

BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY SCHOOL



RETURN TO SCHOOL GUIDE

*These procedures are based on current Public Health Advice.
This document will be reviewed and it is expected that further protocols will be issued;
you will be notified when this occurs.*

Introduction

Returning to school in any year brings its own challenges but this year we also must contend with the threat posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The interests of students and their families, as well as the safety of the staff, are paramount as we prepare for the return of students. It is vitally important that we approach the return to school with a positive and consistent approach. A sense of calm, of safety, of hope, belonging and connectedness to our school community and above all, a sense of pragmatism and common sense will ensure an efficient return to class for all.

The purpose of this document is to help provide clear guidance for students and their families about how our school will operate when we re-open. We are really looking forward to welcoming students back and will do everything possible to ensure that the school year runs smoothly.

This document will take you through the steps we are taking to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of Covid-19 into the school and steps that can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the spread within the school in the event that Covid-19 is introduced to the school.

Wellbeing

The wellbeing of our school communities is a fundamental element of the Department of Education's overall plan to ensure a successful return to school. Schools have received guidance from the Department on how best to support everyone in our school community through this transition, and we will be making this a priority as students return.

It is important to note that some students may find the return to school extra challenging and require additional support. Collaboration between parents/guardians, students and teachers will be hugely significant in helping students to adapt to the new school environment.

Health & Safety Measures

The safe running of our school focuses on two specific areas:

- 1: Minimising the risk of introduction of Covid-19 into the school community; and
- 2: Managing the risk if introduced.

For the school to achieve the above it is hugely important that the virus is controlled by:

- Regular hand hygiene;
- Maintaining physical distancing;
- Application of respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette; and
- Environmental hygiene.

Knowing the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. Those symptoms are as follows:

- high temperature
- cough
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss of smell, or taste or distortion of taste

If your child/children complain of any of these symptoms, please keep your child/children at home and call your GP without delay. In the event that you have more than one child attending our school; if any of your children display symptoms, we are requesting that all siblings remain at home pending the outcome of consultation with your GP and/or COVID-19 testing.

If a student or staff member has been abroad to '*non-green list countries*' prior to returning to school (i.e. within 14 days), we are asking that they ensure they remain in isolation for 14 consecutive days prior to returning to school. If your child/children have been abroad prior to school resuming, we would appreciate an email from you about this.

Students will be encouraged and expected to follow health advice regarding hand sanitation, respiratory etiquette, etc. Requirements in this regard will be clearly communicated to all students from the beginning of the year.

Isolation Rooms will be available in the school should a member of the school community become ill. It is vital that all Parents/Guardians have registered the correct contact details with the school. If in doubt, contact the school office immediately on **094 9630235** or email s.gibbons@ballyhauniscs.ie

Hand sanitiser dispensers will be located around the school, in all base areas, in the Gym and at entry/exit points of the school. All students will also be provided with a pocket sized sanitiser bottle. Students should carry this at all times and use when required. It is the student's responsibility to keep this filled.

Regular Hand Hygiene

Students will be reminded of correct handwashing/hand sanitising protocols on their return to school

Wash/sanitise their hands

- before leaving home
- before and after being on public transport
- when arriving/leaving the school /other sites
- when moving classrooms
- before and after eating and preparing food
- after coughing or sneezing
- after using the toilet
- where hands are dirty

Maintaining Physical Distancing

Measures outlined in the Public Health Advice fall into two categories

1. Increasing separation
2. Decreasing interaction between students, between students and staff and between staff when they are together.

Increasing separation

All our classrooms have been reconfigured to maintain a physical distance of 1 metre between students. All available spaces in the school have been utilised in order to maximise physical distancing

- Access to the school canteen will be staggered to allow greater space between students. Year groups will be assigned staggered Break and Lunchtimes
- Timetables have been revised to minimise movement of students
- Movement of students on corridors will be regulated and supervised
- Some classes have been reconfigured to reduce numbers
- Lockers will remain available to students but will be restricted to designated times. Students will be advised of these during induction.

All students:

- Must sit in their assigned seat.
- Must not move desks in classrooms. All classrooms now have floor markings; it is important that desks remain in their designated spot.
- Maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other people whenever possible. This will be particularly important to remember during break times
- Must use their locker as infrequently as possible and at designated times only
- Must not linger in the locker area.
- Should be outside in fresh air if possible upon arrival at school and during break times

Decreasing interaction

A common-sense approach is required to recognise the limits to which this can be achieved between students. However, we must all do our best to minimise interactions.

For the most part students will remain in their assigned base classroom and teachers will move to them. Students will move classrooms for a number of their subjects throughout the day including Practical / Science / IT classes. This movement will be supervised and will be kept to a minimum.

