

Some information and reminders for the next school year, beginning September 1st 2021

Household Members Displaying Symptoms of Covid-19

If your child, or anyone in your household, is displaying symptoms of Covid-19, please do not send your child to school.

This is the number one thing we can do to keep the virus out of schools and, by extension, out of our wider community.

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: -

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Covid Mitigation Measures in Schools

School will operate as it has this year. All Covid mitigation measures will remain in place in September. Hopefully the Covid situation continues to improve and we can go back to more 'normal' school as the year progresses.

Sending sick children to school

Parents/guardians have perhaps the most important role in keeping the virus out of schools. If your child, **or anyone in your household**, is displaying **any cold, cough or flu-like symptoms whatsoever**, it is **absolutely vital** that you keep your child home from school. It is the number one thing we can do to keep our pupils, staff and wider community safe. Whilst it may mean disruptions for you, it is a responsibility that all parents/guardians must take seriously and you are urged to heed this message and act accordingly.

See here for symptoms <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>

Overseas Travel

Children who have travelled from overseas countries should observe all relevant quarantine periods at the time and not attend school during any quarantine period.

Isolation Area

In the event that a child is displaying symptoms of Covid-19 in school, the child will be removed to an isolation area within the school. The child's parents/guardians will then be contacted and asked to come to the school to collect the child as soon as possible. We are aware that, should it occur, such an incident may cause shock, worry and some level of panic in parents. However, we will need parents to act with a degree of urgency and to collect their child as soon as is possible. If parents/guardians cannot collect their child and we have to call the emergency contact, we will make it clear to this contact that the child is displaying Covid-19 symptoms. Obviously, some people may not be comfortable with this. We would ask you to consider this when asking someone to be an emergency contact. Therefore, if it is at all possible, parents/guardians are asked to make every effort to collect their child themselves.

'Bubbles' and 'Pods'

The 'Bubbles' and 'Pods' system will remain in place in September.

What is a 'Pod'?

A pod is a group of children who sit together in the class. Children in pods may sit within 1 metre of each other. This pod will be at least 1 metre from other pods. This is in line with Dept. Of Education guidance, from 3rd - 6th Class. In 2nd Class, in line with the guidance, it is felt that children are too young to maintain physical distancing. However our 2nd Classes have made the same arrangements with physical distancing as the other classes, but the operation of the system may be less stringent than that of other classes, given the children's age. The class teacher will, in consultation with last year's teacher, decide on the makeup of each pod within the class. The pods will be made up of children of mixed ability who we feel will get on well together. If we have to move children on classroom management grounds, the teacher may do this. A simple example would be if two children are regularly messing or distracting others; the teacher might decide to move one of these children; that would mean another child would also have to be moved to make space for the move. This would be a classroom management issue and would be done with the good of all the children in the class in mind. Learning must go on in the classroom. We will not be placing children in certain pods or moving children to a different pod at the behest of parents on 'Covid-19' grounds. As I have explained, to move one child in actual fact means to move two: one would have to be moved to make room for the other. We will not be placing children in the same pod because they are "best friends", "always in each other's house", "on the same bus", "with the same childminder", etc. There is a

reason for this; if we start down that road and try to please everybody, we will end up disappointing people. It would be an impossible task. The only exception to this will be siblings; if we have siblings in the same class, they may be placed in the same pod. Please do not ask us to make any further exceptions to this.

Children from the same class bubble but in different pods may mix in certain outdoor settings, such as at play times, during PE, on nature walks etc.

Pencil Case Items

Children should try to be as 'self sufficient' as they can be in terms of personal items in their pencil cases. This is to avoid the need or temptation to share items. Please label the following personal items if possible; Pencils, pens, rubbers, pencil parers, ruler, colours, thin black marker, whiteboard markers, safety scissors, glue sticks, personal pack of tissues. Try to make the pencil case as compact as possible; no novelty/furry items etc. The more 'streamlined' the classrooms and the children's possessions are, the better. No Tipp Ex of any sort in any class please.

Shopping Bag

Every child will also need one of those strong, re-usable shopping bags. Not the plastic ones, more like the strong 'woven' ones. These will be used in the classrooms to store books or school bags, to allow for easier cleaning of the desktops in the evening.

