

Principal: Mr. D. Ó Briain
Deputy Principal: Ms. M. B. Walsh
Roll Number: 62380M
CEIST - Presentation Sisters



P: +353 (0)21 4631 973
W: www.stmarysmidleton.com
E: info@stmarysmidleton.com
T: @StMarysMidleton

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians(s),

I sincerely trust that this letter finds you and your family safe and well. We are pleased to be able to share with you the plans around your daughter's return to school for the 2020/21 academic year. In order to reopen as safely as we can a number of precautionary measures have been implemented where feasible and practicable. These measures and protocols have been implemented on the instruction of the Department of Education & Skills as outlined in the Roadmap for Return to School and associated documents.

Given that the school building in which we operate has evolved over the years through the addition of a number of different extensions, making the accommodations suggested in the Roadmap for Return to School has presented a very significant challenge. As you are also aware, student numbers in St. Mary's have increased considerably in recent years and that has also added to the task before us. Many of you will have read articles in the newspapers over the weekend about the challenges faced by schools across the country and also noted with concern the increase in cases notified to the HSE in recent times. While the challenges will vary from school to school and the behaviour of some individuals may place re-opening schools in jeopardy I want to reassure you that the management and staff of St. Mary's are steadfastly committed to having all students return in a safe and sensible manner as soon as possible. However, in order to make this happen we need all of the school community to understand that the experience of school for students in 2020/21 will be profoundly different from school as it was pre-Covid. But most importantly, if the school is to remain open and if students and staff are to be safe we need everyone to accept and adhere to the safety procedures that have been put in place. Not to do so would place what we hold most dear in jeopardy and compromise the ability of our school to remain operational.

We have sought to utilise and reconfigure all available space and made changes where possible. We have reviewed timetables in line with recommendations. In some cases livestreaming from one class to another will be employed to allow for social distancing. We have looked at all options including sourcing classroom space in the local community. All of our PE classes will be delivered off site as the school hall has been repurposed to accommodate mainstream classrooms. We have introduced a one-way system for moving throughout the school to reduce congregation on corridors. This has involved significant remedial construction work which is still ongoing.

Despite all efforts we will still find ourselves in exceptional circumstances where physical distancing for larger classes may on occasions not be possible, due to the nature of our school building. In some instances staff and students will have to wear face coverings/visors where the class size exceeds 24 and live streaming is not possible. Students and staff will also be required to wear face coverings when moving on corridors between classes.



CEIST
Catholic Education
An Irish Schools Trust

School staff know that wellbeing is important and needed for learning to happen. We are prioritising the things that we know will promote wellbeing at this time.

School staff know that parents have made great efforts to support their child's continued education when schools were closed and that parents have done your best. Teachers will be starting with where every student is at.

Getting back to a school routine, getting enough sleep, eating healthily, taking physical exercise, taking some time to be creative and reconnecting with friends will help everyone to settle back in.

Travel

Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone.

It is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of 'normal precautions' ("green"), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

Start and End of School Day

The school will be open for students as normal from 8am onwards. Students will access the building via the entrance assigned to their year group. Students should sanitise their hands upon entry and follow the one-way system to their designated classroom. At the end of the school day students will exit the building via the designated exits assigned to each year group. Students must not congregate in the school yard or in front of the school at the end of the school day. We are currently looking at the feasibility of staggering the exit times for students at the end of the day to reduce the risk of this happening.

We would also request your cooperation in helping to impress on students that they should not congregate outside the school, near the shop or in the walkway behind the houses on St. Mary's Road prior to school in the morning.

Break and Lunchtime / Canteen

Students will have to remain in their classrooms for lunch unless they want to avail of our outside spaces when the weather permits. For the moment, students will not go in and out of each other's classrooms as we would normally allow, nor will students be allowed to have lunch in the corridors.

For now, there will be no canteen facilities. Students should therefore bring a packed lunch each day. In order to minimise congregation at lunch times we are working on staggering lunch times for different year groups.

Classrooms

Students will now be classroom based with the teachers moving between the classrooms. Students will only move for subject options and PE classes. In the main, students will be

assigned to the same classroom as much as is possible and will also be assigned to a specified seat within the classroom in order to assist with contact tracing should the need arise. Classrooms have been reconfigured and seating arrangements have been laid out in line with the recommendations in the Roadmap for Return to School in order to maximise classroom space.

Curriculum

We are proposing to run a mostly unchanged curriculum. But there may be occasions where live streaming will be a feature of the lesson in order to reduce class size. The Roadmap for Return to School outlines adjustments that will be made in assessment and curriculum at a national level in particular for those students who are entering 3rd and 6th Year. No decision has been communicated to schools so far regarding the holding of the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate next year. For the moment, homework and copies will not be collected but will instead be submitted via MS Teams or email.

Lockers

For now, students will not have access to lockers in order to alleviate the issue of congregation and also to facilitate movement on the corridors. Staff will work with students to reduce, where possible, the need to carry as many books between home and school. Staff are committed to moving as much as possible to the use of e-books and digital resources to facilitate student learning. Students will be allowed to bring in their own portable devices such as iPads, tablets, laptops but they will only be needed when required by the teacher. The safety and security of devices brought to school will be the responsibility of each individual student. This is a trial approach and will be reviewed before the end of September.

School Uniform

Students are expected to wear school uniform each day in line with the school's uniform policy. Students should ensure that they have the appropriate school jacket with them at all times to ensure they are protected against the weather when availing of the outside spaces around the school or walking to and from the PE studio.

