



Holy Family School for the Deaf

Navan Road, Cabra, Dublin DO7 TH79

: 01 838 0058 | F: 01 838 0230 | E: info@holyfamilydeafschool.ie

Principal: Eimear O'Rourke, M. Ed | Deputy Principal: Eugene Doyle

21st August 2020

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I hope you and your family are safe and well.

We are looking forward to welcoming your son or daughter back on the first week of September and helping them to re-engage with learning in Holy Family. Indeed, we cannot wait to see our school alive again with joyful and energetic pupils who long to be re-united with their friends and our staff.

A Safe Return

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.

Re-opening the school safely will require the continued co-operation of all members of our School Community – BoM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils.

Return Dates

Post Primary classes will return on a phased basis over two days.

Wednesday 2nd September 1st year, 3rd year and 6th year students only

Thursday 3rd September all students will return to school including 2nd year, 4th year and 5th year students.

If you are uncertain which year group your son or daughter belongs to, please phone the school office 01 8080058.

Early Intervention
T: 01 868 9910

Primary
T: 01 868 9910

Post Primary
T: 01 838 0058

Boarding
infoboarding@cidp.ie



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Return to School Arrangements

We want to have school seem as "normal" as possible for our pupils when they return. In line with Department of Education & Skills guidelines, we will take a balanced and common-sense approach to create awareness about COVID-19 and to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into our school. The most relevant measures and messages are outlined below and will also be uploaded to our school website in coming days. As with all plans, these measures will be kept under continuous review and changes will be made as necessary.

General School Measures

- **NO CHILD, STAFF MEMBER OR PARENT SHOULD ATTEND OUR SCHOOL IF UNWELL OR IF ANY MEMBERS OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD ARE UNWELL WITH SYMPTOMS CONSISTENT WITH COVID-19.**
- Visitors to our school building will be limited to **essential visits only** and should be made by prior arrangement.
- Parents wishing to collect their son or daughter for an appointment should contact the office prior to arrival at the school.
- Sanitising stations will be available at school entry/exit points and in all classrooms.
- School will be cleaned every day in line with public health recommendations.
- Guidelines around social distancing of 2m between adults, hand hygiene and correct cough etiquette should be adhered to at all times.
- Newsletters and updates will be shared with parents through emails, school mobile and the school website to reduce paper sharing between school and home.
- All payments if possible should be made using bank transfer to avoid cash handling and potential spread of infection. Please phone the school office if you need assistance

Physical Distancing

We have upgraded 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.

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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. The school will keep a record of students who share school transport to and from school and who are in the same boarding house.

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. Bubbles will have different mid-morning and lunch-time access to the yards. We will make these routines as easy as possible emphasising safety at all times.

School Transport

Although Pupils in Special Schools are not expected to adhere to social distance or wear masks on school transport, we are asking our Post Primary pupils on school transport to wear face coverings or visors. We are asking you our parents to provide these face coverings. The Escort and driver will also wear face coverings. The driver of your child's bus service will contact you with more information. Students **must** put the mask/face covering they wear on school transport into a sealable/zip-lock bag and keep it in their locker until they leave the school building at the end of the day. Face coverings worn on school transport must not be worn in school.

Arrival to School

Our aim is to avoid groups of children and/or adults at the school door. Entry to school building will be supervised to insure social distancing

- Pupils travelling on school transport should remain in the car/bus until the school doors are open at **8.45 a.m.**
- **Buses will be called one at a time to the front door by a member of school staff and students will disembark.**
- **All entry routes will be clearly marked and supervised.**
- These routes will be shown to pupils in the videos to be shared prior to re-opening

Students enter through assigned doors (different for each group) to designated areas to access lockers sanitise hands etc and meet their SNA who will escort them to their classroom



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End of the school Day

In order to avoid large congregations of parents/Bus Escorts at collection times, we need to implement staggered collection arrangements. They are as follows:

Boarding students will leave the school building 5 minutes early. All boarding students should return directly to their boarding campus. Students travelling on school transport will leave at 3.30 and should proceed directly to their bus. Students will be supervised to ensure social distancing and an orderly exit from the building.

