

Letter from Matthew Bartlett, Head Master

Friday, 06th August 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

You will have no doubt been wondering why I have been so silent over the summer after a year of lots of communications! We finally heard on Tuesday evening of the guidance regarding schools reopening and there is lots of detail. You will be delighted to hear that we are gradually moving to some sense of normality. As always, our priority remains to keep everyone safe and to follow, and if possible exceed, best practice. Please take time to read what the information below as we all continue to work to keep ourselves and our community as safe as possible.

Not all changes in society as a whole apply within the school context. Mitigations that were in place at the end of last term remain until at least until the end of September at which time we will be advised how to proceed. We will be updated if and when it is possible to make other changes. There are also a number of key changes that were not fully explained in the televised briefing.

UPDATES ON OUR WAYS OF WORKING AND KEEPING SAFE

There are **no changes** to all of the following: one-way systems (still in place), enhanced cleaning measures, hand sanitising, wearing of PPE as previously, face masks, drop off and pick up arrangements for the Junior School, and staggered start and finish in the Senior School (although a slight adjustment to timings here). Desks must still be cleaned at the end of each lesson by pupils. Changes (and some are minor) are explained below.

Lateral Flow Tests: important change

All staff and pupils in secondary schools should test themselves using a lateral flow test before returning to schools and then twice weekly. Pupils in Junior Schools are also encouraged to test. I will send under a separate cover next week details of the process for testing. However, Lateral flow tests are available from reception. They can also be picked up at pharmacies or ordered online. This is the quickest and most effective way of ensuring anyone with the virus is identified and can isolate. Pupils should test the day before returning to school or on the first morning before leaving home. Please remember that the test takes 30 minutes to complete including waiting for the result.

Once we have used our current stock, the new testing kits to be delivered require only a nasal swab and take just 15 minutes to deliver a result. Already you can provide a household report rather than multiple accounts when submitting test data.

Contact Tracing

Only clear prolonged close contacts or household close contacts will be contacted for self-isolation. We have generally avoided whole classes being sent home but this change is designed to remove this impact across the country.

Children (0-17) who are close contacts and are not symptomatic do not have to isolate. The same guidance applies as for vaccinated adults

Bubbles: a positive change

These are no longer required in schools from the start of term. We continue to be cautious and to keep pupils working in smaller groups but it does mean that in the *Junior School* we can allow pupils to stay in the playground before school, have mixed after school and homework clubs, return to the normal pre-covid timetable, recommence games, return to normal timings and allow specialist teaching to recommence in designated classrooms.

The *Kindergarten* has its own rules and this remains a 'closed bubble' but specialist teachers will be able to teach the pupils outside.

In the *Senior School* we will keep designated social areas but mixed support groups, mixed training/practices for sport and co-curricular clubs can recommence

Face Masks

All Senior School pupils (S1-S6) should wear face coverings at all times in the buildings including during lessons. This does not apply if in a social area whilst eating and/or drinking. Masks should be worn by Senior School pupils on buses to and from school and to and from Millerston. **The only change** is that pupils in the Junior School are not required to wear masks any longer on buses. Adults will continue to wear masks on site and parents should wear masks when dropping pupils off or waiting at pick up behind the Junior School.

Visitor Policy

Any visitors will sign a new 'covid check list' and can only access the site from 45 Hill Street. A temperature check will take place. We are now reserving the right to ask visitors to take a lateral flow test and wait 30 minutes for the outcome. I am sure you will understand that these measures which will continue to be reviewed are designed to keep everyone safe. Generally speaking the College currently remains closed to visitors.

We will continue to conduct most meetings via teams/zoom or by phone and only the most urgent pastoral meetings can be conducted face to face. We do find this a very different way of working, but we are following national guidance in continuing to work in this way and we really appreciate how cooperative our parent body has been in accommodating this change. We hope that events will gradually return and these will all be risk assessed and reviewed by the leadership team.

A number of events such as Parents Evenings and new class meetings in Junior School will remain online not just because this is the current situation but also because we are responding to significant positive feedback from parents and carers.

