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Headteacher Miss Lynn Black



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Dear Parent/Carer

Following the First Minister's statement on Tuesday and the publication of guidance for schools last night we are working hard on our plans for the 15th March. This is a huge logistical challenge for us given the constraints of our building and it will take some time to rewrite our school timetable to meet the 2M social distancing stipulated in the guidance for our return.

We know already that the following enhanced risk mitigations are to be implemented:

- Strict 2m social distancing between all in the school building
- Strict 1m social distancing on school buses, in line with guidelines for public transport
- The wearing of face masks by all pupils and members of staff at all times, except when eating and drinking
- Minimal movement around the school building

Social Distancing

The requirement for 2m social distancing has a severe impact on the number of pupils that can be accommodated in a classroom. Most classrooms will only be able to accommodate a maximum of 6 pupils with 2m social distancing, with very few with a greater capacity than this.

Many classes in schools will have up to 30 pupils. The introduction of 2m social distancing means that a class of 30 will need to be split into 5 groups pupils. Each group will require a separate teacher and classroom. In effect, a class of 30 will now require five teachers and five classrooms. This is five times the number of members of staff and classrooms than originally required for the class of 30 pupils.

Principles of our Return

The principles we are now working on are as follows:

- All students will return to spend **some** time in-school from Monday 15th March until the Easter break; given the need to be 2m socially distant at all times **it will be a phased part-time return for all our students**

- **Senior Phase students**, who are working towards national qualifications, **will have priority for in-school time**
- It is **expected that all students will receive some in-school education each week** up to the Easter break; as we are working through a new timetable model, it is too early to say how much in-school time will be provided for S1 - 3 students and what it means for individual pupils and year groups.
- All students will, at least until Easter, be expected to observe the current requirement for **2m distancing in school**. This is a significant change for us and our building layout, narrow corridors and the lack of big spaces (e.g. an assembly hall) makes this very challenging. This will limit the number of pupils we can have in school at any one time.
- **Face coverings** will need to be worn at all times by all pupils (including those in S1-3) except for those with notified exemptions
- **Online learning will continue for those not able to be in school**. Due to the prioritisation of Senior Phase students and the implications of 2m distancing, inevitably there will be more students at home than in school. The increase in the number of students following an in-school programme will also impact on our ability to continue with the volume of on-line learning we have been providing. We are moving to a Blended Learning model until the Easter holidays.
- We are required to maintain our 8 'Hub' classes for children of keyworkers – this requires a minimum of 8 teachers.

Education Scotland published guidance for schools on the phased return last night. We will now review this and work with colleagues across Midlothian to ensure the safety of everyone as we bring more students back to in-school learning.

From Monday 15th March, all staff and Senior Phase students will continue to be offered twice-weekly Covid-19 lateral flow testing. We will continue to strongly encourage all senior phase students and staff to take part in this programme of at-home testing, as it is another important way in which we can ensure that our school remains as safe as possible.

We are liaising with the Parent Council on our plans and further detailed information will be shared with you as soon as we can. Please bear with us, as this will take some time.

Many thanks for your continued support and patience as we work through this new plan.

Best wishes

L Black

Lynn Black
Headteacher