

Frequently Asked Questions: starting back to school in September

- Which students return and when?

Pupils in Years 12 and 14 will return to school first and will be in every day of the week beginning 24th August. Pupils in Year 8 will come to school on Friday 28th August for half a day; pupils will either be in during the first half of the day or the second half. Details of this are included in the Year 8 pack recently posted out. Pupils in Years 9, 10, 11 and 13 are the only pupils in school on Tuesday 1st September. From this date, the interim timetable will be followed as below:

2 Week plan

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week A	Year 8	Year 9	Year 8	Year 9	Year 8
		Year 10		Year 10	
	Year 12	Year 11	Year 12	Year 11	Year 12
	Year 14	Year 13	Year 14	Year 13	Year 14
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week B	Year 9	Year 8	Year 9	Year 8	Year 9
	Year 10		Year 10		Year 10
	Year 11	Year 12	Year 11	Year 12	Year 11
	Year 13	Year 14	Year 13	Year 14	Year 13

- I am not comfortable sending my child. Do they have to attend?

Yes. The Minister for Education, Peter Weir, has stated that all pupils should return to school from 24th August. School have been given direct guidelines and advice about how best to make this happen safely, within the current situation. Risk assessments have been carried out to ensure the well-being of all members of the school community during school. If you feel you want to send your child with PPE, you are welcome to do that, but Mr Weir has advised schools that PPE is not necessary for pupils or staff in an education setting. We do suggest that you provide hand sanitiser and tissues for your child to use during the day; there will also be supplies of these in school.

- What size will my child's class be?

Pupils in Key Stage 3 (Years 8, 9 and 10) will be kept in bubbles of no more than 15 pupils. This will mean that classes will be split, and pupils will have to stay with their bubbles throughout the day. Pupils in Key Stages 4 and 5 will be in their options groups which have smaller class sizes.

- How will you limit the risk of infection to my child?

Pupils' movement around the campus will be restricted during the school day, particularly for those in Key Stage 3. Pupils will remain in a bubble within one classroom and teachers will come to them for lessons. Pupils will be encouraged to wash their hands regularly and thoroughly. There will be a one-way system around the buildings and signage to direct movement. Pupils will not be allowed to congregate in large groups; this includes before school, at break and lunch and after school. Pupils will receive a pre-booked lunch in a 'grab and go' bag and eat lunch in one of four large spaces in school. All pupils will be frequently reminded about the importance of good respiratory hygiene and what to do if they are feeling unwell. There will be zero tolerance of wilful non-compliance with safety instructions; pupils who flout hygiene etiquette will be sanctioned.

- Will there be distance markings?

Yes. Where these are needed, these will be displayed around school. Within classrooms, desks and chairs will be placed at distance. Signage will remind pupils to maintain the recommended safe social distance.

- Will there be changes to the start and end times of the school day?

Yes. To avoid large crowds of pupils, we ask that pupils in different year groups arrive to school at the times stated in the start-up letter. Details are:

Years 8, 9, 10 9:25

Years 11, 12, 13, 14 9:40

Pupils will be released at the end of the school day at staggered times.

- What about transportation?

At this point, the Department of Education have not given any guidance regarding transport.

- How will I drop off and collect my child?

Please drop your child off at the turning circle. We anticipate that this will be a busy area and we ask for your patience. Avoid using the top car park designated for staff and visitors.

- What if my children are in different years?

Arrive for the earliest drop-off time and send all your children into school together. They must make their way directly to the classroom they have been assigned. At the end of the school day wait until the latest pick up time for all of your children.

- Should my child wear a face covering, mask or other PPE?

There are no recommendations for pupils to wear PPE including masks. However, if you are uncomfortable with the circumstances and wish to provide PPE for your child, this will not be denied.

- Will there be COVID-19 testing or contact tracing?

No. If you have concerns about COVID-19 symptoms you should take your child to one of the COVID centres at either Craigavon Hospital or Antrim Hospital, and inform school of the outcome.

- Can someone from another household collect my child?

No. It is not possible under the current recommendations to collect a child from another household. It is also not possible to travel to school with another household.

- Will my child get a hot meal or a packed lunch?

Initially the canteen will provide lunch from a pre-selected menu. This will include a range of sandwiches, drinks, snacks and if possible, a hot item. Bags will be prepared by the canteen and delivered to one of four large lunch venues.

- I am eligible for Free School Meals. How can I apply?

There is a link on the school website.

- Will my child be taught by their usual teacher?

As far as possible, yes. However, to ensure that GCSE and A level classes are taught with the most relevant teacher, it may mean that junior classes are taught by another member of that subject area. Also, junior classes may have different teachers from day to day, depending on teacher availability and scheduling.

- Where can I find advice on online learning?

The school website is the first place to visit for online learning. Additional information will be given by subject teachers in September, particularly for pupils who are new to the school or who are starting new subjects.

- How much am I expected to educate my child at home?

Not at all! As pupils will be in school 50% of the two-week interim timetable, the onus is on the subject teacher to direct the online learning through preparation and clear expectation. Your role is to encourage and assist if necessary, but you are not expected to teach.

- How can I look after my child's mental health and well-being?

There are many good websites that can help you to help your child. Most focus on the same key areas: listen, encourage, provide structure. If you have concerns about your child's mental wellbeing, do not hesitate to contact school.

- Will my child be able to access external agencies such as CAMHS?

All support services remain in place, subject to social distancing restrictions. Contact will be made through school or GP and details will follow a referral.

- Will 6th Form pupils be expected to stay in school all day?

Yes. To limit the chances of contamination, all pupils will remain in school for the full day. This includes lunchtime and study periods. 6th Form study will be supervised in the McClay Hall.

- Will I have a timetable to follow?

Yes. You will receive an overview of the interim two-week timetable, showing which year groups will attend on each of the week for two weeks. You will receive a more detailed timetable, showing the subjects you will have on each day. The school day will be divided into three sessions, rather than the usual six teaching periods. You will receive this more detailed timetable during Induction on your first day back to school. This will also be placed on the school website.

- How can I stay safe online?

As you will be working at home for 50% of your timetable, it is important that you know how to stay safe online. There are many websites that can help you to know how to stay safe online. Here are a few tips:

Use the school learning platforms respectfully, treating the thoughts and opinions of others with care