



Kildare Place School – Re-opening Plan March 2021.

25th February, 2021.

Dear Parents,

As you are acutely aware, our school has now been closed since the 22nd December due to the COVID-19 situation. We were delighted to finally receive the “green light” to begin our phased re-opening for our pupils. We have really missed them all. Starting this Monday, we are now hoping to re-open our school safely, firstly for our Junior Classes, in line with current guidance and recommendations.

Re-opening the school safely will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community – BoM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that the re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner which prevents the spread of the virus and allows the vital work of Teaching and Learning to proceed with as little disruption as possible.

We have been working on our plan for the safe re-opening of the school for some weeks now and have published the Department of Education and Skills (DES) COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable re-opening of Primary and Special Schools on our school website. The DES 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 would again draw your attention to our COVID-19 Policy Statement on the school website. **We hope that this document will provide you with a useful re-cap on the information required to play your part in, not only safely re-opening the school, but in keeping it open also!**

We are really looking forward to welcoming our children back to school and will be doing all that we can to ensure that the return to school is a safe and enjoyable experience for the children.

Illness and Self-Isolation

Whilst all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents that, where children or anyone in their household are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, in particular a temperature of 38° or higher, they must not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be isolated and parents asked to collect them from the school immediately.



We would draw your attention to the following link which contains the most up to date guidance in relation to symptoms of Covid- 19

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/school-and-covid-19/when-it-s-ok-to-send-your-child-to-school-or-childcare.html>

Children who have travelled from another countries should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period

It is vital that all families and members of the school community respect the seriousness of the re-opening of the school, and our collective responsibility to protect each other and the wider community. Children will not be penalised for missing school for reasons of illness or self-isolation.

Should you have any query in relation to the safe return of your child, please contact the school office immediately as we are happy to clarify.

Access to School Grounds

All of us here in Kildare Place appreciate your support as we try to safely re-open the school building. **We continue to request you not to come onto the school grounds at all, unless it is essential. Access to the school building itself is strictly limited to staff and pupils. For all other visits/ meetings/appointments, prior consultation must be made with the office and all meetings will be facilitated remotely by phone or online platform.**

Drop-off and Collection Routines

During the time from September to December the new drop off and collection routines worked very well. Again for this period of re-opening, we ask all pupils and parents to follow the same guidance.

We would ask all parents to familiarise themselves with the following drop-off and collection routines for the safe delivery and collection of pupils from school. Please be patient as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices again this term. Working together, we hope to be able to progress the reopening in as safe a manner as possible for all.

In general, it is imperative that:

- In line with recent Department recommendations: **Face masks must be worn by all ADULTS coming into the school playground.**
- Adults do not come within **2m** of each other



- Parents/minders, do not try to have meetings with members of staff in the playground at drop-off and collection times.
- Once pupils have been dropped to the school we kindly ask parents to leave the premises as soon as they can. Please don't hang around!
- All parents adhere to the drop-off and collection plans as outlined below.
- We will also continue to have a one way system in operation at the gate to further ensure social distancing.

It is proposed to re-open in as close to normal a manner as we can, with some adjustments as below.

Drop Off

- We appreciate that dropping off the **younger pupils can be tricky**. We are confident that following on from the routines built last term, they will quickly adapt to being left at the gate to walk up to their allocated area with ease.
- Please note – parents will not be able to enter the playground to access the bike shed in the mornings.
- For the older pupils a drop off by a single grown up at the school gate is desirable (there may be of course, a small number of children in classes who for a variety of reasons, need to be accompanied into the school grounds and we ask that the whole school community to be mindful of this)
- To facilitate early drop off - the school gates will open (as previously) at **8.40 am**. There will be a ten minute period where pupils can wait in the playground and will be supervised by staff. At 8.50am staff will come out to the playground and ask pupils in their classes to line up, ready to enter the building.
- It is school policy that all pupils will have their hands sanitised in their line each morning. This practice ensures that no child is missed in the morning rush.
- Staff members will be available in the school playground each morning to help facilitate the safe movement of pupils and ensure that social distancing guidelines are being adhered to
- The school doors will open at **8.50 am** and pupils are asked to make their way directly to their class. Pupils are asked to wait for confirmation from the staff on duty prior to entering the school building.
- We would ask that, where possible, parents facilitate a steady/staggered stream of drop offs at the gate between **8.50 and 9.00 am**.
- Formal teaching will begin in the classrooms at **9.10am** as is always the case, we recommend having all pupils in school by **9.00am** as it is an important time for them to have the chance to meet friends and settle into the day.