P.E. Gear: in line with the Roadmap for return to School, schools are obliged to comply with the Return to Sports Protocol:

- Changing facilities will not be available to students.
- On the days when students have P.E on their timetable they must come to school in their official P.E. uniform and, as there are no changing facilities, will remain in that for the day.

Face Coverings

- SMHS will provide all students with a reusable facemask and a visor.
- Students must wear one/ both of these when the recommended social distance cannot be adhered to.

- We recommend that students purchase a second facemask to facilitate washing them.
- Students must have a small Zip lock bag or container for storing their mask when not in use.
- Disposable masks are not advised.

Hand Sanitising

- Hand sanitising units have been set up in each classroom and throughout the school corridors but students may wish to bring their own sanitiser. Please ensure it complies with the HSE guidelines.

Students will be asked to wash their hands or use sanitiser on entry and exit of the school building and on occasion during the day. Sanitising stations will be in place throughout the school building in line with DES recommendations.

- Desks will be wiped down at the end of every day but students are asked to bring in their own wipes to clean their own work area

Equipment

Students are asked not to share personal items or equipment with each other. Along with their other school belongings students should bring an extra face covering, hand sanitiser, a packet of wipes and tissues to school each day.

Cleaning

Extra staff are being employed to clean the school more regularly. The whole school community will have a role to play in keeping their own work area and school equipment clean throughout the day.

Visitors to the School

St. Mary's High School has always been a welcoming environment and as far as we possibly can we would like to ensure that this is maintained. With 740 students in our care we are aware that on occasion parents may need to come to the school. If this arises parents should do so by appointment and follow the agreed visitor protocols. However, we would ask that where possible parents should communicate with relevant staff by phone or email rather than in person. We will update the contact form on our web site to assist with this. We will also be facilitating payments for school activities and school expenses via the school App.

Forgotten Items – Protocol

- Should a parent/guardian need to drop any item(s) in for a student, they must place it/them on the table situated in the front door porch and ensure that their daughter's name is clearly noted on the item. This table will be checked before small & big lunch and the student(s) concerned will be called at an appropriate juncture and notified to collect same.

- Parents/Guardians are asked to not attend the school unless absolutely essential, e.g. to collect an unwell student; to collect & bring a student to an appointment or to drop in a lunch. If a student forgets a schoolbook / copy / pencil case etc., this is considered as NON ESSENTIAL and parents/guardians are not to drop these to the school.

Feeling Anxious or Need Support

We fully understand that this may be an anxious time for many students. We have an excellent pastoral care team in the school comprising Class Teachers, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, SEN support team and the Leadership team. Students will have access to whatever support they need to help them to navigate these challenging times.

What will happen if someone develops symptoms or tests positive for Covid?

Should we have a positive case of Covid within the school community, we will follow DES Guidelines and take our advice from the HSE.

If a student is in a household where someone has tested positive for COVID-19 then the school principal must be informed and the student must remain at home.

Remote Learning

We may have to engage with remote learning at some point in the future and therefore, I would request that parents and students prepare as much as possible should the school find itself in a lockdown situation again.

First Day Back

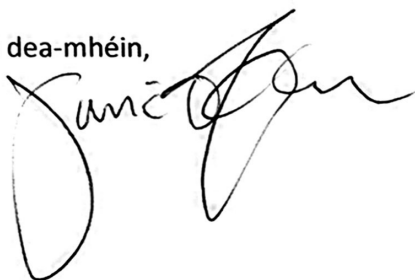
Students should bring the minimum amount of materials with them on the first day i.e. pens, copy book/ refill pad and a packed lunch.

The next few weeks will be a daunting and challenging time for all of us. We are continuing to plan for your daughter's return and to do all we can to mitigate the risks. We will keep all of our plans, protocols and procedures under review and we will communicate any changes or adaptations as the need arises. We all have a role to play by ensuring that we take responsibility for our actions in protecting not only ourselves but others, particularly those who are most vulnerable. The health and wellbeing of our whole school community is the responsibility of each and every one of us. There has always been the strongest sense of mutual support in St. Mary's between staff, students and parents and never have we needed that sense of common purpose and unity more. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued support. This is new territory that we are navigating and one that will involve sacrifice, compassion and adaptability to situations as they arise. By continuing to work together I am confident we will get through the challenges ahead. I would suggest that when we find the going difficult that we keep in mind the motto of St. Mary's "Let Your Light Shine" and rise to whatever challenge we face.

I hope our students and their families enjoy the last couple of weeks of summer holidays and we look forward to welcoming our student back during the week commencing August 31st. The exact timetable for return will be communicated to you via VSware.

| Back to School Schedule | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Monday Aug. 31st | 1 st Year |
| Tuesday Sept. 1st | 1 st Year, 6 th Year |
| Wednesday Sept. 2nd | 1 st Year, 6 th Year, 3 rd Year |
| Thursday Sept. 3rd | 1 st Year, 6 th Year, 5 th Year (no school for 3 rd Year) |
| Friday Sept. 4th | 2 nd Year, 3 rd Year, 5 th Year (no school for 1 st Year or 6 th Year) |
| Monday Sept. 7th | 1 st Year, 2 nd Year, 3 rd Year, 6 th Year, Transition Year (no school for 5 th Year) |
| Tuesday Sept. 8th | All year groups |

Le dea-mhéin,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dunithan', written over the printed name 'Dunithan'.