



GAELSCOIL CHNOC na RÉ

Baile Uí Dhúgáin (Ballydoogan) - Sligeach

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GAELSCOIL CHNOC NA RÉ: Filleadh ar Scoil -Return to School NÓTA 15/8/2020

On 27th July 2020, the Department of Education and Skills published guidelines for reopening schools. You can find all the published documents and subsequent updates at <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a128d-back-to-school/> (GAEILGE: <https://www.gov.ie/ga/feachtais/filleadh-ar-scoil/>)

We have been working hard to ensure that everything that needs to be done in advance of the planned return on August 27th will be completed and a fuller version of our Response Plan will be published nearer the date. In the meantime, the following information will be useful and we would ask that every parent read it carefully. **Comments, suggestions and questions are welcome.** School will be a bit different this year, especially at the beginning, but the children will get used to it very quickly. Explain to your child that things will be a bit different, but try not to let them know that you are overly worried as children can pick up on stress. Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. **This will be achieved by all of us working towards this common goal.**

KEEPING UPDATED

Keep an eye on the school website (ww2.cnocnare.net/fill) and check your email and texts for updates. Check that the school has your correct contact details. Let the know if you have moved house, changed phone number or email address. You may also want to check that your emergency contact details are up to date (this can be done through Aladdin Connect)

UNIFORMS

There is no guidance or advice to say that school uniforms or tracksuits should be washed every day and this is probably not practical for most families. We suggest that they be worn on alternate days to allow for more frequent cleaning if desired. In any event, PE will be weather dependant as we will not be using the HALLA for the foreseeable future. As a school we **strongly advise** that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits only for **school related activities**. Uniforms or tracksuits should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day. **They should not be worn in after-school facilities, shops, during after-school activities, etc.**

SCHOOLBAGS AND LUNCHES

The government have not given any guidelines regarding these items but a common-sense approach should be followed. Ensure that your child does not have any unnecessary items such as toys in their schoolbag. Choose lunchboxes, bottles and pencil cases that are easy to clean, as they will need to be cleaned frequently. We intend that each child will have their own individual covered storage box (provided by the school) for school books, copies and stationery (pens, pencils, colours etc.) and which will remain in school (you will need a second set for home, therefore) It is important that your child has all the stationery that they need as they will not be able to share with their classmates. Homework procedures are yet to be finalised.

LEABHARLIOSTAÍ - LEABHAIR AR CHÍOS / BOOKLISTS - SCHOOL BOOK RENTAL SCHEME

Rachaidh eolas iomlán faoin leabharliosta amach i rith na seachtaine seo chugainn.

Full information on the booklist for your child(ren) will be sent out next week.

PREPARING & HAND HYGIENE

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. We would be grateful if you could also emphasise safe behaviour in this regard to your children at home as part of the preparation for returning to school. Practice washing hands properly, with soap, for 20 seconds. Make sure that your child also knows how to dry their hands thoroughly. Children should also know how to use hand-sanitizer correctly, and that it should not be ingested. Teach your child correct cough and sneeze etiquette. Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or into your elbow if you do not have a tissue. Put the tissue in the bin and wash or sanitize your hands. Make sure that your child can INDEPENDENTLY open and close their lunchbox and bottle, their coat, and their shoes. Shoes with laces are not recommended for younger children!

Children will perform hand hygiene regularly during the school day:

- on arrival at school
- before eating or drinking
- after using the toilet
- after a cough or sneeze
- after playing outdoors
- when hands are physically dirty

Hand sanitizer dispensers will be installed throughout the school. Children are not required to supply hand sanitizer or any other hand hygiene products but may do so providing they are not shared and remain in the child's box at school.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

The guidelines state that children from Junior Infants to 2nd Class are not required to physical distance. Children from 3rd-6th class are expected to keep a distance of 1m where possible. Rooms will be configured accordingly. We are currently working on upgrading 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. Staff will try to maintain physical distance from children when they can, and will wear face coverings and other PPE when needed. Further guidance on facemasks for children is awaited.

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. Within the bubbles, children will be organised into pods (neadacha). A pod is a group of children (4-6) who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom. They will stay in the same pod for a number of weeks.

