



Allen National School

Telephone/Fax: 045 860043

Email: allen.nationalschool@gmail.com

School Website: www.allennationalschool.com

Registered Charity Number: 20124496

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you are all keeping well and that you have had a nice summer break and a well-deserved rest from home-schooling!

As promised, I am coming back to you now to re-engage with you and to help you prepare yourself and your child(ren) for the return to school. School has been a very lonely place without all of you, so we are really looking forward to having everyone back and to welcoming our new Junior Infants.

I have no doubt that you are all becoming a little anxious about the re-opening of schools and how it is all going to work. The intense media coverage can be very unnerving. Couple that with false or misleading information, rumours or conspiracy theories on social media and you have a right cocktail for stress of the highest degree. I do not want any of you to be anxious or stressed, and so, my plan is to communicate with you on a regular basis over the next 2 weeks – letting you know what is happening, providing updates and seeking information I need from you. Be assured you will have all the information you need in order to ensure your child(ren) has/have a smooth transition back to school or starting school.

We will work together on this, to get it as right as possible, for the children.

Key information for parents at this point:

First to answer some of your questions:

1. Will Junior Infants/new pupils joining classes visit the school before they start?

Yes - we will be accommodating our new pupils and their parents to visit the school in advance of them starting school proper. Preparations for this are underway but are linked to the development of our School Response Plan (see below) and the appointment of the Junior Infant teacher(see below). Hence I cannot give you a date, just yet, for the visits. The appropriate advice and guidelines of the DES and NPHET will apply to the visits.

2. When will the school open?

We are still operating on the assumption that we will be able to go back to school on August 27th, but of course this is dependent on the advice of the DES and NPHE at that time. I will keep you informed of any change to this date as things unfold.

3. When can we collect our uniforms?

Thank you to those who have paid for their uniform order. The uniforms have not arrived to the school as of today. We have contacted the supplier who has not received them yet. I will inform you when they arrive and will let you know then where and when to collect them. If they do not arrive in time and you have no uniform your child/children can wear their own clothes until we get them.

4. Is it safe to use the book rental/school books?

Yes. Thank you to all parents who have paid book rental fees. All monies were due by August 1st – we have all the books ready for your child/children. Books will be distributed to the children on their first day back. Each child will receive a book with their name on it. This will remain their book for the duration of the year and no other child will have access to it. No books will be swapped or shared. *It is very important you ensure your child takes care of their books and brings the correct books to school each day.* Many thanks to the Book Rental Committee of the Parents' Association who have prepared all the books.

5. I didn't get my photos have they arrived?

Yes we have the outstanding photos from the school photographer. We will arrange to pass them to you when school re-opens.

6. My child's teacher was to be appointed - can you tell me their name now?

Unfortunately I can't just yet. Interviews were to be held today Tuesday, but yesterday we were advised not to go ahead in light of the restrictions on travel into Co.Kildare. They have been rescheduled and will occur online. Parents of relevant classes will be informed as soon as possible after contracts are signed.

7. Is it going to be safe for my child to return to school?

I am going to briefly outline, the process that is underway, to re-open our school. It is important that you understand what is going on behind the scenes. It is important that you understand your role in this process and the importance of reading and replying to all the communications I send you over the coming weeks.

The Roadmap for Re-Opening Schools is a document outlining the Department's plan to support schools to re-open. As part of this Plan the Department is providing various funding and guidelines to help us, put in place policies and procedures to assist us mitigate against the virus getting into the school.

Currently we are working on our COVID-19 Policy and on our School Response Plan.

I want to reassure you that the priority for the BOM is the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff and parents at all times. This is all new for all of us. It will take time to get everything organised and the current restrictions in Kildare are affecting access to tradespeople, suppliers and delivery mechanisms. Please bear this in mind. Advice and guidance is changing on an ongoing basis. I am asking you to understand we all need to be flexible and patient as things may change at short notice.

The Department's guidelines are very good and prompt us to prepare and plan for the return to school by identifying risks and the most appropriate control measures to put in place to address them.

It may be helpful for you to think of other work places e.g. doctors' surgeries, supermarkets, garden centres, offices etc. they have all had to adapt their physical space and to develop new routines and ways of going about their business in order to keep their staff and customers safe. Schools are no different. We have to adapt our routines and practices to keep pupils and staff safe. Surgeries, supermarkets, garden centres and offices have all succeeded, I am confident we will too!

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 class will be referred to as a 'bubble' and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles. Within the 3rd -6th bubbles, children may be either seated 1m apart, if possible, or organised into pods. A pod is a group of children (normally 6) who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble (or classroom).

Decreasing Interaction. This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There will be marked routes for various bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms (more information will be available on entering and exiting the school next week). Bubbles will have different mid-morning and lunch-time access to the playground. We will make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

When the procedures are finalised I will send them to you.

8. How can you as a parent help?

Parents will play a critical role in keeping Allen National School covid free. We need you to remain vigilant and to follow all procedures – remember the virus is at its best where there is complacency.

Parents must do these things

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

1. **Parents MUST notify the Principal that they have been abroad and are self isolating.**

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. We do not want your child to be left in isolation for too long so you need to organise for someone who is relatively local to be listed as one of your contacts and for them to be available if you are in work or away from home.

2. **Parents MUST provide the details of at least 4 adults who could be contacted if your child becomes ill in school. Junior Infant parents have already received a form to be completed and returned when they visit the school, parents of children in Senior Infants to 6th class will be contacted next week to update contact details already on file.**

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

It is important that staff be made aware of any medical conditions your child may have.

3. **Parents are advised to inform the school of any medical conditions their child may have. You will be contacted next week to update your child's records re same**

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. Children will be required to wash their hands each time they use the toilet and enter the classroom. 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.

4. **Parents are advised to talk to their children about the importance of hand washing at home and in school. Please model good hand hygiene by washing your own hands and encouraging your child(ren) to wash theirs regularly and particular, if you return inside after being outside.**

5. **To help with home-school communication the school will be using Alladin Connect going forward. This will require parents to download the Aladdin Connect App to their smartphone. Parents are advised the app will require smartphone access.**

6. **Parents are advised to reduce the time children are spending on devices and to try to re-establish bed time routines in preparation for your child returning to school.**

I hope you find this letter helpful. 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 and remaining calm and confident when discussing the return to school with the children.

I will contact you again next week with further information, in the meantime, take care and relax.

Kind regards

Ms McDonagh