



Ballycullane National School New Ross, Co Wexford.

Phone: 051 562542

E-mail: office@ballycullanens.com

Web: ballycullanens.com

19th August 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian, Staff Member, I hope you and your families are keeping well.

As you are aware, our school has now been closed since 12th March due to the COVID-19 situation. We are now hoping to re-open our school safely, in line with current guidance and recommendations.

Re-opening the school safely on **Monday 31st of August** will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community – BoM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner which prevents the spread of the virus and allows the vital work of Teaching and Learning to proceed with as little disruption as possible.

- ❖ We have been working on our plan for the safe reopening of the school for some weeks now and have published the DES COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools on our school website. The Response Plan gives details of
 - Physical preparation, signage, hand sanitizer stations,
 - Advice, procedures and training for the safe return to working in the school for all school staff and pupils
 - General and specific advice on how all pupils, staff, parents and visitors will prevent the spread of the virus
- ❖ We are also publishing our COVID-19 Policy Statement on the school website.

RE: Physical Distancing and Safe School Attendance

We are currently working on upgrading our procedures and routines within the school to ensure that there is as much Physical Distancing as is possible in our building. We will apply physical distancing in a practical and sensible way, recognising that the learning environment cannot be dominated by a potentially counterproductive focus on this issue.

Physical Distancing will be achieved in two ways: -

Increasing Separation. This will be achieved by re-configuring the classrooms to maximise physical distancing. Each classroom will be referred to as a bubble and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles (classrooms). Within the bubbles, children will be organised into pods. A pod is a group of children who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom. In our school a pod in most cases is the actual class a child is in. (Junior Infants is a pod of 5 children, Senior infants is a pod of 5 etc)

Decreasing Interaction. This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There are 3 doors for various bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. While all children will have break times as previously, Bubbles will have their own area of the playground to play in during break times.(i.e. no mixing of children from different classrooms)

While all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents that, where children are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school.

Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period



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Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. We would be grateful if you could also emphasise safe behaviour in this regard to your children at home as part of the preparation for returning to school. **CHILDREN ARE ASKED TO WASH THEIR HANDS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE COMING TO SCHOOL**

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. This will be achieved by all of us working towards this common goal.

- ❖ If at all possible we request you not to come onto the school grounds or into the school building unless it is essential. We appreciate that dropping off the Junior & Senior Infant pupils to the yard is essential initially at least, but for the older pupils a drop off at the school gate is desirable. In fact many of our children are within walking distance or could cycle to school and this is encouraged. Working together we hope to be able to progress the reopening in as safe a manner as possible for all. **Drop off is from 9.05am to 9.20am.** The yard will have teacher/s supervising during that time for the month of September initially.
- ❖ **Jnr and Snr Infants and First Class access the school via the gate opposite the shop.** They can then access their classroom via the new door at that side of the school. All other classes use the main entrance gate. They will not be allowed congregate together in the yard but will remain in their bubbles when associating with others and enter the school by the main entrance door or side door depending on their classroom.

Please be patient as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year.

- ❖ It is imperative that adults do not come within 2m of each other
- ❖ Parents please do not try to have meetings with members of staff in the playground at drop-off and collection times – meetings between parents and teachers can only take place by prior arrangement. (This may have to be more restrictive depending on guidance - it is quite possible that the recommendation will be for remote meetings/telephonic communications.)
- ❖ A bundle of books and copies is being put together next week for each child and will be ready for them during the first week back.
- ❖ Sharing of personal materials and stationery is not allowed.
- ❖ Children should not bring toys or personal items to school.
- ❖ **It is advisable that school uniform is for school only and that children should change out of it into their own clothes on arriving home each afternoon.**
- ❖ Indoor shoes are not needed at least for the first weeks at school and we will reassess this as winter approaches.
- ❖ If you have any questions not answered by this letter or any other concerns that we should be aware of please e-mail office@ballycullanens.com and I'll get back to you.

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Margaret Furlong
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