Water

Water is the recommended lunch drink, in line with the school's Healthy Eating Policy.

Uniforms

Last year, there was some talk in the media about uniforms and whether they need to be washed every day. Whilst this talk seems to have subsided as the year went on, we will continue with our 'relaxed' uniform policy for the start of the year and will not be insisting on children wearing the school uniform every day. This should allow for more frequent washing of the uniform, should parents wish to do so and it will also allow for easier 'layering up' (see below). Please ensure that the tracksuit is worn on PE days (the teacher will inform the children as to when their regular PE day is). Just to be clear, we are not insisting on, advocating or otherwise promoting the daily washing of the uniform. We are just reacting to something that was 'out there' and trying to allow parents the choice to act in a way that may make them more comfortable.

Please put your child's name on each item of their uniform and any coat/hat/gloves/scarf etc. that they may bring to school.

'Layering Up'

As the winter approaches, the weather will, obviously, begin to get colder. As advised by the HSE and the Department of Education, we will be opening classroom windows to allow for improved ventilation. This will be done with the health of all, students and staff, in mind and with the aim of creating an environment that is 'Covid unfriendly'. We will have the heating on, but we won't be able to escape the fact that it may be chilly at times. There is simply no way to get around this problem. Therefore, we are asking that the children 'layer up' as the days get cooler. If they could wear a vest/t-shirt/UnderArmour-type top/tights under their uniform that should help matters greatly. We would prefer if children layered up underneath their uniform, rather than them having to put their coats on in class. Coats can be bulky and can make writing, drawing and general movement that bit more 'cumbersome'. We would ask for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

School Holidays and Books Going Home

Depending on the Covid situation at the time, we may send the books home with the children for holiday periods. This will, hopefully, only ever be a precautionary measure, in case the situation changes rapidly and schools are closed beyond the scheduled holiday period. Hopefully the situation will improve as the year goes on and will stabilise enough that we do not have to do this. Please do not panic if you see the books coming home!

Parents/Guardians on School Grounds

As with all schools, we are trying to minimise visitors to the school. Parents/Guardians are requested not to come onto the school playgrounds or into the school building unless it is essential, both on September 1st and into the future. Basically, the fewer people we have coming into the school, the safer it is. It is hoped that no one takes this personally, it is not meant so and it is a measure to make the school safer for your children. If you do need to come into the school, now or in the future, please phone the school office on 045-432174 and make an appointment.

We appreciate that dropping off your child on the 1st September may well be an emotional time and you may wish to accompany them as far as possible, but we must insist that you drop them at the gate and leave. I can assure you we will do the very best we can for all the children in our care.

Dropping Things in to the School

If your child forgets an item and you wish to drop it in to the school, we would ask that you phone the school office on 045-432174 before you leave home. This should be for essential items only. Forgotten football gear or art supplies your child will probably manage the day without these (in other words, these are not essential). Unless you consider it absolutely vital, it is advisable not to pay a visit to the school.

If you do need to drop something off, phone the school office and the item may be dropped in the blue box at the front door. Please clearly label all items dropped here with your child's name and class.

Picking Up a Child from school

In order to minimise disruption, if you do need to pick up your child from school early (for example, for a dental appointment), please try to time this pick up at your child's break times. This means your child could have their bag packed and be in the yard ready to go. You can approach the wall, talk to the teacher on yard duty and we can hand the child out the gate, so to speak.

Empty Soap and Spray Bottles

If you have any empty soap or spray bottles at home, we would have a use for them in school. Please send them in with your child, as they empty. This is a collection that will be ongoing for the year.

Hand Hygiene, Cough and Sneeze Etiquette

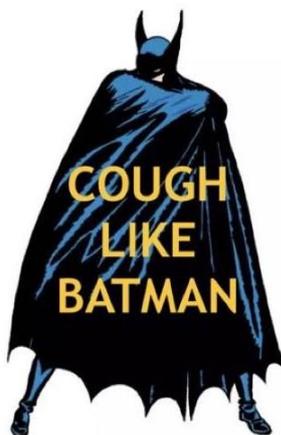
Hand washing and sanitising will continue to be a feature of school life.

