St Michael’s PS,

49, Lisnaragh Rd

Dunnamanagh, Strabane

Co Tyrone BT82 0QN

24th August 2021

Dear Parent,

I trust the children all had a good summer, enjoying the break and recharging their batteries after such a challenging school year. We look forward to starting a new term on Wednesday 1st September. Covid 19 Guidance, in relation to the reopening of schools, was issued by the Department of Education on Wednesday 18th August. I am providing you with a summary of the main points that impact on the return to school for you and your children. Please keep this information for future reference.

1. **Pupils are required to self-isolate until they have received a negative PCR test: pupils who are deemed to be a close contact, must have a PCR test on day 2 and day 8 of being identified as a close contact.**
2. **If a pupil displays symptoms of COVID-19, they, and any members of their household within the school will be sent home and advised to follow the**[**PHA guidance**](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/covid-19-information-public#what-should-i-do-if-i-think-i-have-covid-19) **for households with a possible COVID-19 infection.**
3. DE has said that there is no longer a need for bubbles. However, they have asked schools to continue to support effective contact tracing means by maximising the time where pupils are within a consistent group of pupils. Like many other schools we have decided to maintain class bubbles and minimise contact between classes.

Family groups will be asked to continue to sit together on the bus and all pupils will be asked to keep to the same seat each day, as far as possible. Pupils should continue to wear a face covering on the school bus, where they are able to do so.

The use of the assembly hall for lunchtime will resume with our two separate lunchtimes as before: P1-4: 12.15-1.00pm and P5-7 12.45-1.30pm. Classes will sit separately and children will have designated seats.

Staff will do their best to stick to their class group, with minimum contact with other classes, only when necessary.

These practices became second nature to all of us last year and we think it safest to continue them as precautionary measures for the foreseeable future.

1. Pupils will be able to bring school bags, pencil cases, lunchboxes etc to school. Items will only be isolated if a pupil has Covid and then their items will be isolated and cleaned before going back into general circulation.
2. Pupils will continue to enter and leave the school by different doors. P1/2 via play area, P3/4 via side entrance at canteen (now free after work completion). P5/6 by the main door. P7 by the back door. Pupils will continue to wash their hands on entering the class and handwashing will be maintained throughout the day and before home-time. Hand sanitiser will not be used as a substitute for hand washing, but as a helpful additional layer of protection. Pupils will be reminded to practise good hygiene in relation to coughing, sneezing etc and a ready supply of tissues will always be available in class.
3. Staff will be on hand to escort pupils into school at the start of school each day. At the end of the school day, staff will continue to escort pupils to the bus and to the school gate for collection by parents.
4. Parents who are dropping off children, should not gather outside the school and should maintain distancing of 2m, as far as practicable.
5. Pupils should wear their school PE uniform to school on days when they have PE. They will not be changing in school for PE. Teachers will inform you as soon as possible which days of the week this will be. Pupils must wear their PE uniform and not other PE gear on these days. PE uniform should only be worn on PE days, with school uniform being worn on other days. We hope to confirm a date soon for collection of PE uniforms from the school.

I assure you we will continue to provide as safe a school environment for everyone that we possibly can, and look forward to what will be a more ‘normal’ school year for all of us. Just mentioning normal, I will send all the ‘normal new school year information’ at the start of the school term.

*J Carlin (Mrs)*

*Principal*

**A reminder of symptoms:**

* a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR
* a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR
* a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste.

**You must follow the advice on the PHA website.**