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“FOR THE INCREASE OF LEARNING AND GOOD MANNERS”

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Information for Parents – Michaelmas Term 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian

What a year this has been! As the school year began last autumn, we could

never have anticipated that by springtime planes would be grounded, shops shut, families and friends separated, businesses closed, exams cancelled and schools silent. The word unprecedented has been used many times but it remains the most accurate description.

On behalf of the Royal School, I would like to thank you for working alongside us as we have all adapted to new routines and to the challenges of remote teaching and online learning. At times it has been frustrating, difficult and lonely. However, as we reflect on these recent months we can see so much evidence of creativity, resilience and kindness for which we are thankful. Google Classroom was only ever intended to enhance and not replace the physical classroom and we have all learned valuable lessons as we got to grips with it. Thank you to all of you who completed our questionnaires to help inform our planning. No doubt it will become a staple of the educational landscape, although hopefully only as a part of our suite of provision.

As you may be aware the Department of Education (DE) released 'Northern Ireland Re-opening School Guidance' on 19 June. This guidance is the 'blue print' for our planning for the next academic year. Please be assured that all the decisions we have made, and will make, will place the safety of pupils and staff as our paramount consideration. We are painfully aware that this won't be an ideal start, especially for our new Year 8 pupils but we will endeavour to ensure that it is as meaningful as we can achieve. We promise that whatever the circumstances you and your children will receive the same level of care that you would expect from the Royal School.

The procedures which we have put in place reflect the current guidance as of 30 June. You will understand that the advice and guidance has been constantly changing and the situation may be different by the middle of August. We will advise you in August if there are any changes so please keep this information to hand.

General Principles

Throughout our planning we have centred on a number of key things:

- Plans should be consistent with DE guidance and at least comply with PHA standards.
- The wellbeing of people (pupils, staff, parents) should be central.
- The pupil experience must be as positive and fulfilling as possible.
- Quality Learning and teaching should progress with as little disruption as possible.
- Planning should be dynamic and flexible enough to change in response to changing circumstances.

Start Dates

In line with DE guidance, pupils in years 12 and 14 will return to school on 24 August with most others returning on Tuesday 1 September. Pupils in Years 8 and 13 will have induction sessions as indicated below. Following their Induction Session year 13 pupils will then return for the commencement of teaching on 3 September.

Induction Sessions (Uniform should be worn to induction sessions)

Year	Date	Time	Venue
8	28/08/20	09:00-12:30	Assembly Hall
13	26/08/20	13:00-15:15	Assembly Hall

School starts at 8:50am.

Year	Date	Location
8	01/09/20	Designated Room Remain there for all lessons
9	01/09/20	Designated Room Remain there for all lessons
10	01/09/20	Designated Room Remain there for all lessons
11	01/09/20	Form Room Normal class movement
12	24/08/20	Form Room Normal class movement
13	03/09/20	Form Room Normal class movement
14	24/08/20	Form Room Normal class movement

Early Release

Year 14: Released at 12:20 on 26/08/20

Social distancing

- The guidance from the Department of Education states that '***a distance of 1m is appropriate between children and young people.***'
- To facilitate this, we will operate a one-way system throughout the school. To further limit traffic in the corridors pupils in Key Stage 3 will remain in the same room throughout the day, with opportunities to leave at break time and lunch.
- Areas of the schools will be designated a specific exit which pupils will use at the end of the school day.
- The school day will end on a staggered basis starting at 3.00pm. Please be mindful of possible extra traffic in the town and arrange a safe pick up point for your child if they cannot walk home or are unable to take a bus. Vehicles must not enter the school grounds at any time unless by arrangement to collect a pupil who is ill or has mobility difficulties.
- Information about the times that specific year groups will be released and the exits they will leave by will be circulated in August.
- If any pupil has difficulty getting home, they should report to the Concourse Office.
- Staggered break and lunch times will operate until further notice. Pupils will be advised when they start back, as to the times.
- Floor markings will assist pupils to keep an appropriate distance in lunch queues, toilets etc.
- In order to reduce areas of congestion locker areas will not operate until further notice so pupils must ensure that they bring the correct books and materials for each day – and only what they need for that day.

- Staff and pupils will be asked to respect each other's need to maintain social distancing in classrooms. This may mean that teachers will be more 'static' than we would like and stay at the front of the class room.
- Pupils who need help should seek it however, in these cases, teachers and pupils may be less than 1m distant from each other but NEVER for more than 15 minutes.

Parents and other visitors may only enter the school building by invitation or appointment. Whilst in the building parents and visitors will be accompanied at all times and required to abide by our hygiene and social distancing protocols.

Class Sizes

- We are pleased that under the current guidance we are able to accommodate full classes all the time, so there will be no need for pupils to attend some weeks and not others.
- To facilitate this, pupils in Key Stage 3 will remain in the same classroom throughout the day and constitute a 'protective bubble'. Teachers will move to teach them.
- Unfortunately, for the immediate future this will have an impact on our ability to offer the practical element of some subjects such as Technology & Design, and HE. Subject officers at CCEA and Heads of Department are actively working to appropriately redesign schemes of work.
- Classes in Key Stage 4 and 5 will have 'normal' class change overs although they must observe social distancing and the one-way system throughout the buildings.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 and 5 should note that in order to meet social distancing requirements their teaching room will correspond to the size of the class and therefore they may be in different rooms than last year.

