

Email from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master

Tuesday, 16th February 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

Welcome back to KG-P3

We are delighted to confirm that this afternoon the First Minister confirmed that our KG-P3 pupils will be returning to school on Monday 22nd February. Nothing will give us greater pleasure than to start to welcome back our youngest pupils and to begin to see Hill Street coming back to life with teaching and learning take place in person. The success of this process and all the safeguards which are in place it is hoped will allow in due course for other young people to return to Junior and Senior Schools. I have written in detail to parent/carers of pupils in Early Years in a separate email.

Other year groups

The First Minister also confirmed that there will be no further changes before 15th March, when the next review will take place. We do not have an indication of return dates for any other year groups and of course we will continue to provide the best possible remote learning provision. However were I to have a crystal ball and based on previous experience over the last year, I would suggest that we are unlikely to see much change before Easter. I do not wish to be gloomy but we have all learnt the need for realism during the current pandemic. The Government rightly wishes to see that the R number and transmission rates do not rise as a consequence of pupils returning to school.

Senior Phase pupils (S4-S6)

Our S4-S6 began their remote prelims today and I wanted to thank everyone for their support. Once again our students were outstanding in their behaviour, application and approach. There was over 99% attendance for the first day of prelims. We reviewed everything at the end of the day to make the necessary 'tweaks' to ensure things are as seamless as possible. Our job is to support young people as they adapt to this very new way of assessment whilst ensuring it is robust, accurate and equitable.

This evening we received notification that the date for submitting quality assured provisional grades has been extended to Friday 25th June. These grades must be based on demonstrated attainment consistent with subject-specific guidance. We are utilising assessments produced by the SQA in the flexible manner advised and which can be verified by the SQA. These prelims will provide one part of the evidence used to ensure robust grades in line with the SQA rubrics.

Pupils in S4-S6 in practical subjects will be invited into school post prelims to complete any practical assessments entirely in line with the new guidance ie: no more than 5-8% of the school roll in at any one time, strict 2m distancing and all other precautions in place. Pupils will only be invited into school when work cannot be carried out remotely. You will hear shortly about arrangements for this but we want to focus on prelims first. There will be provision for Art, Graphics and Drama and we await further guidance on PE. Pupils will be in school on different days to allow for safe distancing and we will use all available spaces.

Changes which we know about

- The current mitigations and precautions all remain in place but for Senior School pupils we will now have 2m distancing in place. This will lead to adaptations to routines and provision. However until we have return dates indicated by the government it is not possible to outline the detail of what this will mean in practical terms. The CLT will continue to model and plan for all possible eventualities. Our site, staffing ratios and ample buildings provide a flexibility that few schools can enjoy

- 2m distancing will be introduced on school transport. The two providers we use are very flexible and supportive in their approaches and we will monitor the latest guidance and ensure it is implemented
- Lateral flow testing will be offered to all staff and to pupils in S4-S6 either immediately before or upon return. This is entirely up to the individual to decide whether to participate but the kits are already in school and I will write separately on this once we have dates for return announced by the government. This is asymptomatic testing and does not reduce the requirement on all of us to continue to ensure all aspects of keeping safe by distancing, face covering, sanitising and following all guidance

As always, I will provide updates as soon as they are known to us and thank you for your continuing support for your children and indeed the College in these constantly changing and challenging times. Indeed I wanted to end with sharing a prayer that I came across which seems to summarise where we are as a world and as individuals.

Loving God,

We asked for strength, and you gave us difficulties to make us strong.

We asked for wisdom, and you gave us problems to solve.

We asked for prosperity, and you gave us purpose and brains to use.

We asked for courage, and you gave us fears to overcome.

We asked for patience, and you gave us situations where we were forced to wait.

We asked for love, and you gave us troubled people to help.

We asked for justice, and you called us to be just and lead with integrity.

Lord, we have received nothing that we asked for or wanted.

And yet, we receive everything that we needed.

For this we give thanks.

Amen.

Kindest regards and every blessing to you all

Matthew Bartlett

Head Master



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GREAT THINGS HAPPEN IN THE GREEN BLAZER