ensure that your son has everything he needs leaving school in the morning: lunch, copies, coat etc. Please refrain from dropping belongings into the school office. Should you need to speak with any staff member please contact the office and they will return your call at the earliest convenience.

Finally we would ask you for your support in what has been a mammoth task, managing Covid in a school setting. Please speak to your son before he returns and explain that whilst many of them are currently getting the vaccine we must still continue to be vigilant in schools as per Public Health instruction. The Code of Behaviour was amended last year to address incidents where students refuse to cooperate with Covid Health & Safety procedures. We are aware that we are all tiring of these restrictions but please appreciate that we are only trying to do our jobs as instructed by the Department of Education and have your son's health and well being at heart.

Please find attached the Return to School Schedule for students and I would ask you that you would pay the relevant fees through the Vsware system. Furthermore please ensure that you have downloaded the Vsware app as all correspondence will go through the Mail option on this system.

I would like to welcome all our new students to the school and their parents and we hope to see you at school events throughout the year and we hope that your son will be very happy here. We also wish our 6th Yrs a fond farewell as they begin a new journey. We will miss you. Finally I would like to thank you sincerely for your support last year, it was truly unprecedented in my career and the mammoth task that we had here in the school was made easier by parental support, staff support and the amazing students that we have. The end is in sight hopefully. I sincerely hope as we enter 2022 we will be in a much better position and school life will return to normal.

Stay Safe,

Mrs Karen Steenson
Principal