

School Restart – 4.1.22



Dear Parents,

School reopens for all pupils on **Thursday 6th January 2022.**

Following our most recent update from DENI there are currently no plans for a 'circuit breaker' and in turn there are no further plans in delaying the reopening of our schools.

As we proceed into this new term of the academic year, I appeal once more for your continued support as we anticipate many challenges with the latest variant of Covid19. It is very alarming indeed, to witness how Omicron and the alarming rate by which it is transmitted threatens our school/local community and our country as a whole. We wish to reassure you that we will continue to do all we can to limit the level of disruption this pandemic continues to have on our pupils' education.

Mitigation measures we will continue to have in place:

- All classes will continue to operate in bubbles, with hand hygiene remaining high priority for all
- Regular sanitising of pupils' work stations/desks will take place throughout the school day. (Additional supplies of kitchen roll/ antibacterial wipes would be greatly appreciated)
- All adults on the school premises will wear face coverings and we request that if you visit our school premises you ensure face coverings are worn at all times
- Circulation of air and monitoring of CO2 levels, as recommended will be ongoing. Classrooms will have windows/doors open to promote good circulation of air flow, whilst running our heating systems. We ask you ensure your child takes their coat to school as we are in the midst of colder weather
- Lateral Flow Test (LFT) – Staff members will continue to take LFT regularly and prior to this new school term commencing. We urge you to consider taking regular LFT for your children to help our school community remain as safe as possible and reduce the rates of transmission
- Pupils who avail of the school bus service will continue to wear face coverings for the duration of their journey to and from school

Potential challenges we may face:

- **Absenteeism of staff**, both teaching and non-teaching may cause disruption. Accessing the substitute teaching register has become almost impossible as the high demand for substitute teachers is exhausted across the province. In the event of teaching staff absence, I will cover classes where possible like last term and we will aim to source substitute teachers. This will essentially mean further disruption to the delivery of our intervention programmes.

- **Non-teaching staff absences** – there is currently no register to access for cover. Can we ask if there are any parents who wish to assist, if this is the case please give your name into the school office and we can complete the appropriate Access NI for you in the event of additional support being required. If non-teaching staff members are absent it is highly likely we will redeploy the resources we have to ensure pupils' Health and Safety continue to remain our key priority.
- Continuity of pupils' learning should remain consistent, as our teaching staff always plan in advance of each week using comprehensive schemes of work. The delivery however may be given via different personnel if we experience staffing shortages.

Pupil absence/Reporting Covid absence

If your child will be absent over the coming term due to Covid or other illness, we ask you to please alert Mrs Morrow on the following email:

lmorrow846@c2kni.net

We ask that you refrain from communicating your child's absence via Seesaw to your child's class teacher.

If your child is absent, we will endeavour to ensure their learning is facilitated via Seesaw, if isolating due to Covid.

Please be advised your child's class teacher will post work daily, but we ask you to be mindful this is alongside our provision of face to face learning in class and the high likelihood they will be facilitating more than one child via Seesaw on a daily basis.

PHA Guidance

Changes to self-isolation for Covid 19 cases have been announced on PHA website, please refer to their website for further guidance.

Some cases will now be able to end isolation after seven days instead of ten, provided they have negative lateral flow results on day six and day seven with tests taken 24 hours apart. The first test must be taken no earlier than day six of the self-isolation period. If lateral flow tests are positive individuals must continue to isolate for the full 10 days.

As we proceed to enter this new term, we ask for your continued support, ensuring we all take a collective responsibility, reducing our social contacts outside of school and taking cognisance of the governmental guidelines and continuing to wear face coverings.

We would like to thank you for your due diligence and support throughout Term one, which we know we can count on for this coming term ahead.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further queries.

Yours in continued partnership

C. Wadsworth and staff of St. Joseph and St. James's P.S.