



Cookstown High School
Combined Grammar & Secondary School

Dear Parent and Carer,

You may be aware that the Minister of Education, Peter Weir, announced recently that schools would return on a phased basis on the 24th of August for Year 12 and 14 pupils in an effort to get back to normality and a position of 'business as usual'. The minister also provided guidance for the reopening of schools.

The purpose of this letter is to provide parents with an overview of the practical consideration on how the new arrangements will work, as well as to reassure you of the measures that have been taken to ensure the safety and well-being of your child. Please be aware that it is possible after 6 weeks summer break that arrangements may change, and if they do, we will communicate accordingly. Initially, school will not be timetabled for all year groups every day but will follow a blended learning model which is enclosed with this letter.

On the days your son/daughter is to attend school it is important that he/she knows what to do and where to go. This letter will set out this necessary information, which will also be available on the school website.

On the first day back for each year group, there will be an induction talk as set out below:

Day and date	Year group	Venue
Monday 24 th August	Year 12	Millar Hall (12Y1, Y2, Y3) Boys' Gym (12Y4, Y5)
	Year 14	McClay Hall
Friday 28 th August	Year 8	Details as per letter with Year 8 pack
Tuesday 1 st September	Years 9, 10, 11, 13	Details to follow at a later date

Pupils will be given a detailed two-week timetable at induction, and the modified school day will be explained.

What will the beginning of the new academic year look like?

Within the guidance from the Department of Education is a stipulation that pupils arrive to school at staggered times to avoid unnecessary congestion. Junior pupils (Years 8-10) should arrive to school for 9:25 and Senior pupils (Years 11-14) should arrive to school for 9:40. If it is necessary to drop off junior and senior pupils together, all should make their way to directly to school.

On the first day back for each year group there will be an induction talk; pupils in each year group should make their way directly on arrival to school to the listed venue. On subsequent days, it is essential that all pupils move directly to their classrooms for session 1 on arrival to school. This will have been explained in detail during induction.

Transport to school

At the time of writing this letter to you, we have not received information in regard to transport. We understand that there may be restrictions in place and some of you will be affected by these regulations. When we become aware of these regulations, we will communicate this information to you.

We encourage you, as far as possible, to transport your son/daughter to school by car, avoiding sharing with other families as per government guidance at this time. However, we appreciate that many cars coming on to the site each day will create the congestion we are eager to avoid. Therefore, we ask that you adhere to the arrival times, and avoid using the top car park, near to the upper building of the school. The turning circle area may be busy, but we ask that you remain patient.

If there are any changes to the guidance about transport, especially for buses, we will send this to you.

The school day

Given the current restrictions and social distancing of 1 metre, the High School has been able to timetable pupils for 50% face to face teaching at school and 50% lessons at home through online learning.

The dates for pupil to return are outlined below:

Monday 24 th August	Year 12 and Year 14 (all week)
Friday 28 th August	Year 8 Induction (details of induction have already been sent to parents)
Monday 31 st August	Bank Holiday (School closed)
Tuesday 1 st September	Years 9, 10, 11 & 13
Wednesday 2 nd September	Years 8, 12 & 14
Thursday 3 rd September	Years 9, 10, 11 & 13
Friday 4 th September	Years 8, 12 & 14

We will operate an interim two-week timetable; an overview of this is enclosed with this letter for you to keep safe. A more detailed version will be given to pupils during induction.

We have undertaken a full risk assessment to reassure parents that pupil and staff safety is a priority and every step has been taken to ensure this, as far as is practically possible.

Preparation

In preparation for the new academic year we would ask that you emphasise to your child to build up a level of understanding regarding good respiratory hygiene, using the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and the routine of hand washing using soap and water. This will also be promoted around school and staff will emphasise the importance of good personal care.

Please ensure that your child has his/her own equipment (pen, pencil, ruler, eraser) as school will be unable to lend these out. Pupils should also bring their own supply of tissues and hand sanitiser; they should not lend these to others during the school day.

Social Distancing

The current social distancing guidance of two metres has been reduced to 1 metre between children and young people. A one-way system around school will be in operation and signage will clearly direct all members of the school community. It is essential that pupils act responsibly around school and respect the well-being of others, as well as themselves.

The main strategic objective is to achieve maximum face-to-face teaching for all pupils at the earliest opportunity. However, given the restrictions of social distancing requirements a balance will be provided through blended learning, through a mix of face-to-face teaching and learning from home.

Timetable

The interim timetable will be placed on the school website. The school day will have three teaching and learning sessions. Pupils in Years 8-10 will remain in a designated classroom with teachers coming to them to limit movement around the school. Pupils in Years 11-14 will follow an optionsbased timetable, with some modifications (rooms, length of lesson). Work will continue between face-to-face lessons through online learning, guided by the subject teacher.

6th Form study will be supervised in the McClay Hall.

This is very different from our usual six-period teaching day, when all pupils move around the campus between lessons. This new model meets the requirements of the latest guidance from the Department of Education and requires all members of the school community to adhere closely to the highest standards of personal hygiene and social distancing.

Explanation to pupils will be given on the first day back to school at the end of August or start of September about personal hygiene, especially hand-washing and social distancing. There will be time to ask questions and to dispel worries.

