

Mon, 10th August.

Dear Parent / Guardian, Staff Member,

RE: Re-opening of Caherleaheen NS

I hope you and your families are keeping well.

We are working towards the re-opening of our school safely, in line with current guidance and recommendations.

Re-opening the school safely will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community – BoM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner which prevents the spread of the virus and allows the vital work of Teaching and Learning to proceed with as little disruption as possible.

We have been working on our plan for the safe reopening of the school for some weeks now and have published the [DES COVID-19 Response Plan](#) for the safe and sustainable reopening of Primary and Special Schools on our school website. The Response Plan gives details of

- Physical preparation, signage, hand sanitiser stations,
- Advice, procedures and training for the safe return to working in the school for all school staff and pupils
- General and specific advice on how all pupils, staff, parents and visitors will prevent the spread of the virus

We have also published our [COVID-19 Policy Statement](#) on the school website. Our BoM will keep you informed as to the progress of our re-opening plans and provide you with the information required by you to play your part in safely re-opening the school.

RE: Physical Distancing and Safe School Attendance

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 bubbles, children will be 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. The school population will be divided in two for yard breaks. Therefore we will have two small breaks and two lunch breaks, so as to accommodate distancing of bubbles in the playground.

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.

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

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing, sanitizing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. 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. All staff members will wear face-shields and individual staff members will not be prevented from wearing masks if they so wish. The DoES has not indicated that primary school children should wear shields or masks. However some parents may want their children to wear face protection and you are perfectly entitled to exercise this right.

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.

We will keep in touch with you in the coming weeks and will forward further details such as staggered times for safe arrival and collection of children.

We are really looking forward to welcoming our children back to school and will be doing all that we can to ensure that their return to school is a safe and enjoyable experience for the children.

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Vivian Nolan
Chairperson Board of Management

Mary Connolly
Principal