

August 10th, 2020

Dear Parent,

Welcome back to Moate Community School for the academic year 2020/2021. It is a long time since our school closed on 12th March and a lot has happened in our world since then - many things have changed. We hope that you are all keeping safe and well and you have had an opportunity to relax and enjoy some downtime over the summer break. This year more than ever, we will be very happy to welcome all of our students through the gates of the school again. It is fair to say that this prolonged closure of schools has shown the importance of school life for students and their families and the connectivity it provides for the whole school community. It has shown us that school is indeed a place of learning, but as importantly, a place to share experiences with each other, to connect with each other and to provide a structure to our lives that we possibly took for granted. While school life will be different, it is our hope that we can continue to provide a quality learning environment for our students, an environment that will continue to foster friendships, and where students will gain the experiences to create memories and prepare them for their future.

Many aspects of school life will be affected this year due to Covid 19 and these are being felt by every school community in the country. We have always been very fortunate to have the support of our students, parents, teachers and the wider school community in the past. As we carefully plan for the year ahead we are confident that we will continue to have this support as we face the many challenges ahead. As we make our way through this academic year, we will be always be guided by the health and welfare of all members of the school community and we ask for your patience and support in this regard.

We especially wish to extend an extra warm welcome to our new First Year Students. This is a new and exciting time for them. However, we recognise that it can also be a time of transition and change for everyone involved. We will endeavour to make this transition as smooth as possible, particularly in light of our current circumstances.

Due to the Covid 19 restrictions, our Leaving Certificate Class of 2020 had an abrupt end to their life in Moate Community School and to all that goes with a final departure from secondary school. We would like to take this opportunity to wish them every success in their results in September and in all their future endeavours.

Please find attached the School Calendar for 2020/2021. It takes into account the restrictions and challenges of Covid 19 and is of course subject to change at any time in light of Public Health Advice. Dates for Parent Teacher Meetings have been included as part of the calendar, but it remains uncertain if these will go ahead at this time.

There will be many changes to the school routine in order to comply with Department of Education & Skills guidelines. As per the attached schedule, students will be returning on a phased basis. This will allow us to fully explain and demonstrate to students all new procedures. These include the following which are subject to change according to ongoing Public Health Advice.

- The school opening times will be as follows:
Monday – Thursday: 8.55am - 3.55pm
Friday: 8.55am – 1.15pm
- Students will go directly to their 9.00am timetabled classroom when they enter the school in the morning.
- Covid 19 posters, instructions and signposting will be clearly visible throughout the school.
- Each classroom has been reconfigured to allow a minimum of one metre physical distancing in the classroom.
- There will be a strict One Way System in place throughout the school which will facilitate physical distancing. This will be clearly signposted.
- Students will be required to wear face masks in class and as they travel between classes on the corridors. Students are required to bring their own face masks to school each day.
- There will hand sanitizers placed at all entry/exit points throughout the school, and in every classroom. It is essential that all students practice good hand hygiene and proper cough etiquette at all times. When a class is leaving a classroom at any time, they will be directed by their teacher to sanitize their work station thoroughly in advance of any new class coming into the room.
- Lockers will continue to be available to students at present. Clear guidelines will be in place regarding how students are to access their locker.
- The school canteen will be accessible to students as normal. The small break and lunch break will be staggered across years to minimise the number of students out of class at any one time. The full detail of these changes will be explained to students when they return.
- Students must bring their own drinks for the full school day as water fountains present a risk of contagion by the very nature of their contact with multiple bottles.
- Students will be expected to wear their full school uniform at all times.
- New procedures are now in place for visitors to the school. Current health advice recommends that visitors must be kept at a minimum and **only in essential circumstances**. Parents who wish to contact the school must do so by phoning 090 6481350 or emailing info@moatecs.com.
- Please ensure that your child has everything that they need for school, and if they forget something, please do not call to the school, unless it is a matter of emergency. This will have to be strictly adhered to in the best interest of everybody's health and safety.
- If you need to collect your child from the school during the school day, please ring the doorbell at the reception doors and wait there until you are attended to.
- In line with Public Health Advice, students who are experiencing any symptoms associated with Covid 19 should not attend school. Further guidelines will be available from the Department of Health in this regard and will be made available to parents. Please familiarise yourselves with this advice.
- Further information regarding Music Lessons, PE and Transition Year Activities will be available in due course. We hope to be in a position to provide our Evening Study Programme and information on this will issue at a later date.