All students

- When going to class in the morning or after breaks and when moving from one classroom to another, do so quickly

- Co-operate with supervisors who will be on the corridors aiming to minimise student interaction
- Must not visit locker areas between classes
- Limit interaction on arrival and departure, in hallways and other shared areas
- Use the canteen at your designated break/lunch times only
- Avoid physical contact such as hugging, hand shaking
- Avoid sharing personal items like pens, calculators, books etc.
- Where you have used electronic devices, you must clean the PC before and after use with the wipes provided

Respiratory Hygiene and Cough Etiquette

All Students

- Avoid touching the face, eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a bent elbow or tissue
- Dispose of tissues used in bins

Masks/Face Coverings

Students will be required to wear Face Coverings. **Cloth face coverings** act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact.

It is therefore **a requirement** that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained.

All students on the post primary transport scheme should wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so. All students will be issued with a face-covering at Induction.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn by any of the following groups:

- Any person with difficulty breathing
- Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated
- Any person who is unable to remove the face-covering without assistance
- Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

All students:

- When wearing face coverings students should not touch the face covering and should wash or sanitise their hands (using hand sanitiser) before putting on and after taking off the face covering.
- Face coverings should be stored in a space designated for each student that is separate from others when not being worn (e.g. in a labelled bag) when not in use

- Cloth face coverings should be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
- Face coverings should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth face covering may make it difficult to breathe.
- Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Environmental Hygiene

In line with Public Health Advice, more regular and enhanced cleaning regimes will be implemented in our school. Our cleaning staff have been provided with a specific Covid-19 training programme focused on cleaning, and the school received extra funding for increased cleaning costs.

- Each school setting will be cleaned at least once per day
- There will be enhanced cleaning of shared equipment such as tools, art materials, electronic and sports equipment
- The Department of Education have provided us with clear protocols, including cleaning protocols, that the school will follow if there is a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19

All students:

- Will be allocated a desk in their base classroom. They must sit at that desk for all classes unless the teacher asks them to move. This will also aid contact tracing, if required.
- Must ensure to bring all personal belongings with them when exiting a classroom
- Must not leave school bags, books or other materials along corridors
- Are responsible for cleaning any Computer they use. The keyboard and screen should be wiped carefully BEFORE use. Wipes will be provided for this purpose.
- Must ensure to be extra careful not to drop litter and tidy after themselves after break and lunchtime.

Uniform

Full school uniform must be worn at all times. This includes black shoes only. We advise students if they have a school jacket to wear it as the school will be ventilated throughout the day. Hoodies and other jackets are not permitted.

Students will have access to changing rooms for PE class – the changing rooms are marked out to ensure students can maintain the 1meter distance.

If possible, we would encourage that your child's uniform is washed as often as is feasible for you to do so. This is an advisory recommendation.

School Day Routine

Coming to and from School

As per Government regulations, all students travelling on school transport will be required to wear a facemask, sit next to sibling(s) or remain seated next to the same individual for the remainder of the term. Students are asked to disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion.

Morning:

Students should not congregate in groups close to one another. Assigned entrances and exits will be given to all year groups when they return. Junior students will use the main entrance at the rear of the building. Senior students will use the front entrance off the knock road.

Students will be asked to adhere to queue management protocols in the mornings when entering the school building.

Students on entry to the school must:

- Sanitise your hands
- Wear your face mask at all times in the school building,
- Go to your locker and organise your books and materials for your classes until lunchtime. Only use your locker when you can adhere to social distancing.
- Take your prepared school bag to the classroom and place it at your assigned desk. Do not touch any other desk or chair as they have been cleaned/sanitised
- You must then leave the room and go outside of the school if the weather is suitable.
- When the bell sounds, go straight to your classroom using the entrance closest to the room. **Ensure that you are wearing your face mask before entering the building**

Walking or Cycling:

All schools are encouraging students to walk or cycle to school if they can do so. Parents/guardians are required to observe and respect all social distancing protocols in relation to any contact with the school. This includes maintaining a two-metre distance to other families when dropping off or collecting their children from the school and any contact with the school.

Change of class:

All class groups are assigned to a Base classroom. Each student will have an allocated Chair/desk in their base classroom. For a limited number of times throughout the day students may move classrooms to attend their Practical/Science/IT classes – the following steps should be taken:

- Put all books and equipment into your school bag
- Use the outdoor footpath as an alternative to walking in the corridor where possible

- Follow the instructions of the supervisors present on the corridors.
- **YOU ARE STRICTLY FORBIDDEN FROM GOING TO YOUR LOCKER BETWEEN CLASSES**
- When you get to your room, go straight to your assigned seat/desk
- Sanitise your desk and chair using the sanitising wipes provided.
- Place the used wipe in the bin.

Break time:

Break times have been staggered to help facilitate social distancing for students. You are encouraged to spend your break time outside of the school building.