Collection

- Collection times remain 1.30pm for Infant Classes and 2.30pm for all other classes. Initially there may be a slight delay in releasing classes so as to ensure social distancing. Staff will be available to help guide and support the release of pupils.
- During pupil's collection times, we kindly ask parents to adhere to social distancing guidelines in the playground and not approach the school. Junior Infants will be released from the doors at the top of the playground (as in the past) at 1.30pm.
- Senior Infants will be released from the Fire Doors to the hall (as in the past) at 1.30pm.
- From March 15th, following an update and review from government, Senior classes will be released on a rota basis – with some classes being asked to stand on their line in the playground and wait for collection. This will ensure we don't have groups of pupils from separate classes congregating at the door areas. Once we see you, we will then release your child to your care!

Infection Control Measures in School

We have put in place a number of policies that aim to minimise spread of Covid-19 (and other infections) in the school.

Physical Distancing

As a staff we are consistently 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.

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. A pod is a group of children (normally 6) who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom.



Decreasing Interaction. This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There will be marked routes for classes to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. Bubbles also have specific playground areas during mid-morning and lunch-time access to the playground. We will make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

Limiting Interactions Outside of Class Bubbles

- All pupils will be asked to go straight to their own classrooms (as usual) and remain there as much as possible, excluding class visits to playground/ hall/ toilets etc.
- As far as is possible, classes are to minimise meeting each other in corridors/ stairwells – we continue to have a one way system marked on the stairs to facilitate this.
- As much as is possible the school will make use of the two stairwells and not have classes passing through each other.
- Unfortunately at this time, there is not the possibility of having whole school face to face assemblies or activities that join more than one class together.
- Any additional adult visitors to the school will only be permitted through the office and a log of details will be kept for contact tracing purposes.
- Face coverings must be worn by all adults entering the school.

Hand Hygiene and Toilet Facilities

- There will be hand sanitizing stations in all classrooms, at all doors and stairwells.
- Each class will continue to have one designated toilet facility. Pupils will, other than in exceptional cases, be asked to go to the toilet one at a time.
- All classes will continue to have a routine of hand hygiene/ sanitisation at an appropriate level facilitated by the class teacher.
- **Again, we would propose that all pupils have a little pack with them in their schoolbags with a personal hand sanitiser, anti-bacterial wipes and a facecloth to wipe/dry their own hands.**
- The use of the hand dryer in the pupils' toilets will need to be encouraged/ reinforced. Please do talk to your children about the importance of correct hand washing and drying.



Air Filtration

- We are very grateful to the KPS Board of Management who facilitated the purchase of large air filters/purifiers for all classrooms in September. In the time since then, they have now been recommended by the Department of Education. These will continue to be in operation in all classroom areas, changing the air in the room up to 5 times and hour.

Break Times

- The school playground has been re-marked with 8 specific class areas so that pupils can have access to the playground whilst remaining in their class bubble (i.e. not socialising with other classes)
- At the end of break times, when the bell goes, all pupils will continue to line up on their line, as in the past. New lines have been painted in the playground that are better distanced. These will be pointed out to all classes in due course.
- These new lines may also be used by staff to ensure at other times, classes remain isolated i.e. they could also be used at home time etc.

Surfaces and Space

- All classrooms are removing as much unwanted/unnecessary furniture as possible. This is to facilitate the most space that we can in the classes.
- The staffroom will operate as normal, with an overflow space being set up in the hall to provide us with sufficient room to adhere to social distancing.

Face Coverings

- There continues to be no obligation/recommendation for pupils to wear face coverings whilst in a Primary school. If you, and indeed your child is comfortable to wear one we would encourage you to do so. They can provide a valuable additional layer of protection that will contribute to fighting the transmission of the virus. Please do note that we will not be making mask wearing mandatory and that their use is entirely up to each individual family.
- As recommended, all staff will continue to wear appropriate face coverings during activities where the 2m social distancing guideline is difficult to adhere to.