Lunch

Break and lunch will operate at the usual times, with some changes:

- Pupils will have a cold lunch provided by the canteen. The canteen will not provide food at break-time; pupils should bring their own snacks for break.
- Details about payment for lunch through the fingerprint system will be confirmed nearer to the return to school
- Pupils will eat their lunch at distance in one of several large venues in school.
- Pupils are permitted to bring their own packed lunch to school, but they must remain with their bubble while eating this in the prescribed lunch venue for that year.
- Pupils will not be permitted to leave the site during lunchtime. This applies to all year groups from Year 8 to Year 14.
- Parents will receive a menu to make a choice for lunch in advance.

Please note the following:

- We advise pupils to go to the toilet before school. There will be slots during the day for them to do so while on site, but the fewer people using the facilities, the better.
- Pupils should only bring equipment that is absolutely necessary with them - in the first instance, this will be what they need to write, as well as any materials they have at home for their subjects. These items should be kept with them at all times when on site.
- There will be no parents or visitors allowed on site **except** with an appointment.
- Once pupils are on site, pupils are not permitted to leave the site apart from essential appointments.

We will make every effort to support our pupils and it is imperative that they observe social distancing, albeit there may be accidental encroachments. Please be aware, we expect all pupils to adhere and respect the guidelines set down and those pupils who wilfully refuse to follow expectations regarding safety will be sanctioned accordingly. Any pupils found coughing deliberately or spitting in the direction of others will be dealt with.

We very much look forward to welcoming pupils back into school and cannot emphasise enough just how important it is that they attend. We are aware from the varied nature of engagement with online learning that there is no substitute for face-to-face education, and our staff are eager to ensure that pupils do as well they can - particularly given the challenges they have faced this year.

If there are any issues or concerns, please contact the school as soon as possible.

Advice for Parents

Control 1: Prevent the virus coming onto site – most important

- a. Symptoms: if your child or anyone in your family shows symptoms of coronavirus (new, continuous cough or high temperature or loss/change in normal sense of smell/taste) you and they must not attend school and must self-isolate. Please arrange testing – attend testing centres at Craigavon Hospital or Antrim Hospital.
- b. Transmission in the wider community: everyone must maintain the recommended 2m social distancing from those you do not share a permanent home with. This includes on your route to school. Children from different families must not therefore travel to school together in the same car, even if in the same bubble when at school.
- c. Cleanliness/hygiene: please ensure your son/daughter has disposable tissues and hand sanitiser.

Control 2: Limit any possible transmission on the site

- a. Arrival and collection: only 1 parent/carer to accompany each child; please arrive/depart promptly if dropping off or collecting your child and please do not leave your vehicle. The main gate will be open to students who are walking, as usual. If your child drives to school, they will be able to park on site, but must maintain social distance (and must not travel with anyone from a different household).
- b. Groupings: Junior pupils in Years 8-10 will be in consistent groups or bubbles throughout the school day. Senior pupils (Years 11-14) will be in options groups and must move around the school using the one-way system and social distancing. Arrival times, movement around the school, breaks, lunch, departures etc. have all been scheduled to avoid unnecessary contact.
- c. Cleanliness/hygiene: there will be numerous occasions during the day when each child will wash their hands, including immediately on arrival in the morning. Classrooms and other contact-

points will be disinfected repeatedly throughout the day and will not be shared with other students. Classroom will be kept well-ventilated, and also supplied with tissues.

Control 3: Actively monitor, and respond to, developments and feedback: please inform us if your circumstances alter, or if there is anything else you believe should be mentioned. We will also continuously monitor the local, regional and national situation.

It is of course still possible that a child could become unwell with symptoms of coronavirus.

In this case:

1. The child must not be brought into school; the household must self-isolate and follow guidance including that the child is tested. If the symptoms are first noticed at school, then he/she will be sent home. It is essential to inform school promptly of test results.
2. If a child (or an adult) in a group tested positive, then the whole bubble would be sent home to self-isolate for 14 days.
3. It would not be necessary for the other household members of this wider group to self-isolate, unless wider group members themselves also then developed symptoms. In this case, guidance should be followed – including testing – and school must be informed.

Pupil well-being

There were many unknowns around when we would actually get back to school. We have not had a usual pattern of school with all of its annual cycle of events. We will seek to recover normal school routines and focus on teaching and learning through both face-to-face teaching and online learning. Reconnections with friends will provide essential social interactions contributing to holistic development, an aspect of school that has been greatly missed during lock-down.

Please make us aware through the Form Tutor, Head of Year or Vice-Principal (Pastoral) about anything that may be affecting the return to school for pupils who have lost routine, structure, and have missed friendships.

Education at school is best done in community and there will be a transition period as we all return to school. When pupils return, teachers will work with your child and listen to what they have experienced during this most unusual of times, as we move forward together. Please reassure your child/children that there will be a period of transition and that we look forward to welcoming them back for their learning to continue.

We are in uncharted waters and we will continue to work our way through this together with you, as every school is doing, to ensure that we keep our school community safe whilst trying to provide the best education possible.

We will keep you informed of changes and developments; please keep up-to-date with messages on Parent App and the school web-site.