Dear parents,

I trust this letter finds you all safe and well. I just wanted to inform you of the arrangements that have been put in place by myself, in consultation with the school’s Board of Governors, as to how we plan for the children to return to full-time education in August in line with current advice from the government and the Education Authority.

It is our plan to have our school return to a ‘safe normal’ as soon as possible. However, we are ever mindful of the importance of safety and co-operating with the government as, together, we strive to combat Covid-19.

The information presented in this letter will provide you with an overview of our ‘return to school’ plans. Additional information is expected from the Department of Education next Wednesday or Thursday but I am hopeful that this will not significantly alter the plans I have outlined.

A ‘Zoom’ meeting will be held on Monday 17th August at 7pm and all parents are invited to attend. Should you have any questions about the information contained in this letter, please feel free to ask questions at this meeting.

 As previously outlined in my letter in June and in keeping with the holiday list previously provided, I intend for all year groups to start school on 26th August and finishing on that day only at 12.00 This is for P2 – P7 classes only, separate dates and times will be provided for Nursery and P1 children will be in school from 9.15 – 11.45 as per individual start date letters. Class visits for SEN pupils will be arranged for the week beginning 17th August.

On the pupils return we will be concentrating on the need for the pupils to have the time and guidance to be able to respond to the new routines in a calm and organised fashion. We want them to feel safe and welcomed back to school in a safe and reassuring way.

All children will be arriving to school until further notice with staggered start and finish times which will be determined by the different year groups they are in and also the different entrances they will now use.

These staggered times are to ensure there is no mass gathering or congestion outside the school building each morning and afternoon. Each class will be designated an entry door and arrival time.

Please note that the school gate on the Duncastle Road entrance will remain locked until 8.40am. The only parents that will be permitted on the school grounds will be the Nursery, P1 and P2 parents. I would ask that children in P3 – P7 are left at the Duncastle Road entrance of the school where a member of staff will meet them. Parents leaving their children to P1 or P2 MUST use the one-way system in operation, i.e. walk along the back path, drop their child off and leave via the front gates. P1 and P2 children will enter the classroom via the doors that open out onto the playing fields, where their teacher or classroom assistant will meet them. (P1 arrangements may vary slightly for the month of September). These doors can be accessed by walking along the path at the back of the school, past the play equipment, to the back of the classroom (someone will be there in the morning if you are unsure of where to go.)

For the rest of the school:

P3 and P4 – enter through the cloakroom door facing the small playground (as they would have done in the past).

P5 and P6 – enter through the cloakroom door facing the big playground (between the P6 and P5 classrooms.)

P7 – enter through the door backing onto the field (at the back of the school)

On arrival at school, hand sanitiser stations will be available and all children MUST sanitise their hands before entering the school.

**Arrival and Finishing Times (Monday to Thursday)**

P1 – (September only)– 9.15am – 11.45am

 (from October onwards) – 8.45am start and finish at 1.45pm

P2 – 9.00am start and 2.00pm finish

P3 – 8.45am start and 2.15 pm finish

P4 - 9.00am start and 2.30pm finish

P5 – 8.45am start and 2.45pm finish

P6 – 8.55am start and 2.55pm finish

P7 – 9.00 am start and 3.00pm finish

**Arrival and Finishing Times (Friday)**

P1 - (from October onwards) – 8.45am start and finish at 1.30pm

P2 – 9.00am start and 1.35pm finish

P3 – 8.45am start and 1.40pm finish

P4 - 9.00am start and 1.45pm finish

P5 – 8.45am start and 1.50pm finish

P6 – 8.55am start and 1.55pm finish

P7 – 9.00 am start and 2.00pm finish

Please note that lunchtimes and play times have been further reduced to allow for earlier finishing times on a Friday.

P1 and P2 can be collected by parents at the door of the classroom that backs onto the playing field.

P3 – P7 children will be walked out the path at the allocated finishing time. Please remain in your car/stand away from the gate until you see your child’s class.

This arrangement will allow the class to arrive and enter school before the next class arrives etc. Where there are siblings I would ask that they arrive in the morning at the later slot together (9.00am) but are picked up at the stipulated times in the afternoon. At the moment we will not be having breakfast club or any afterschool clubs. Please adhere strictly to the times given to ensure children are safely in their bubble with minimum overlap between classes.

Please understand that this is all very new to us as well and that there may be some ‘teething problems’ to get over at the start. The situation changes all the time and we may need to make adjustments, so I appreciate your patience.

