

*Scoil Phobail Béal Átha N-Ámhnaís*

---

## BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

5<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian/Student,

I hope you are keeping well.

Following last evening's confirmation that schools are to reopen as scheduled we are very much looking forward to welcoming all students back tomorrow. To ensure the health and safety of all stakeholders it is absolutely essential that we all follow closely the public health guidelines that are in place to ensure that this return to school is a success.

It is also important to remember that we are returning to a different situation than what pertained before Christmas. The arrival of the now dominant Omicron variant requires us all to be even more careful than we were previously. To ensure everyone's health & safety the following guidelines must be observed:

- **Students/Staff should not attend school if they or any member of the household display any signs or symptoms of Covid-19. In situations such as this you are advised to self-isolate and contact your GP.**
- **If identified as a close contact of a positive case of Covid-19 please follow closely the advice of the HSE.**

Staff and students are expected to co-operate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school.

We will also continue to implement the safety measures introduced last September. Students and staff are required to:

- Maintain regular hand hygiene;
- Maintain physical distancing;
- Apply appropriate respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette; and
- Maintain environmental hygiene.

As before students will be required to wear face coverings at all times within the school building. It is a requirement that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff or students cannot be maintained. This applies both indoors and outdoors.

All students on the post primary transport scheme should wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Face coverings should be changed and refreshed regularly.

The school will continue to enforce these measures rigorously. However, each member of the school community must take personal responsibility for their safety and the safety of others. For this reason, we would encourage that, where possible, students should take an antigen test prior to the return to school. Regular antigen testing would assist the school greatly in containing the virus.

As mentioned above the Omicron variant is now dominant in Ireland. With its increased transmissibility it is likely that we will face challenges with staffing levels. If such a situation arises we may be reluctantly forced to leave Year Groups at home. You will be advised of such decisions by text.

We understand that this has been an exceptionally stressful time for many. We will do everything we can to assist and support our students in the next number of weeks. To that end please do not hesitate to contact us if your circumstances have changed in recent weeks.

We look forward to having our students and staff back in school tomorrow. If we work together and follow all guidelines I am confident that it will be a safe and rewarding return for all.

Regards,

*David McDonagh*

Principal