

Planning and Preparing for Re-Opening

As a staff we are very busy preparing for all the children to return. Below we have answered some questions that we thought you may have. We hope you find them helpful!

You will have heard new words in the media such as ‘Bubble’ and ‘Pod’.

What are they?

Classroom Bubble: Each classroom in the school will now be its own independent group. Classroom Bubbles will also be segregated at yard times. This is to ensure that children only mix with others within their class;-but social distancing is still being adhered to.

Class Pods: These are smaller groups created within the classroom. The aim would be for children to only interact closely with others in their own Pod within the whole class group.

Note: The DES have made no requirements for social distancing up to 2nd class. From 3rd to 6th, a 1m social distancing is required if possible. This will be possible in some classes depending on the number of pupils in the room.

What adults are allowed enter the School Buildings?

To ensure a controlled and safe/hygienic environment, only staff members will be allowed access to the school building. Please, under no circumstances should you come into the building unless you have an appointment. Casual visitations are completely discouraged. The school should only be accessed through the main door. The only entry is via the front door. Even then, access will be by appointment only. All visitors to SN Fionntáin Naofa must wear a mask/face covering.

Have the date or times to reopening the school changed?

We are opening on Thursday 27th August commencing at 9:20am and closing at 1pm.

When the children come to school in the morning what will happen?

We ask that no child is left on the school grounds before 9:00am any morning, If this becomes an issue at SN Fionntáin Naofa we will have to contact the parents of such children as they are a risk to the health and safety of everyone else. We are operating strict classroom bubbles on school grounds so we cannot have children mixing outside in the morning or after school. Children will be expected to go directly to their own room every morning and refrain from mixing with other Classroom Bubbles. Please use dedicated classroom doors to enter and exit the classroom see above Safe Classroom Entrance & Exit Plan. Classroom Staff will be on hand to monitor same every morning.

Are parents allowed in the school yard in the morning?

No. We must ask that parents (apart from those with Junior Infant children) let their child walk in from the school gate. All parents arriving at SN Fionntáin Naofa must observe Social Distancing Requirements and wear an appropriate face-covering/mask. Parents dropping children off by car are asked to let them off and drive away. Junior Infant parents only can walk their child to the classroom door.

Through what door will my child enter the building?

See traffic management plan attached

Are the school closing times changed?

Please note: School will close at 1pm on Thursday 27th and Friday 28th August.

From Monday 31st August closing times will be as normal:

-Infants: 2pm

-All other classes: 3pm

Note: Junior infants will finish at 12:00pm daily during the initial few weeks of school up to September 11th.

What happens on wet mornings?

Children must not mix outside of their own Classroom “Bubbles” and should not all congregate at the front door or in the same space. They must enter the building/classrooms via the assigned routes outlined in the Traffic Management Plan. All necessary doors will be open from 9:00am. No child should be on the school grounds before that time.

Homework

Our primary aim for the month of September is to get the children back to school safely and to manage/minimise the risk of COVID 19 so we can remain open. Accordingly, we have decided not to assign Homework Activities at this time. We will review the situation in Mid September with a view to on- line learning.

School-Bag

The children will bring all their belongings to school in their school-bag on the first day of the week. During class-time each pupil will use their school bags to mind/store all their belongings. School-Bags are to be left in school every day until the last day of the week. Then they may be taken home for the weekend.

Therefore, the only item(s) your child needs to bring to school every day will be his/her lunchbag/lunch-box/drinks bottle.

Break-Times

We will be staggering break times to ensure the safety of the children. Children will be able to play with all children from their own particular room, but are not allowed to leave their designated area or mix with other class groups.

Is your child safe to start back at school?

Children who should not attend school

If your child is in one of the following categories, they should not attend school.....

- Children who have been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have been in close contact with a person who has been diagnosed with Covid-19
- Children who have a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children who have been in contact with a person who has a suspected case of Covid-19 and the outcome of the test is pending
- Children with underlying health conditions who have been directed by a medical professional not to attend school
- Children who have returned home after travelling abroad and must self-isolate for a period of 14 days
- Children who are generally unwell

How will the school support a child who cannot attend?

For children who are vulnerable, a letter from medical source stating that the child should not attend is required.

Since a child is not able to attend school for an extended period of time, the Class Teacher (and/or the Special Education Teacher, where relevant) will suggest activities to support the child's learning at home with parents. Parents are welcome to make an appointment to discuss these arrangements.

What if your child has underlying health conditions but you have been told they can attend school?

We can understand that this is a very difficult situation for parents and you will be anxious about the school reopening. We can make every viable provision for a child in this situation and could possibly seat that child on an individual desk, - provided we have space to do so. Please talk to your Class Teacher to discuss same.