After School Activities and 'Club'

- The "After school Club" facility provided by Pamela and Vivienne is unfortunately still not in a position to run due to the ongoing restrictions. As soon as they can offer a service safely, they will be in contact with parents.
- Unfortunately, due to the current restrictions, the school is not in a position to offer afterschool activities at this time. This will be reviewed again following an update from the Department of Education.

Cleaning

- An enhanced cleaning routine remains in place in the school, with additional hours being assigned to our cleaning company. We will also continue to include some minor sanitising tasks by pupils, at an age appropriate level, as part of the new classroom "routine" – trying to teach a few life skills and making it part of the new school life!

We are also aware that following the first few days in school, we may indeed need to review and amend some of these proposed practices. As always, we appreciate your help and support with this should changes to the procedures need to be made. We will of course be constantly reviewing all the practices mentioned, in an effort to come up with the best, and most practical solution.

The main focus of the first few weeks is welcoming and settling our pupils and ensuring that their transition back to being in school is as smooth as possible. There will, undoubtedly, be some unforeseen challenges and we will deal with these as they arise.

As a staff, we are all looking forward to welcoming all our pupils in Junior Infants, Senior Infants, First and Second classes on Monday 1st March.

On **Monday March 15th**, following an update and review by government, we look forward to welcoming our **Third, Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Classes** back to school.

We are satisfied that we have control measures in place to ensure that this will be another safe re-opening. We recognise that it will take some time for all to settle back into the routines and procedures designed to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of the virus.



As is always the case in Kildare Place, we would like to thank you sincerely for your co-operation and ongoing support during this most recent and frustrating lockdown. We look forward to working with you as we assist the children adapt to the necessary changes. We are also conscious of the fact that our pupils have not been in school since December and that they are looking forward to coming back to school to meet their friends again face to face.

What do parents need to do?:

In order to be ready for the return to school, could we please ask for your help and support with the following:

- For this return to school all parents are being asked to fill in a mandatory parental declaration form for the return to school for their child. This is now required after **ANY** absence, for any reason from school. Pupils, for whom this form has not been completed, cannot be allowed to return to the classroom. A link and copy of this form will be sent to you in the coming days.
- **Please adhere to school policy and do not send your child to school if they are unwell in any way. Likewise, should a child become ill during the school day, parents will be contacted to collect their child. School policy remains that they do not return to school until they are symptom free for 48 hours. This is to minimise possible infection of others.**
- Make sure that you are adhering to the published guidelines in relation to all travel. **If you have been staying/holidaying in an effected area, your children must isolate in line with government recommendations.**
- Please talk to your child and reassure them that their return to school will be positive. We can't wait to see them all again, and see the school back in action. Remind them that the teachers will all be talking to them all about the new routines etc. and that, if they have any concerns, the school staff are there to help and support them.
- **Please do not congregate at or near the school gate or even outside the school at drop off and collection times.**
- Please make sure to return all of your child's books to the school when they return – as we will need time to quarantine them prior to their use!
- In order to help us adhere to the guidelines and above all for the safety of pupils, we are asking that each child have a sealable bag (freezer bag) etc. labelled with their name that will contain the following items.

One small personal bottle of hand sanitiser	A face mask (if one is required)
A small face cloth that can be used to dry hands in the classroom	A small packet of anti-bacterial wipes



Having these additional items in a personal pack will ensure that pupils can be confident that they have a role to play in working with the school to help keep us all safe. Hand dryers are in place in all the bathrooms, however many schools are now adopting the practice of a personal hand towel only used by your child and washed/ replaced daily as desired by parents at home.

We are conscious that there is a lot to digest in this document, however we would like to take the opportunity to thank the many parents who have consulted with us in getting ready for the return to school. Your helpful advice is much appreciated.

We are confident that despite the difficulties and challenges, we can make the return to school a smooth transition for all. We are all in agreement that our pupils need to be safely back with their peers in class.

As always, we appreciate your on-going support and recognise that without it we would not be in such a strong position re-opening. This "plan" is a working document and we are conscious that we may not get everything right the first time. We will need your help to ensure that we all do what we can to keep everyone safe.

We look forward to seeing you all next week,

Ian Packham & Staff

On behalf of Kildare Place School Board of Management.