Hygiene

- Pupils and staff will be expected to wash their hands:
 - on arrival at school;
 - at the start and end of break;
 - at the start and end of lunch;
 - before leaving school.
- We advise pupils to wash their hands as soon as they arrive home.
- All classrooms will be provided with hand sanitiser which pupils will use on entering the classroom.
- Signs will be displayed throughout the classrooms and buildings reinforcing the messages about hygiene and social distancing.
- Pupils must not sit at the desk of another pupil or touch the possessions of anyone else.

School Uniform

There have been significant relaxations to the restrictions on non-essential shops meaning that the school shop will be open, 3 days a week, from Monday 6 July for the purchase of school uniform and sportswear. We are advised that there is a minimal risk of transmission of the virus from clothing and so pupils will wear their school uniform as normal. We would however strongly recommend the following regime:

- Shirts and blouses, which are closest to the mouth, should be laundered daily, trousers and skirts and other garments may be worn on rotation. We would suggest that knitwear, which is more challenging to wash, is not worn during September.
- Pupils should wear their sports kit to school on the days when they have PE and remain in it for the full day to minimise time in the changing rooms and also to provide a 'fallow' day for the other garments.

- This year, until further notice, in order to ensure we can comply with social distancing guidelines, the shop will be operating on an appointment only basis. Only one customer will be permitted into the shop at any one time. Please telephone school as soon as possible to arrange an appointment on 028 3752 2807.

With the exception of Monday 13 July, opening times will be 9.00am to 4.30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday during July and August.

Catering

- We will operate a service in the Dining Hall from 24 August. We expect that there will be a limited selection to begin with until we establish demand.
- Pupils will be issued with a personal 'chipped' card, linked to their Parent Pay account to reduce the need to touch machines when paying for food. Cash will not be accepted.
- Any pupil who has lost or forgotten their card should advise the Concourse Office and not go hungry!
- As you would expect vegetarian and gluten free options will be available from 24 August.
- It is likely that we will use disposable tableware and cutlery.
- Pupils who choose to bring packed lunch must keep the lunch in their school bag throughout the day. They will eat their lunch in the classroom.
- Pupils who choose a deli option from the Dining Hall will eat it in the classroom.
- Social distancing and appropriate hygiene will be observed in the Dining Hall.

General

- At the start of the year pupils will be given some stationery to help organise their resources. After that it is essential that pupils attend school fully resourced with their own pens, pencil case, colouring pencils, glue, sellotape, art equipment and calculators. **These items cannot be given out by teachers or shared between pupils.**
- Unfortunately for the immediate future Sixth Form pupils will not be permitted to leave the school grounds at lunchtime. However, with parental permission, they will be permitted to leave school early on any day on which they have no more classes.
- There will be no whole school assembly until further notice, although assemblies for year groups may continue.
- There will be fewer day trips and visits for the academic Year 2020-21 and only when we are assured that it is safe and practicable for them to continue.
- School Trips etc. which have been planned will only proceed if Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice permits them.
- It is our hope to be able to commence our extra-curricular activities as soon into the new academic year as possible.
- Parent / teacher consultation meetings will be arranged as and when allowed.
- Speech Night in September has been cancelled. We are keen to recognise achievement however, and are considering the practicalities of an appropriate event for later in the year.
- Decisions about other events such as the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols and the Spring Concert will be made at a later date taking into consideration the context pertaining at the time.
- There will be no school musical production in the next academic year.

Pupil Care Protocol

- If your child is unwell and has any of the symptoms of COVID -19 i.e. raised temperature, persistent cough, fever, please do not send them to school. Please call 111 and seek advice from your GP. Where possible, please take your child's temperature before sending them to school.

If a child is unwell at school, the following steps will be implemented:

- The pupil should advise their teacher immediately that they feel ill or, if it is during change over or at break or lunch the member of staff in the Concourse Office.
- The pupil will report to a designated space in the concourse area which is spacious and well ventilated. They will be attended by the school nurse. At all times your child will be supported in accordance with guidance from the PHA and a manner consistent with the school ethos of care.
- Parents/Guardians will be notified ASAP to collect their child from the concourse entrance and to seek appropriate medical advice if required.
- They will be required to follow the Test, Trace, Protect Programme.
- Water, tissues, and where appropriate paracetamol will be provided for the child who is unwell.
- The concourse area will be deep cleaned immediately after the child leaves school.
- Further details about the Test, Trace, Protect Programme will be made available in August.

I hope that you are reassured that we are ready for the start of term. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors for their active engagement with the complicated planning process. There is no doubt that things will be different in September but over the last 400 years this school has seen a lot of change and has shown the capacity to cope. It is to be hoped that we may be able to relax the restrictions as the academic year progresses.

I hope that you will have a good summer and I look forward to seeing you and your child(ren) soon.

Yours sincerely



Graham GW Montgomery
Headmaster