How will we be managing Hand Hygiene?

The HSE advises that regular hand-washing is key to the prevention of spreading Covid 19 and we will be making provision for regular hand-washing using hand-soap, warm water and paper towels throughout the day.

Will hand sanitiser be available?

Yes, - the DES have given all school additional funding for the purchase of same. We have installed a Hand Sanitising Unit in every classroom and also at the front doors. Children will be expected to use Hand Sanitiser when leaving/entering the building/classroom.

Will staff members be wearing PPE?

Yes, - staff will all have been issued a face shield to use whilst working at SN Fionntain Naofa. Some of our Teaching/SNA Staff may wear masks at work as well.

What about School Uniforms?

The School Uniform is to be worn as usual. It is advisable to change into casual clothes after school each evening.

What if you want to contact a teacher or the school?

As always we are available to speak with you as and when needed. We will however no longer be able to have any adult just casually turn up at reception or stop a staff member on the yard. We will now be only able to pass messages to staff via email or the Office Phone. Please do not drop into reception. If you wish to speak with any teacher please email: shanahoens@gmail.com or call 05787 39715 between 1:00pm and 3:00pm Mon.-Fri. If a follow up call is necessary, then that will be arranged. Meeting a staff member face to face will only be possible where an appointment has been made. The health and safety of pupils, staff and your family is most important to all of us at this time.

Collecting your child from school early?

We request that this happens for medical appointments and emergencies only as we try to minimise children moving around the school during the day.

If a child has to go home early it will only be facilitated by prior knowledge ie By contacting us in advance. When you arrive at Reception you will be asked to sign your child out. When this is completed we will arrange for your child to be sent down from his/her class. Please be reminded that no visitors will be allowed past Reception or down the corridor.

What about the personal equipment my child brings to school?

- Insofar as possible, it is requested that children bring their own pens, pencils, colours, rubbers, etc., to school in their own pencil case to avoid the sharing of equipment. Pencil cases will remain in school-bags at SN Fionntáin Naofa overnight and where possible they should be made of a material that can be wiped
- It is further requested that all items have the child's name on them for ease of identification.
- As already explained, all school bags are to remain in school during the week and may be taken home on Friday.

Will any shared equipment be used in the classroom?

By necessity, some classroom equipment needs to be shared eg Laptops, iPads and the equipment used for structured activities and play in Infant Classrooms (Aistear). Cleaning of such shared equipment with wipes or other cleaning products will take place at regular intervals to minimise the risk of the spread of infection. Each Teacher/Classroom Bubble will be provided with a Cleaning Basket containing essential / practical cleaning products which can be used throughout the day as the need arises. Such baskets will not be shared with other rooms..

Dealing with a suspected case of Covid-19

- Pupils should not attend school if displaying any symptoms of Covid-19. If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 while in the building, the following procedures will be implemented:
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- The child will be accompanied to the designated isolation area by a member of staff. The staff member will remain at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic child and will also make sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic child at all times.
- A mask will be provided for the child presenting with symptoms. He/She should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.
- The school will facilitate the child presenting with symptoms to remain in isolation, if they cannot immediately go home, and will assist them by calling their GP if required.
- The child presenting with symptoms should be advised to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- If the child is well enough to go home, the school will arrange for them to be transported home by a family member, as soon as possible, and advise them to inform their GP by phone of their symptoms. Public transport of any kind will not be used.
- If they are too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school will contact 999 or 112 and inform them that the sick child is a Covid-19 suspect.
- Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

The HSE will inform any staff/parents who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID19 is made. The instructions of the HSE will be followed in all such cases.

Impact of a Suspected or Confirmed Case of Covid-19 in a Class

If the school is notified that a person in your child's class has a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19, the following arrangements will be followed:-

- The parents of all children in the class will be notified and Public Health Advice will be sought/pursued.
- Possible Impacts may include the closing down of a Group/Pod within a classroom, the closing down of a Classroom/Bubble or even the closing down of the entire school.

Will the School's SET Programme continue to operate?

- In keeping with our Special Education Teaching Policy, Learning Support will continue to be provided by a blended approach of in-class support and withdrawal aimed at particular Class Groups, smaller groups from identified Classroom "Bubbles" and individual pupils.

What about PE?

When possible, PE will take place outside on the school yard .

Cumann na mBunscol

Cumann na mBunscol Laoise instruct all counties not to organise or participate in any inter school games/competitions until the 31st of December at the earliest.

There will be no Laois competitions run for the remainder of 2020.