18th August 2020

Dear Parents,

We have been working to make sure a return to school is a smooth and enjoyable experience for all our children and staff, whilst taking account of the stringent Health and Safety guidance from Public Health officials. The Department of Education published re-opening guidance, ‘New School Day’ Version 2, in which particular attention is paid to social distancing, hygiene and physical protection, school meals catering services and curriculum delivery; we have taken cognisance of this document in our planning.

Here at Dromintee PS, we appreciate the sentiment in the ministerial foreword to the 70-page document that, ‘there will be staff, pupils and parents who may feel a level of anxiety around the return to school and it is important that we work together to assure them that while the more normal return to school carries an element of risk, schools are taking all steps possible to keep the school as safe an environment (as possible) for children and young people, staff and parents’.

We offer detail on the first few weeks of term, with some particulars outlined. Other elements will be expanded upon at class level and will be shared with you.

Children will return to school for an induction/orientation/’getting to know you’ session week commencing Monday 24th August. Details are as follows:

Tuesday 25th P2 P7 9.30 – 12.00

Wednesday 26th P3 P6 9.30 – 12.00

Thursday 27th P4 P5 9.30 - 12.00

P7 will also be attending all day Thursday, but will be off-site.

P1 will be invited into class in small groups on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Staff school development days will take place on Monday 24th and Friday 28th August. There will be no pupils in school on these two days.

There will be no school on the bank holiday on Monday 31st August.

School will open at 8.30am on Tuesday 2nd September to receive ALL pupils. There will be no staggered start or finish times. Each class has its own entrance/exit and children will be supervised in class from 8.30 onwards. School starts at 9am.

P1 will use the entrance by the outdoor reading room in the infant playground.

P2 will use an external back door – this can be accessed via the early years’ playground. Please leave your child at this area. At 2pm please wait by the fencing at Eva’s garden for pick up.

P3 will use a designated external back door. Please leave your child at this area. It can be accessed via the early years’ yard or the bicycle shelter area and overlooks the football pitch. Pickup will be at 2pm for the first 2 terms.

P4 will be the only pupils to use the main school front door. Pick up will be from this area also at 3pm.

P5 will use the entrance to the left of the main school door at the front of the school. It is the door that the ‘bus folk’ normally leave from. This is also where they will be picked up at 3pm.

P6 and P7 both have separate entrance/exit doors which opens directly into their classroom. These can be accessed at the back of the school, overlooking the school football field.

When dropping off and picking up from school please maintain a distance of 2m from other adults. This may be done by parking further away from the school and then walking with your children to avoid congestion - ‘park and stride’.

The layout of the classrooms will permit all children to be present with best spacing and practical protections. A class will act as a single consistent group or bubble, with minimal prolonged interaction with other classes within the school. Break times and lunchtimes will be staggered. Children will be permitted to take lunch boxes to school and will place them in the trolley at their specific entrance. Lunches will be eaten in the classroom. School meals will be served and consumed in Slieve Gullion hall, as is usual.

Hand sanitisers are placed at every entrance to the school and pupils will be encouraged to engage with thorough hand washing throughout the day. Managing of visits to the toilet has been addressed and each class will have a system which best suits their age and location.

No parents are permitted to enter the school building. The foyer will be used as an additional teaching space. The front hall will be used as a waiting area. Please make an appointment before you come to the school on any issue.

We have endeavoured to be wholly compliant with the guidelines and to ensure a welcoming atmosphere for our children. Coats and school bags may be taken to school, as may water bottles and pencil cases. We will be encouraging children not to share or exchange their personal belongings. We would ask that all your child’s belongings are labelled.

Soap and warm water, disposable paper towels, tissues and hand sanitiser is available in each classroom in Dromintee Primary School. Some adults may choose to wear a facemask or a face shield, it will be a matter of personal choice. Children are not expected to wear face coverings. ‘Given the risk mitigations in place in schools to limit and contain the spread of COVID-19, face coverings are not generally recommended for routine use in schools’. (DE 13.8.2020).

We look forward to welcoming you all back. We want to ensure our environment is safe physically and psychologically. The staff will continue to strive to ensure that your children, our pupils, are encouraged to reach their full potential. Our school development day on Monday 24th August will address the integration of ‘healing schools’ practices and well-being and resilience exercises for pupils into our curriculum.

Mrs Wendy McKeown Mrs Michelle Kelly

Principal Vice-Principal