- If you are going to a different classroom after your break, if the room is free you should put your bag in that room at your assigned desk.
- Leave the room and go outside of the school or to the canteen area.
- The Canteen facility will be available for students to purchase food. Please adhere to the queuing systems arranged. A limited number of seats will be available in the Assembly area. We encourage students to eat their snack and go outside as quickly as possible.
- When the bell sounds, go straight to your classroom using the entrance closest to the room. **Ensure that you are wearing your face mask before entering the building**
- When you get to your room, go straight to your assigned seat/desk
- Sanitise your desk and chair using the sanitising wipes provided.
- Place the used wipe in the bin.

Lunch time:

Lunch times have been staggered to help facilitate social distancing for students. You are encouraged to spend your lunch time outside of the school building.

- Put all books and equipment into your school bag
- Go to your locker and organise your books and materials for the afternoon classes. Only use your locker when you can adhere to social distancing.
- If you are going to a different classroom after your lunch break, if the room is free you should put your bag in that room at your assigned desk.
- The Canteen facility will be available for students to purchase food. Please adhere to the queuing systems arranged. A limited number of seats will be available in the Assembly area. We encourage students to eat their lunch and go outside as quickly as possible.
- Seniors students are allowed down town, as is the privilege of senior students – students are responsible for keeping their social distancing. Should a problem arise with students not maintaining social distancing and congregating outside shops this privilege may need to be revoked
- When the bell sounds, go straight to your classroom using the entrance closest to the room **Ensure that you are wearing your face mask before entering the building**

- When you get to your room, go straight to your assigned seat/desk
- Sanitise your desk and chair using the sanitising wipes provided.
- Place the used wipe in the bin.

End of School Day:

To facilitate social distancing at lockers, 2nd, 5th and TY students will leave class at 3.50pm. All other students will finish at 4pm.

When the appropriate bell sounds:

- Sanitise your hands before you leave the room
- Go to your locker and organise your books and bag
- Sanitise your hands when you are finished at your locker
- Leave the school building promptly through the nearest exit door.
- Students traveling on a school bus must go to their bus and board when allowed by the driver
- All other students must leave the school and proceed home.

Arrangements for Practical classes

We are awaiting more detailed guidance on school activities relating to specific subjects like Home Economics and Science. In the interim the following advice applies

- Sport Activities: we will be referring to the HSPC guidance on return to sport <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e3706-expert-group-on-return-to-sport-guidance-for-outdoor-sports-and-fitness/>
- Art: Where possible students should be encouraged to have their own individual art supplies
- Music: To the greatest extent possible, instruments should not be shared between students. Where singing or wind instruments are in use the room must be well ventilated and social distance must be maintained

Very High-Risk Students

The school will consult with parents / guardians in instances where students cannot attend school for health reasons. We will work to ensure that these students receive appropriate support to engage with learning, and stay connected to our school community.

Visitors to the School / Appointments

School personnel will not be in a position to meet parents on a one to one basis during this Academic year (As per Guidelines, July 2020) unless it is essential and by prior appointment only. All such requests and appointments must be made through the school office **094 9630235** or email **s.gibbons@ballyhauniscs.ie**

All invited visitors to the school will be asked to wear face coverings and complete contact tracing recording sheets at the main office.

Important Points to Note

- As each year group returns to school each student will be provided with a **refillable Hand sanitiser to carry**. We encourage students to use this as much as possible to avoid queues at sanitising stations around the school. It is the student's responsibility to refill this bottle as required. Refill points will be available around the school.
- Students will also be provided with a **washable face covering**. This should be washed each evening. In addition to this we are advising that students carry a spare face covering contained in a labelled zip lock bag stored in their school bag.
- Students can **ONLY** go to their lockers at the following times:
 - On arrival at the school
 - during the long lunch break
 - before going home
 - only when you can adhere to social distancing
- After the school day has ended (4pm) students are not permitted to be in the school building as it must be cleaned.
- The school has a Covid-19 Response Plan in place. It is available on our website <http://ballyhauniscs.ie>
- On reopening of the school all school staff will have completed Covid-19 Induction Training.
- Lead Work Representatives (LWR) have been appointed. One key aspect of their role is to consult with school management on the control measures required to minimise the risk of staff and students being exposed to Covid-19 – these measures and protocols will continuously be monitored and updated as the need arises.
- Significant signage is displayed throughout the school, outlining the signs and symptoms of Covid-19 and to support good hand and respiratory hygiene
- All non-essential travel for school activities has been paused
- Clear Protocols are in place if a student at school has Covid-19 symptoms. The student will be isolated and parents / guardians will be contacted immediately
- We maintain a contact log, which may be required for contact tracing.

Contact details:

Principal: principal@ballyhauniscs.ie

Deputy Principal: o.macken@ballyhauniscs.ie