- It is not yet clear what will happen in terms of sporting and extra-curricular events. We will provide details as soon as they become available.
- Regarding foreign travel, it is essential that students do not attend school if they or any family member has travelled abroad without adhering to the rules and regulations laid down by the Department of Foreign Affairs (e.g. 14-day quarantining period).

As we prepare for the year ahead, please take note of the following:

School Uniform:

In the interest of the overall appearance of pupils, full school uniform must be worn in the school at all times and at all school functions. This includes occasions such as public and house examinations. The wearing of the school uniform contributes significantly to the atmosphere of order, discipline and respect in the school and we would appreciate your support in ensuring students are co-operative in this matter.

Our student uniform consists of:

- Navy crew neck jumper with school crest.
- White shirt / blouse.
- Navy uniform trousers for boys.
- Navy check uniform skirt / navy trousers for girls.
- Black/Navy shoes.
- Navy jacket with school crest.

The jacket with the school crest is compulsory for all students who intend wearing a jacket to school. 'Hoodies' may not be worn as part of the school uniform. It is essential that all uniform items be labelled with the student's name. We feel that students should take pride in wearing the school uniform as it reflects positively on both the students and on our school. The following are not allowed: body piercing, unkempt appearance and facial hair. Some students will experiment with hairstyles/dyeing hair etc. during the summer months. Please ensure hairstyles conform to school rules and regulations for the commencement of the new school year.

School Books:

School books are available on the Book Rental Scheme. Only students renting all books may use the scheme. Books that are lost or mislaid during the year must be replaced by the individual. The viability of the rental scheme relies on full co-operation from students and parents. Students will have the majority of their school books in their lockers when they commence school. The cost of book rental for the year is €150 per student and will be collected on the first day. This fee covers school books, school journal, locker, extra insurance, report costs etc. Locker, locks and code will only be given out on receipt of payment. A replacement journal will only be issued to students in exceptional circumstances at an additional cost of €10.00. Remember locker, locks & codes and school books will ONLY be given on receipt of payment on the first day.

School Transport:

Students using the school transport system should ensure that they have received their transport ticket. Regarding students who avail of the Ballycumber / Clara bus service, please contact Rohan Transport on 086 8119160 and let them know you require a seat on the Ballycumber/Clara bus service.

Lunchtime Passes:

Only students who live within walking distance of the school will be issued with lunchtime passes to go home for lunch. All other students should remain on the school grounds at lunchtime.

Mobile phones:

While recognising the uses of mobile phones especially in emergencies, the school believes that they can act as a major distraction in the classroom environment and beyond. It is strongly recommended that students do not bring mobile phones to school. If they wish to contact home they may use the school phone at the main office.

Data Protection:

Moate Community School shall endeavour at all times to comply with the Data Protection Act 1988, the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2018. Procedures will be outlined in the school's Data Protection Policy.

Communication with Parents:

As you are aware, the school has set up a Parents Email Database to ensure effective and instant communication with parents. From now on, **ALL** correspondence will be forwarded by email. Therefore, we would ask parents to regularly check their email account. This is critical in the light of Covid 19 as regular updates will be provided.

Thank You:

We wish to thank all staff for their hard work and commitment in continuing to engage and provide tuition for students at the end of the last academic year during lockdown, in very difficult circumstances.

These are very challenging times for all of us and we appreciate and understand how difficult students and families may find these changes. We are aware of the challenges that have faced many families during the Covid 19 lockdown since March. We acknowledge that the return to school may prove stressful for many and some students may feel overwhelmed. We wish to assure you that we will make every effort to provide a smooth transition back to school for students and teachers, and to provide support wherever possible. We will work together for the long term health and welfare of all members of the school community. We wish everyone the very best for the academic year ahead.

Yours sincerely,

Kindest regards,

Tom Lowry
Principal

Maura Murray
Deputy Principal

Carmel McCormack
Deputy Principal