I cannot stress enough, if you or your child displays any of the symptoms of COVID-19 as outlined in PHA guidance, DO NOT send them to school and ensure they are tested. For any other illness, please do not send your child to school for a further 24 hours, even if fully recovered. We want the school to remain open as long as possible for as many children as possible.

**Class ‘Bubble’**

Each class will be known as a ‘bubble’. Each bubble will be its own separate entity and will not ‘mix’ with other ‘bubbles’. This will include break and lunch times, and the adult support within the bubble. School meals will be delivered to, and eaten within, each classroom and each bubble will be allocated a separate time to play in the playground.

Toilet facilities will need to be shared by two classes. To allow for this to happen, extra cleaning will be carried out throughout the school day. Once one bubble has used the toilets, they will be fully cleaned before the next bubble uses them.

As far as possible class windows will remain open to allow for additional ventilation and learning outside will be actively encouraged.

Adults within each bubble will maintain social distancing but the guidance coming from the department is that pupils will be socially distanced as far as reasonably possible and this may not be necessary within a class bubble.

**In-school hygiene**

Pupils will be supervised washing their hands, regularly, throughout the school day. In addition, classrooms are equipped with sanitizers, paper tissues and cleaning products which the class teacher will use on surfaces throughout the day. All pupils will be asked to sanitise their hands before entering the classroom in the morning and prior to leaving in the afternoon.

Additional cleaning will also be undertaken by the cleaning staff at the end of the school day as part of a new cleaning schedule.

**Suspected case of Covid-19**

Should a child present with any of the following 3 symptoms (as identified by the Public Health Agency), they will be removed from their ‘bubble,’ along with any siblings and taken directly to the designated isolation room where they will be supervised until a parent collects them.

- Elevated temperature

- Continuous cough

- Change in taste/smell

After each use of the isolation room, a deep clean will take place. Forehead thermometers are available in each class to check the temperature of any child that displays symptoms.

It may be necessary for the school to ask for a child to be tested to ensure there is not a case of COVID-19. If this happens, I must be notified in writing that they have returned a negative test before re-entry to the bubble will be permitted.

Whilst we are doing our very best to reduce the risk of having COVID in the school, unfortunately we cannot eliminate the risk entirely. If a positive test is confirmed within the bubble, ALL CHILDREN and Staff within the bubble will be asked to go for a test. The entire bubble will not be permitted in school for 72 hours to allow for a deep clean. Again, I will require written confirmation that all members of the bubble have returned a negative test before being allowed back onto school grounds.

**Equipment required**

A stationary and resource pack will be provided by the school initially for the sole use of your child. These resources will not be shared by other children. This will consist of pencils, rubbers, whiteboards and pens etc. As these resources diminish we may ask for the parents to help replace them as this is of considerable cost to the school. The only other items that will be permitted to be brought in to school will be a lunch bag, coat, mid-morning snack and water bottle.

NO SCHOOL BAGS, PE BAGS, PENCIL CASES OR ANY OTHER ITEM should be brought to school until further notice.

**Uniform**

As outlined previously, I will be relaxing the policy on school uniform for the time being. Children should come to school in their navy polo shirt and blue jumper. Children can also come to school in plain navy or black leggings/jogging bottoms if this makes washing a bit easier. Grey skirts and trousers are fine if you prefer.

As we plan to be outdoors a lot more, please ensure your child comes to school in suitable outdoor shoes (plain in colour) and brings a warm coat.

**Learning Platforms**

We plan to conduct parental surveys to allow us to review and adapt our use of a purposeful learning platform for our pupils. From September, remote/blended learning for all pupils from P1 to P7 will take place via an app Seesaw. Additional online platforms such as Accelerated Reader and Mathletics will be used to support blended learning. Guidance on the use of these platforms will be provided on the return of the pupils in August. All homework, and if necessary, any work set as part of Blended/Remote learning, should be completed via these platforms.

In addition to these learning platforms, we plan to have ParentPay established in the school by August. Further details on how to use the App will be provided on the week the pupils return to school. Please note that ALL pupils will require a packed lunch to be eaten in school on Thursday 27th and Friday 28th August. Dinner money will not be required until 1st September. Children will be off for the Bank Holiday on Monday 31st August.

Should a parent wish to speak with the class teacher, they should, contact the school office or directly contact the teacher via the Seesaw app. No parent will be permitted in the school unless an appointment has been made.

If the guidance issued at the end of this week, means these plans need to be changed, I will contact you in writing on the week beginning 17th August. The password for the Zoom meeting on Monday 17th @ 7pm will be available through the school app and our school website on Monday afternoon.