

1st November 2020

Dear Parents & Guardians,

Covid-19 Update

I hope that you have managed to get a good break over the half-term and are feeling refreshed. Sorry for writing to you on a Sunday, but I wanted to respond to the Government's announcement, before we are all back in school tomorrow.

The statistics showing the potential rate of growth of the virus was shocking and scary. I know it certainly brought it all back home to me. I can imagine that some of you might be concerned about the fact that we will still be in school, while the rest of the country is in lockdown. I completely understand the need to prioritise our pupils' education. However, I also know that each family's individual circumstances will affect how they view this, particularly if they have vulnerable family members or elderly relatives. Regardless of our own personal views, the key thing is that we need to work together to keep our school community safe and our children happy.

I have been overwhelmed by the support that you have shown us so far. I have really felt the 'St Catherine's Spirit' in the positive messages we have received, kind words on the playground and general good humour being displayed in such challenging circumstances. We cannot prevent Covid-19 from touching our school community, but we can do our best to limit the effect of this if we continue to pull together.

I would urge you to help me by doing the following:

1. **Please comply with the Government Guidance.** I will do everything I can to try to control the situation within the school, but I can't alter what you do outside. In addition to our pupils, I have a duty to keep my staff safe. They are not able to socially distance from your children – the Government Guidance makes this clear. By following the rules, you aren't just keeping them safe, you are helping keep our staff safe.
2. **Ensure that you strictly socially distance on the playground.** Stay away from other families and do not loiter chatting. We will ask you to leave the school site as soon as you have collected your children. Remember that you should not be collecting children other than your own unless you are in a single-person support Bubble.
3. **Please wear a face mask on the school site at the end of the day.** As staff, we will not be wearing masks, as I think it is important that the children see our faces smiling at them as they leave. However, I hope mask wearing will reassure some parents (I have been contacted about this) and discourage chatting between adults.
4. **Please don't try to come within two metres of a member of staff.** By all means smile and wave from a distance! If you need to talk about something private, email the office and someone will call you back. Obviously, if the matter is serious and urgent, I will always make time to see you personally.
5. **Remind your children not to touch each other** and that adults will avoid touching children, unless essential e.g. for their safety or emotional wellbeing.
6. **Ensure that your contact details are up to date.** The protocol for if a child displays symptoms requires them to be quarantined until they can be collected. Regardless of whether this is difficult for you, we will need you or a member of your household to be able to collect them if needed. Please make sure that you have a plan for this.
7. **We may need to send a Bubble or Bubbles home during a school day, if we receive notification of a positive test.** Again, please have a plan in place for this.

8. **We may need to close a Bubble due to non-Covid staff illness/isolation.** We will do everything we can to avoid this, but we cannot mix Bubbles.
9. **Do not send in a child or their siblings into school if they are displaying Covid symptoms.**

Within school, please be aware of the following:

1. **All windows and doors will be open to allow a free flow of air throughout classrooms.** This will be regardless of weather, so at times it is going to be cold. Our uniform policy is currently relaxed – the safety and comfort of the children is the most important thing. Please consider sending your child in with thermal underwear or a fleece to wear over their jumper etc. For more on the importance of ventilation, this article is really interesting: <https://english.elpais.com/society/2020-10-28/a-room-a-bar-and-a-class-how-the-coronavirus-is-spread-through-the-air.html>.
2. **Lessons will be outdoors as much as possible, regardless of the weather.** Please make sure that your child brings in a waterproof coat with a hood.

As you know, I had planned to extend WrapAround Care hours. Sadly, the Government announcement means we will have to rethink this. To avoid unnecessary inconvenience, we will run this Monday to Thursday as planned (e.g. Breakfast Club from 7.40am and Afterschool Club until 5.30pm). However, please be aware that all WrapAround Care is likely to cease on Friday 6th November until the end of the Government lockdown.

There is no way to prevent the mixing of Bubbles in WrapAround Care and I do not want this to damage the integrity of the class Bubbles. I hope that the fact that the majority of parents will be working from home will mean that it will not cause too much inconvenience. I will seek guidance from our Health and Safety advisers and update you as soon as possible.

We will make the best of the current situation, as we always do! It is just really important that we tighten all procedures to keep each other safe.

Together, the Family of St Cath's will get through this!

Looking forward to seeing you all tomorrow.

Take care and stay safe,

Ms Kane