



Colaiste Bríde

Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

January 5th, 2022

Dear Parents & Guardians,

I hope you and your families are all well and safe.

As you are aware all students will return to school tomorrow, **Thursday, January 5th**.

In advance of your daughter's return to school please note the following:

COVID-19 Symptoms

We have been advised by HSE Public Health and the Department of Education to remind families of the following:

Students and staff are not to attend school if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 infection.

Symptom profiles are available at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/>.

They also advise parents to take a very precautionary approach particularly as COVID-19 levels are so high in the community.

If a student has been told by the HSE services that they are a **close contact** of a case of COVID-19, they need to adhere to the advice on the HSE website in relation to restricted movements and testing. It is important that anyone who has been identified as a close contact, is very aware of COVID-19 symptoms, and isolate and undergo testing should they develop any symptoms.

According to the Department of Education, if a post primary student has tested positive for COVID-19:

- *They will be contact traced by the National Contact Tracing Team.*
- *The National Contact Tracing Team will contact them and ask them to identify their close contacts.*
- *The student who tested positive will have to isolate for 10 days from the day their symptoms started, or for 10 days from the day they had the positive PCR test. The student can return to school after this isolation period, provided they do not have a fever/temperature during the last 5 days of their isolation period.*
- *Students who have symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home, isolate, and arrange to have a COVID-19 test.*
- *There are 2 types of COVID-19 test available from the HSE: antigen tests (home test kits) and PCR tests (done at a test centre and sent to a lab).*
- *Students (or anyone between 4 to 39 years of age) who has symptoms of COVID-19 are offered antigen tests firstly and they do not book a PCR test unless they get a positive antigen test result.*
- *Note – If a student is identified as a CLOSE CONTACT of a case in their HOUSEHOLD, they will have to restrict their movement as per national guidelines for household close contact and get a COVID-19 test as soon as possible.*
- *Further information is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/testing/get-tested/>*

Teacher & Student Absences

As a result of the currently very high levels of COVID-19 circulating we expect that a number of both teachers and students will be absent in the coming days and weeks. If your daughter's/ward's teacher is absent we will endeavour to provide a substitute teacher who will continue to teach the class.



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However, as there is already a severe shortage in teachers and substitute teachers this will not always be possible. If the situation continues to deteriorate classes may be required to stay at home and revert to online classes.

Remote Learning

We recognise the need for continuity of schooling during periods of self-isolation. Teachers who are able to attend school will continue to upload classwork/homework onto our remote learning platform, Office 365. Students may contact their teachers individually via Microsoft Teams chat if they are having any difficulty accessing schoolwork.

Ventilation

Schools have been directed to maximise ventilation in rooms by opening doors and windows. We understand that this is not an ideal environment for learning, however as adequate ventilation reduces the spread of COVID-19 in indoor settings, windows and doors will have to be kept open. Although we have increased the output from our heating system to its maximum, ensuring adequate ventilation has meant that classrooms can still get colder than we would like. When cold weather is forecast, we would strongly recommend that students wear layers under their uniform and wear their school jacket in class.

To properly analyse the ventilation in our classrooms we purchased extra CO2 monitors, one for each teaching space in the school. As a result, we have detected that there are ventilation issues in some of the oldest classrooms, classrooms that have low ceilings and that have windows on only one external wall. We have engaged the services of a chartered engineering firm to make an emergency application to the Department to instal mechanical ventilation systems in each of these rooms. However, this installation will take a number of months to complete. In the interim we have purchased, at a considerable cost, HEPA filters which will be installed in classrooms numbered 1 to 12 in the coming days to ensure adequate clean air.

Face Masks/ COVID-19 Guidelines

With COVID-19 case numbers so high I would also like to take this opportunity to ask that all parents/guardians reinforce the importance of current public health messaging by ensuring your daughter/ward reduces their number of contacts in a bid to keep everyone safe and our schools open. With this in mind, I would ask all parents/guardians to talk to their daughters about following all HSE guidelines not only in school, but also when waiting for buses, lifts home, or when going into town. Students must continue to follow the regulations around wearing face masks in school; however, I would ask you to please remind your daughters that they still need to practise social distancing and to wear their mask when outside school. Kindly remind them that their actions can affect so many other people and not just themselves. Therefore, we ask all parents/guardians to work with us to encourage your daughters to follow the guidelines set out by HSE, not only in school but outside school as well. We must exercise caution and be calm and consistent in our messaging. We have a duty of care to all in our buildings and those outside of school. We ask you to emphasise that students must follow guidelines and show personal responsibility by ensuring their own physical distancing, correct wearing of face covering, hand hygiene and respiratory procedures, not just in school, but outside school also. Everyone has a responsibility to combat this virus. We need your support to encourage all of our students to follow the guidelines at all times.



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I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you that **school will be closed on the 14th of January** for a Department of Education sanctioned Junior Cycle workshop.

I thank you all for your cooperation, understanding and support. On behalf of the Coláiste Bríde school community, I thank you for your cooperation and wish you all the very best in the months ahead.

We look forward to welcoming our students back to Coláiste Bríde. Classes begin, as always, at 8.45 am.

If you have any concerns regarding the return to school, please contact office@colaistebride.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Kiera O'Sullivan

Principal