School Uniform

Uniforms should be cleaned/launched on a regular basis. On days when your son/daughter has PE they should wear their PE uniform to school.

Face Masks : it is mandatory for all staff and post primary level pupils to wear face coverings.

Special schools can have an exemption for some pupils who find this a difficulty. We will provide all staff and pupils with visors that are Deaf friendly and have the approval of the Deaf Community and Chime. Visors worn in the school building must stay in the school building. Visors will be sanitised and stored at the end of the school. Each student and staff member will have their own visor. Visors should not be shared or swapped.

Hand Hygiene

As parents, we ask you to emphasise the importance of hand hygiene and cough etiquette with your son or daughter. **We ask that all pupils wash their hands at home before coming to school.**

Pupils will be asked to sanitise their hands at the following times during the day:

- On arrival at school
- On entering and leaving classrooms
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outdoors
- When their hands are physically dirty (look dirty)
- When they cough or sneeze.
- After changing battery in hearing aid/cochlear implant



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In the classroom

- Contact between class groups (bubbles) will be kept to a minimum.
- Coats, phones etc. should be kept to a minimum and will be kept in pupils' lockers to limit contact as much as possible.
- Shared resources such as tablets, laptops, etc. will be cleaned after use.
- Students MUST have their own materials for class as sharing of materials will not be permitted. Please ensure your son/daughter has adequate pens, pencils, ruler etc

School Lunches

Students MUST bring their own lunch to school. Please note there will be no facilities for heating food so please do not send in food that needs to be toasted /microwaved etc as these facilities will not be available. The school shop will be closed.

Pupils will be assigned an area for break and lunch and separate yards will be accessed by each group.

Audiology

Audiology support will continue to be provided to all students following all necessary safety measures. Please ensure that your son/daughter arrives at school with working hearing aid/cochlear implant and other assistive technology (FM system) if applicable. Students should have spare hearing aid/cochlear implant batteries and be encouraged to change these themselves where possible. As always assistance will be provided to students when required. Spare batteries are available in school as usual at a cost of 50 cent per battery.

Curriculum and Learning

Teachers will be following the Department of Education and Skills Guidance on Learning and School Programmes for Post Primary School Leaders and Teachers. The wellbeing of our students is of utmost importance and we wish to provide as smooth a transition as possible for students returning to school.

Illness

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- As already stated, **NO CHILD, STAFF MEMBER OR PARENT SHOULD ATTEND OUR SCHOOL IF UNWELL OR IF ANY MEMBERS OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD ARE UNWELL WITH SYMPTOMS CONSISTENT WITH COVID-19.**
- **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>

- If a pupil develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 during the school day, they will be brought immediately to a designated isolation area with a staff member. Parents will be contacted immediately to bring them home and seek further medical advice as necessary.
- If a pupil has been advised by a doctor to isolate, parents should contact the school.

Return to School Videos

We are creating class videos for pupils to help allay any fears they may have about the return to school. These videos will bring them (and you) through the school day - arriving at school, classrooms, breaktimes and going home time. I am confident that our pupils will ease seamlessly back into the school routine and we will all do our very best to ensure that the transition is as easy as possible for them.

Class teachers and SNAs

I would like to welcome Mr Michael McGrath to the Post Primary teaching team and Ms.Elaine Condron, Mr Jason Maguire and Ms Caitlin Claffey who will join the Post Primary SNA team. I extend good wishes to Mr Pdraig Brady and Ms Catherine McFarlane who are on leave of absence this year

Summer Work

We have made great efforts over the Summer months to have the school welcoming and ready for the pupils. Joey Watson, our caretaker, has been very busy painting and maintaining the school grounds.



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We Are in This Together

As we face this task of re-opening our school in a safe and sustainable way, I thank you all for your co-operation with these measures. Our main priority is the health and safety of everybody in our school community and we believe that these measures will work towards ensuring that. If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact the school at the above numbers or by email: info@holyfamilydeafschool.ie

Please note procedures put in place will be reviewed on an on-going basis and as updated advice is published by the Department of Education and Skills

An ISL translation of this letter is available on our website together with ISL Covid related signs.

I hope you all enjoy the final days of the summer break.

Yours sincerely,

Eimear O'Rourke M.Ed
Principal