

Covid-19 - The Abbey School's response to Reopening

A Message to Parents and Students

We are all very much looking forward to welcoming you back to school after what has been a very challenging time for us all. Over the last number of months, we have been planning and working towards the reopening of our school. The health, wellbeing and education of your son is paramount to us in that work and will be our number one priority for the weeks and months ahead. It is only natural for you and your son to experience some level of anxiety around his return to school. Please reassure him that everything that can be done to provide him with a safe school environment is being done. Should you or your son experience levels of anxiety that you feel you need assistance with, please contact us and we will do whatever we can to help alleviate your concerns.

Foreign Travel

Your son should **NOT** return to school if he has been in a country not on the Green list at the time of his return to the country until they have undergone the 14-day self-isolation period.

Travel to and from School

School Bus

Buses will travel as usual. Students will have to wear a face covering at all times whilst on the bus. They are also expected to sit next to a family member if one is also travelling by bus. If a member of their class is also on the bus they can sit with them too. They are also expected to sit every day in the same seat whilst on the bus.

Cycling

Where possible students are encouraged to cycle to school and lock their bicycle to the bicycle stand. New bicycle stands have been installed inside the PE Hall entrance.

Entrance Gates

Students must enter the school by either the SuperValu or the PE Hall entrance at all times. The front entrance and Office entrance is strictly for Staff only for Health and Safety reasons.

Entrance Doors

Please use the entrance door nearest your base classroom where possible to minimise interaction with other year groups.

Social Distancing

Seating in every classroom has been configured at a physical distance of 1.1 metres between students. Every classroom has had all unnecessary furniture removed and put into storage to maximise the space in every room. Some new rooms have been reconfigured such as the table tennis room which will now be a classroom for third years. The old Technology room will now be the Technical Graphics room. The old TG room has been merged into the two rooms on either side to increase their capacity. We are very fortunate that we have enough

classrooms for our class groups and enough space for the students within those classrooms for **all students to return to school on a full time basis**.

Face coverings/Masks

As per Government guidance, where 2m physical distancing cannot be adhered to i.e., in classrooms and on all corridor spaces, it is compulsory for all staff and students to wear a face covering. Please ensure that your son has one on his person when entering the school building every day. Face coverings or masks must be washed on a daily basis. The school will have a stock of masks available for emergencies. Face coverings and masks can also be purchased in the school. Between now and his return to school please ensure that your son is familiar with the wearing of a face covering/mask. If your son has a medical condition which does not allow your son to wear a face covering for a prolonged period of time or at all, it is very important that you bring this to the attention of the school immediately with a written medical note from his doctor.

Hand Sanitisation and Personal Hygiene

There are hand sanitisers located in every room in the school and at regular intervals on the school corridors for the students to access. The toilet facilities will be cleaned at regular intervals during the school day. The two student toilet blocks have hot water and soap dispensers as well as electronic hand dryers.

Student Illness

If your son has any of the following symptoms:

- Cough
- Temperature
- Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste

at any time, it is absolutely essential that you keep your son at home, contact your GP and follow the GP's guidance. Students who display symptoms whilst at school will be placed in an isolation room under supervision of a member of staff and his Parents contacted to come and pick him up. On arrival to the school, please park outside the front office door and ring the office on 062-52299. Your son will be then brought to the car by the supervising member of staff. Please contact the school to arrange his return following such an incident.

Uniform

Students will wear their school uniform on a daily basis as normal. We just ask that the full uniform is washed on a regular basis. We have all become acutely aware of the need to protect ourselves and others by maintaining a high level of personal hygiene. Please promote this on a regular basis with your son. Please also note that students must wear **black leather shoes**.

The School Day/Timetable

On arrival to the school on a daily basis, students are asked to go immediately to their designated base classroom. Classes will continue to be 40 minutes in duration. We will try to have as many doubles as possible on the timetable to minimise the movement of students and teachers.

Classes will have a base class at Junior Cycle, i.e. a classroom that the students will be based in for their core subjects of English, Irish, Maths, Science, Geography, History, SPHE, CSPE, Wellbeing, and Religion. As some option subjects have specialist rooms i.e. Technology, Materials Wood Technology (MTW), Technical Graphics (TG), Art and Music students will move to these rooms for these classes. Whilst in these rooms they will stay in pods from their base class. They will be expected to clean their workspace before the class commences and again at the end of the class.

Evening Study

Evening study will commence on Monday 14th of September. There will be an option to attend evening study on a four or five day basis. Application forms will be available on Friday 4th September.

Lockers

Junior Cycle

Students will not have a locker to avoid large congregations of students during the school day. Instead a 42Ltr plastic container has been purchased for your son. It will be placed beside his desk and will contain all of his books, copies and equipment including any cleaning materials to clean his work space.

Senior Cycle

Transition Years and LCA students will not have a locker for the coming year. They do not have text books and will be able to carry what they need in their school bag.

Leaving Certificate

5th and 6th Years will have a locker for the coming school year. Lockers have been allocated with a gap between lockers within a year group i.e., a Sixth year every four lockers and a 5th year every four lockers. Access to their lockers will be as follows:

5th Years at 9.30 am and again at the end of Period 7 i.e., 2:10pm Mon & Wed 2:40pm on a Tue Thurs & Friday.

6th Years before school, at lunchtime and after school.

Students are asked to be patient and observe physical distancing whilst accessing their locker. Students will not be allowed to congregate at the lockers. These are provisional arrangements and may need to be changed once we can see how they will operate.

Breaks/Canteen

Junior Cycle students will take their break at 10.10 each morning. Senior Cycle students will take their break at 10.50am. Lunchtime will be as normal at 1.00pm for all students. The school canteen will operate as normal at break and lunchtime. We have a new canteen operator (DM Park Hospitality) in place for the coming year. Students will be able to order

and pay in advance. Seating in the canteen is not possible due to physical distancing. Students can take their food with them to their base classroom or to the new outdoor picnic tables in the yard.

Students will be encouraged to take a face covering break and get out into the fresh air at breaktime and lunchtime by going outdoors when the weather permits. We hope to be able to have sport at lunchtime each day with, hurling, football, soccer, rugby, basketball, athletics and more being organised by the staff.

Senior Cycle students (TY, 5th & 6th Year) will be permitted to leave the school grounds at lunchtime. Adherence to Physical distancing whilst outside the school grounds must be adhered to.

PE and School Sports

PE classes will operate as per usual with a particular emphasis on outdoor activities where possible and our PE Hall will not be needed for classes so it will be available for PE classes and lunchtime activities. Face coverings will not be required for outdoor sporting activities. Students will not tog out in the Dressing rooms but in their base classroom or in the PE Hall to ensure physical distancing.

Practical Subjects

Materials Technology Wood, Technology, Technical Graphics, Art and Music will take place in their respective rooms as usual with students physically distanced. The equipment/tools that they use will have to be cleaned down by the student before the class commences and at the end of the class. Face coverings will need to be worn in practical classes also.

Computer Classes

Classes will take place as necessary in the computer rooms. Students will be physically distanced whilst in the room which will reduce the capacity of the room to 19 students at a time. Again, students will be asked to clean their work space at the beginning and end of classes held in computer rooms.

Contacting/Attending the school

At this time, we would respectfully ask that you do not attend the school without a prior appointment. Please contact the school office to arrange all appointments. When you do attend the school for a meeting please note that you will need to wear a face covering throughout your time in the school. We request that you do not email staff directly at this time.