Buses

Buses continue to operate as normal with face masks continuing for Senior School pupils but no longer applying for Junior School pupils

Ventilation

A major part of the guidance concerns ventilation and the College will continue to follow the guidance as well as introducing the use of CO2 monitoring or equivalent as recommended. Our large site, well ventilated rooms and smaller classes are all aids to safety in this regard.

Music, Drama and PE

Music, Drama and PE can now return to normal. These departments have needed to make most adaptations and I am very grateful for the goodwill and generosity of spirit they have shown over the changes and adaptations.

Peripatetic lessons will now return in the week commencing 30th August for both Junior and Senior School pupils with all mitigations in place in practice rooms

The Sports Hall is now fully back in operation and likewise changing rooms in the Sports Building will open again with mitigations in place. However, pupils will attend in Games kit on the day they have games so there will be no changing at Millerston or for games. It follows that no pupil should be wearing their games kit on any other occasion than their designated games day.

Use of the Fitness Suite

The fitness suite will be back in use from the start of term. Ms McGrenaghan will provide protocols and guidance for use of this.

TIMINGS AND ROUTINES

Catering

The very popular grab and go service continues for all year groups: this is unchanged and the app and pick up points are unaltered. For S5 and S6 there will be grab and go from a pick-up point in the Main Hall

Refectory service as used to exist will not return until post October week at the earliest due to the layout of the area and to ensure staff are kept safe

Junior School

We are now back to normal timings for the school day in Junior School with breaks and lunchtimes as usual. Therefore, there is only an afternoon break for early years.

Clubs and after care will operate as normal. Homework Club commences week beginning 23rd August and clubs the week after.

Primary 7 are now back in the main building and will enter via the Scott Street door and exit via the Hill Street West door.

We are now able to return to normal use of the playgrounds which is clearly preferable for pupil wellbeing and relieves pressures on staff. **In the morning**, the following applies from 8.30am.

- KG straight to Kindie
- P1 straight to the Atrium
- P2 lower playground
- P3 lower playground
- P4 red playground
- P5 main pitch
- P6 main pitch
- P7 Sports Hall playground

There will continue to be staggered **dismissal times** to ensure social distancing. Parents must continue to maintain social distancing and wear masks at all times when on site. Could I please ask that you then leave the area once you have picked up your child(ren)

Kindergarten from 3pm - 4.30pm
 3.00pm - Primary 1 and Primary 2
 3.10pm - Primary 3 and Primary 4
 3.20pm - Primary 5, 6 and Primary 7

Senior School

There are some changes to the school day which is now as follows:

S1 - S3	S4 - S6	School Day
8:55 – 9:15am	9:05 – 9:15am	Registration & Welcome Prayer
9:15 – 10:05am	9:15 – 10:05am	Period 1
10:10 - 11:00am	10:10 - 11:00am	Period 2
11:00 - 11:15am	11:00 - 11:15am	Break

11:20 - 12:05pm	11:20 - 12:05pm	Period 3
12:10 - 12:55pm	12:10 - 12:55pm	Period 4
12:55 - 1:05pm	12:55 – 1:05pm	Examen
1:05 - 1:45pm	1:05 - 1:45pm	Lunch
1:50 - 2:40pm	1:50 - 2:40pm	Period 5
2:45 - 3:25pm	2:45 - 3:35pm	Period 6

Please try to ensure that your child does not arrive until the given start of the day to allow us to continue to keep everyone safe.

Social areas are unchanged with:

S1	Clavius
S2	Refectory
S3	Refectory
S4	Convent Chapel
S5	Hall
S6	Common Room and other S6 areas in main building

The Library is currently not in use due to social distancing within a smaller area

Pupils no longer have lockers and many lockers have been removed. We are confident this will provide further safe spaces for our young people and we are considering how to utilise the areas freed up as social areas which are more appealing.

I hope all this is helpful to you and it certainly points to us moving slowly but positively to a greater sense of normality. I am very much looking forward to more face to face interaction whilst continuing to want to keep everyone as safe as possible. However, should you have any concerns or questions, as always do not hesitate to be in touch with me and I will be very pleased to assist.

Can I say how much I have appreciated the loyalty and support of all of our parent body in these challenging times and I am delighted that slowly we are returning to a sense of normality. I do look forward to saying a socially distanced welcome back to everyone

Kindest regards

Matthew Bartlett



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