It would help us greatly if you can teach your child correct handwashing and sanitising technique, not just a 'splash and dash'. See the HSE website here <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/how-to-wash-your-hands.html>

One very simple thing would be to teach your child to pull up their sleeves when they go to wash their hands. Very simple, but it needs teaching.

We would ask that your child cleans their hands last thing in the morning before they leave home for school. Also, when they return home, they should wash their hands first thing.

You could also teach and encourage correct hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette with your child. We have found that encouraging children to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice in their heads will pretty much amount to the time that it takes to wash their hands correctly. Children may be advised to 'Cough Like Batman' (into their elbow) if they do not have a tissue to cough into. Simple things like this may be effective with your child.



Travel to/from School

We would encourage as many children as possible to walk, cycle or scoot to school. The risk of catching the virus in the open air on a walk to school is low. Walking/cycling/scooting has the added bonus of being a more predictable travel time. If you drive, it might take you 5 minutes, or it might be 25 minutes. If you walk, the journey

time will be roughly the same every day and you can time it to arrive in school close to 9:10am. Whilst we obviously don't want children late for school, we also don't want them to arrive too early and be hanging around outside.

If you are driving your child to school, you could consider a 'park and stride' option, parking away from the school and finishing the journey on foot.

If you are picking your child up from school, parents are encouraged to arrange a spot to meet your child, away from the immediate environs of the school: for example, the boardwalk, the park, the library, the Riverbank, in front of the church, the church garden, the small pitch gate.

As school ends every day, there may be a large number of adults gathered on Chapel Lane. Parents are encouraged to do the following:

- If you are parked on Chapel Lane, stay in your car.
- If you must wait along Chapel Lane, please adhere to social distancing guidelines and maintain a 2m distance from others as you wait. There are markings on the wall to indicate 2m.
- Wait a little away from the main gate, where the crowd may be less.
- Consider wearing a mask as you pick up your child. It can't hurt.

Parents/guardians are asked not to congregate outside the school wall on the morning of September 1st, or indeed any morning. I know that you may want to talk to other parents and have a catch up, I would ask that you do this elsewhere. Please exercise social distancing, staying 2m from each other. Unfortunately, 'a quick word at the wall' with the teacher will not be an option this year. If you need to communicate with the teacher, please contact the school office. Your cooperation in these matters is appreciated.

Entrance Gates to the School Grounds

Each class (a 'bubble') will be assigned a gate to enter the school grounds. This is to minimise congregation at the school walls (congregation of parents as much as children!). We have the Junior Yard Gate (at the pedestrian crossing on Chapel Lane), the Small Gate further down Chapel Lane and the Big Sliding Gate further down again. The children should enter the school grounds via their appointed gate.

Please note that there is no entrance/exit for children/parents via the staff car park.

2nd Class:

Enter at the main gate, at the pedestrian crossing.

Once inside the gate, turn right and enter the school via the ramp at Door A.

Latecomers

If your child is late for school and their entrance door is closed, they can enter the school via the Front Door (Door C).

Induction Day, September 1st

The first day of school at Patrician Primary School for 2nd Class pupils will begin at 11.30am and finish at 2.30pm. The aim of this late start and earlier finish is to give our new pupils a chance to settle into their new school. It will also give pupils the opportunity to meet their teachers in a relaxed environment. Pupils will be shown the route from the gate to their seat in the class and guided outside at home time.

If we have all 360 children arriving at 9:10 am on the first day, we may be overwhelmed, the children may become disoriented, and that may compromise your child's safety and the safety of our staff. We feel that this approach will allow a more relaxed and safer return.

Class Groupings for Incoming 2nd Class

The incoming 2nd Classes will be a blend from all the 1st Classes, as is the norm. We have consulted with St. Conleth's Infants' School and feel we have a good blend of mixed ability classes, whilst also considering children who get along with each other and the boy: girl ratio.

First Week in September for 2nd Class

Wednesday September 1 st 2021	11:30 to 2:30.
Thursday September 2 nd 2021,	9:30 to 2:30.
Friday September 3 rd 2021	9:30 to 2:30.

Enter via the Main Gate where the children will be guided straight to their classroom, entering the building through their designated door.

Monday Sept. 6th onwards

School as usual from 9:10 to 2:50