



Dear Parent/Guardian,

We would like to continue to update you on our plans for returning safely to school this year. As stated in our previous correspondence, we are extremely grateful to our students, you as parents and our staff in making great efforts to engage so positively during school closure. We want to keep you updated about plans for reopening our school over the next week.

St Augustine's College is committed to a smooth resumption of school operations and the return of our whole school, safely and in adherence to the advice and instructions of public health authorities and Government guidance. Our return to school can only take place in a planned and careful manner with the support and cooperation of our whole school community.

These are unprecedented times and reducing the risks associated with Covid-19 will require us to do certain things differently as we all adjust to the new norm. It is very important to note that all the changes below are emergency measures to ensure the safe return to school for all our staff and students. Measures will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with public health guidelines and any changes will be communicated to all. We are looking forward to welcoming our new first years, and all other returning students to school.

Students returning to school after such a long period of isolation are likely to have concerns about the risk of infection or changes to their school environment due to the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of Covid19.

We will endeavour to support our students as much as possible through our pastoral care structure, through the wellbeing curriculum of SPHE, CSPE and PE, through open communication and partnership with parents/guardians and through directing students towards publicly available sources of support.

Returning to School

Below is a list of some of the measures that St Augustine's College has currently in place or is working on in preparation for our return to school for next week. On first day return to school students need only bring a school bag with pencil case and couple of copies, their lunch and drinks.(Fizzy drinks are not permitted in school).

In the interest of safety to all please do not drive on to school grounds. Students should be dropped off at pedestrian entrance at the front of the school.

Response Plan

All schools are required to implement a School Covid-19 Response Plan, including a:

- Covid-19 Policy Statement
- Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- Procedure in dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

Our school Covid-19 Response Plan has been ratified by the Board of Management and is now available on our school website. http://www.staugustines.ie/images/Covid_19_respponse_Plan.pdf

Initial Return to School Protocol

We strongly encourage all students and their guardians to please look at this clip before returning to school.

<https://youtu.be/bM8IPJ8bQm4>

Each year group will undertake a specific Presentation COVID19 School induction programme on the first day of return to school

Parents/guardians shall keep themselves up to date on the evolving health and safety guidelines as revised and published by the HSA and HSE

All staff will have received Covid-19 induction training.

School Attendance

All schools must have a “Staying at Home if unwell” policy which promotes the prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals. No person (child, teacher or parent) should attend school if unwell or any members of their household are unwell with symptoms consistent with COVID19 i.e. if the child has symptoms of a viral respiratory infection or if there is someone in the household suspected or known to have COVID-19.

Students will not be able to access livestreamed classes from the teacher in school in this case due to current Child Protection and GDPR issues.

Blended Learning

As Covid-19 crisis continues to evolve, St Augustine’s College will take appropriate steps to safeguard our community. This may see a return to distance learning / blended learning. We are preparing contingency plans in the event of school closures.

Parents/guardians must be aware of the symptoms of Covid-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to symptoms of cold or flu. The most common symptoms are fever, cough, and shortness of breath and loss of sense of smell or taste. More information regarding the most up to date signs and symptoms of COVID 19 are available on www.hse.ie.

If a student is absent because of a confirmed case of Covid-19, arrangements will be made for work to be sent home

Parents/guardians shall inform the school on any planned international trips and their intention to return to school after the mandatory 14-day self-isolation period has passed.

International students will follow this same protocol - agencies are responsible for their quarantining arrangements

Parents/guardians are advised that the school reserves the right to decline entry to pupils who appear to have fever or respiratory tract infection. Educational settings do not need to take children’s temperatures every morning.

Heating, Ventilation

Windows and doors will be left open where possible to ensure adequate ventilation

Managing Movement in the School Building

Students should not congregate in any part of the school in groups close to one another.

A traffic flow plan has been finalised for movement within the building and this will include a one-way system in certain blocks. Signage will give clear guidance to students. A video explaining our one way system will be available at <http://www.staugustines.ie/covid-19> in the next few days.

Classrooms are currently being cleared of any excess furniture to facilitate maximum space for social distancing.

Classrooms are also being arranged seating wise to facilitate the maximum space for social distancing. This results in a significant reduction in classroom capacity in each room.

The school will endeavour to support physical distancing. Based on our experience we have no doubt that our students will be fully cooperative.

During the School Day

School Times

Class begins as normal at 9.00am and finishes at 3.55pm and 1.15pm on Fridays.

Uniform

All students will wear their full school uniform every day. As always, students are expected to maintain clean and neat attire.

Please ensure that your child's belongings are fully and clearly labelled. Students cannot share any belongings or equipment with other students

Classrooms & Classes

Much of the school space has been reconfigured to create larger additional classroom spaces including –

- Canteen
- Study hall
- Handball alley
- Single desks only in the classrooms

Canteen

The canteen is not available at break times. Students will be assigned a classroom in which to eat their lunch and an outside area to exercise with their friends, again with social distancing. We plan to re-open canteen services if possible at a later stage.

As per direction from the Department of Education and Skills, the water taps will not be available to students. They are encouraged to bring their own filled water bottle to school each day.

Behaviour

All students are expected to follow the schools Code of Behaviour as normal. In particular, students are required to abide by all procedures, directions and protocols designed to prevent the spread of infection. Refusal to do so will be regarded as a serious breach of school rules and subject to appropriate sanctions.