Decreasing Interaction. This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. Bubbles will have different mid-morning and lunch-time access to the playground. We will make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

Each class will be a 'Bubble'. Contact between bubbles will be extremely limited and break times will be staggered. Classes may be divided into groups, or 'Pods'.

DROP-OFF AND COLLECTION

Schools must "limit interaction on arrival and departure from school." We are working on a plan to implement this requirement which will include staggered drop-off and collection times, carpark restrictions and socially-distanced collection points. The main features will be an encouragement to walk or cycle to school and for cars not to enter the carpark. More details later.

CLEANING

Cleaning will be increased considerably. Schools have been given a budget for the extra cleaning and cleaning materials required. Each classroom will be cleaned thoroughly daily and other cleaning throughout the school day. Resources will be provided for children individually where possible, or shared with their 'pod'. Resources that are shared between classes will be cleaned between use.

Books, toys and resources will be cleaned regularly or quarantined for 72 hours before being reused. Older children may be asked to wipe down their table and chair at the end of the day.

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

Parents will not be permitted to enter the school building but appointments may be made to visit the school for essential purposes. A contact tracing log will need to be filled out for each visit. This does not mean that you will be unable to communicate with your child's teacher. You can communicate with them via the traditional methods such as notes, phone calls etc. We will also have additional electronic means of communication such as email, Aladdin Connect, etc.

TEACHER ABSENCES

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation have put pressure on the Department of Education on the issue of substitute teachers. Supply panel clusters of substitute teachers are being set up to increase substitute availability. If the school is unable to secure a substitute teacher, the school may use a non-mainstream teacher to cover the absence. (This includes Special Education Teachers and the Principal). Every effort will be made to avoid a class being split between other classes.

STARTING JUNIOR INFANTS

Unfortunately, parents will not be permitted to enter the school building with their child on the first day of school (or on subsequent days). We will organize for either a short visit to school by appointment, or a video or virtual tour of the school before the first day. We also intend to start the Junior Infants a little later than the other pupils on the first morning to allow for space to mark this special day. Rest assured, Múinteoir Yvonne and other school staff will do their best to make sure that every feels happy and safe at school. The benefits of play are well-documented, and infant teachers are very aware of this. Lots of time will be spent playing and listening to stories. The number one priority for the first few months of school will be the children's well-being.

CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

The Special Education Team in your child's school will make sure that your child's needs are catered for to the best of their ability. Special Education Teachers may be required to cover for mainstream teachers in the case of their absence and a substitute teacher is not available. This may mean that your child may have reduced support at times, but the school will have the opportunity to increase support when a substitute teacher becomes available. If your child suffers from anxiety, or does not respond well to change, will most likely hear from your child's school in advance of reopening. They may provide a virtual tour of the school or a social story. If you have concerns or questions, email the school within the next week or two. Doing it now rather than in the first week back will give them a better chance to respond and prepare where necessary.

HIGH-RISK PUPILS

Pupils at high risk may not be able to return to school. These pupils will receive appropriate support to engage with learning. Ongoing connection with the classmates and school community will be ensured.

The list of people in very high risk groups includes people who:

- are over 70 years of age – even if fit and well
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing active chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radical radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma who are at any stage of treatment
- are having immunotherapy or other continuing antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system, such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors
- have had bone marrow or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months, or who are still taking immunosuppression drugs
- have severe respiratory conditions including cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, pulmonary fibrosis, lung fibrosis, interstitial lung disease and severe COPD

- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID, homozygous sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes you much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppression therapies)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

SUSPECTED CASES OF COVID-19

While all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents that, where children are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school. Children who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period.

Symptoms of COVID-19:

- High temperature
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath or Difficulty Breathing
- Loss of smell or taste, or distortion of taste

Again, children should NOT ATTEND school if they are unwell or if any members of their household are unwell with symptoms of COVID-19. If any pupil becomes unwell while at school, they will be brought to an isolation room and given a mask to wear. Parents will be contacted to collect the child as soon as possible. The HSE will inform any parents of children who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case.