

**Email from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master**

Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

The announcements made yesterday by the First Minister were clearly a significant further step to opening up society from the restrictions we have all faced and I am sure we are all delighted to hear of the progress being made. I thought I should update parents and carers of what this means within school. Nothing of course changes for society as a whole until Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May and for schools there is no new or updated guidance at all, which means that all the statutory guidance which was last updated on April 19<sup>th</sup> remains in place. Therefore, **all mitigations and arrangements within school are unchanged**. I know that you will want to continue to support the College in all it is doing to keep everyone safe and well.

- Most importantly and clear even within the changes announced today is 2m distancing must be maintained between adults who are not from the same family. Therefore, please continue to support this with maintaining the pick-up arrangements and your understanding of why staff have to 2m distance
- Wherever possible within a school setting there should be distancing and therefore all our room arrangements, one-way systems, mitigations with start, finish and change over times remain
- Bubbles are a key part of safety and remain in place

There is no indication at all as to when restrictions may be eased within a school setting and it is important to note that guidance is more detailed for schools than any other setting. Rules are detailed and specific and it is not always possible to take the general announcements and simply assume they apply without amendment to schools. It certainly provides me with a challenge but I will of course keep you updated and introduce changes once they are permitted. I do understand that this complexity of guidance for schools may be both frustrating and confusing, not least when it appears to contradict the guidance which applies for different settings. Please continue to trust us to do the very best to keep your children safe.

- **Distancing** generally is under review but easing is unlikely until at least early June and we finish on 22<sup>nd</sup> June so it is unlikely to have much of an impact before then
- **Day trips and excursions are possible and will start to take place** (for instance the Early Years annual trip to Troon and retreats offsite for S1-S3). Rest assured that they require a detailed risk assessment over and above our current enhanced risk assessments for operation during a pandemic
- The possibility for **Events** is still extremely limited as we fall under the guidance for schools, not guidance for life events or what are separately referred to as specific events
- **Social gatherings** such as Proms etc. are still not feasible for us to arrange and this is likely to be the case for the rest of this academic year. Even if we were not subject to the schools' guidance which we of course meticulously follow, such events fall under hospitality not specific events and as such 2m distancing is in place, dancing is not possible, live bands, discos are not feasible and there is a 10.30pm finish time. Above all there remain very strict rules in place about numbers from different households which make this sort of social gathering not possible even in tier 1 or 0 and of course we will still be in tier 2 from Monday
- **Guidance on sport** remains to be updated and professional bodies are doing this at the moment. We are still operating within bubbles and mixed competitions/year groups are not feasible within a school setting. However, I am well aware that this contradicts with pupils playing within club setting. Hopefully this anomaly will be addressed nationally. I also cannot wait to welcome parents back as spectators but restrictions on this are likely to remain until the start of the new season
- **More than one singer within Mass** is now possible (but not congregational singing). I know that soon we will have 4 singers in each year group working within their year group bubbles singing at shared celebrations



- We hope that Father Dermot and St Aloysius' will be able to review the **numbers able to attend at St Aloysius'** when we are using the church but that is clearly not under my jurisdiction. Perhaps we can hope and pray the church will be able to be used to its fullest 2m distanced capacity in time for Confirmations and I will again update you once more is clear
- We await guidance on visits (other than day trips) into next year

I am sorry if this letter sounds much less positive than my normal more upbeat tone, but I know that our community welcomes clear guidance and most importantly a continued reassurance that keeping everyone safe remains our number one priority. We continue to look forward with confidence to the months ahead and a return to normality. That is achieved by knowing what is and what is not possible at present, however frustrating at times that may be.

Can I end by sharing with you how joyful the last week was? We sent our S6 on study leave in civilised style and as always, they demonstrated what exceptional young people they are by their demeanour and good humour in spite of the circumstances. We celebrated Mass for S4 and S5: moments of great joy for all of us who have missed the comfort of receiving the Sacrament on a regular basis and then we had five masses for our first communicants. The singing, the celebration of the sacrament, the engagement of the young people and the personal nature of these events brought a bit of heaven to Garnethill. It was a reminder of what really matters and why we can and should look forward with hope to the future.

Kindest regards

**Matthew Bartlett**

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