Student feeling unwell - Students should bring this to the attention of their teacher or if on break, come immediately to the Principal and follow HSE guidance thereafter. An isolation area will be available in the school building for any person who is awaiting collection.

After School Supervised Study

We hope to run supervised study in the school. This is still under review.

Extra-Curricular Activities

We have been advised to delay the commencement of extra-curricular activities until the day to day running of the school is operating fully first. But we look forward to being in a position to offer some activities when we can.

Personal Protective Equipment

Face Coverings/Masks

Following the Minister's announcement on 7th August 2020, all students must wear a face covering in school. These should be reusable and washed every day. **The school will supply the students with one mask and a face shield.**

More details are available on <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>

We request that students refrain from wearing face masks that depict any imagery on them so as not to cause offence to others. Face masks will not need to be worn when students are exercising, eating or drinking. Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic or the need to social distance.

Gloves

The use of disposable gloves in the school by students or staff is not appropriate. Routine use does not protect the wearer and may expose others to risk from contaminated gloves. Routine use of disposable gloves is not a substitute for hand hygiene.

Hand Sanitiser

The use of hand sanitiser is mandatory. Everyone entering the school building will be required to sanitise their hands at the entry point. Regular handwashing with soap and water will be necessary during the school day. Sanitising points will also be available throughout the school building including in every classroom. Hand sanitizing stations have been installed inside every classroom and areas of entrance & exit. Everyone will be required to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving a classroom.

Students should perform hand hygiene: on arrival at school; before eating or drinking; after using the toilet; after playing outdoors; when their hands are physically dirty; when they cough or sneeze; when they move to another classroom. Parents/guardians encouraged to advise and practise good hygiene with their children at home. A small bottle of hand sanitiser may be carried by each student individually.

Cleaning products to sanitize surfaces will be available in all classrooms.

A separate isolation room has been provided in school to accommodate students who feel ill in school and present with symptoms.

Environmental Hygiene and Cleaning Regimes

Students and staff are required to bring minimum amount of belongings into school. The school is not responsible for lost property.

Students and staff will be required to clean their own desk, chair and work area each day. Supplies of cleaning spray, paper towels and wipes will be provided in every room.

Students using computers will be required to wipe down the keyboard, mouse, desk and chair with a sanitising wipe before leaving the room.

Students will be asked to take their own packaging and rubbish home each day with them in their lunchbox. Bins will be available in every room for the disposal of masks, tissues, wipes etc. The cleaning staff will empty bins as required.

Our caretaking staff will be continually and routinely cleaning touch points around the school building including classroom doors, stair rails, bathroom sinks and doors etc.

These cleaning arrangements will be closely monitored and reviewed

Visiting the School

Parents/guardians are asked to make only essential visits to the school. An appointment must be made with the Principal/Deputy Principal prior to visiting the school – drop-ins will not be possible. Parents will be asked to remain in the car park and to telephone the school office to gain entry.

Meetings must be confined to one parent/guardian rep only and the meeting can last no longer than 40mins

Dealing with a COVID19 Suspect/Confirmed case

General Guidelines

Suspected Case of Covid 19 : Procedures are in place for dealing with a suspected case in school as per DES guidelines . You will receive a call and be asked to collect your child promptly from the isolation area and contact your GP.

If a student displays symptoms of COVID19, the school shall:

- Isolate the student i.e. the student will be accompanied to the designated isolation area keeping a 2m distance from the symptomatic student
- The student will be wearing their mask
- Contact is made immediately with the parent/guardian who will be asked to collect their child and advised to contact their GP immediately and continue self-isolation at home. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- Facilitate the student presenting with symptoms remaining in the isolation room if they cannot immediately go home
- Advice shall be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and put the tissue in the waste bag provided
- Carry out an assessment of the incident which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery
- Arrange for the appropriate cleaning of the isolation area
- Provide advice and assistance if contacted by the HSE

The school will be contacted by the HSE to discuss the case and identify people who have been in contact with the suspected case of COVID19 and they will provide advice on any actions or precautions that shall be taken. The HSE will also be in contact with the case directly to advise on isolation and in identifying other contacts to provide them with appropriate advice also.

Confirmed Case of Covid 19 : In the case of a confirmed case of Covid 19, contact tracing will be carried out by the HSE and the school will follow their advice.

Confidentiality in all cases is important and all people should ‘avoid the rumour mill’.

Highly Vulnerable Students

The Department will provide further guidance on how to support high risk students in the coming days.

Further information

The following link on www.gov.ie contains further information that may answer your queries/concerns

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7acad-reopening-our-post-primary-schools/>

Both the Department of Education and we as a school, appreciate that we are living through exceptional times which impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times. People have been naturally worried about the risk to their physical health and that of their loved ones. There will be a significant emphasis on promoting the wellbeing of our school community to ensure a successful return to school as we all continue to manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We realise that many of these measures sound scary and daunting, but we will do everything we can to help you and your child through the process. If we continue to work together, we can make this challenging time that bit easier and hopefully keep our school open. Thank you for your continued support of our school and we look forward to being in contact with you soon again.

Michael O'Sullivan

Principal

Jim Power

Deputy-Principal

Nollaig Sheehan

Deputy-Principal