

POST EASTER RETURN TO SCHOOL

APRIL 2021-04-08

Website Notice to Parents and Guardians/Students

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope all students, parents/guardians and staff enjoyed a break from Remote Learning over Easter. We are looking forward to welcoming all students back to the school next Monday, 12 April 2021.

We thank all students and teachers for engaging in Remote Learning since Christmas and all parents/guardians for your support of this contingency. We appreciate your support during this difficult time.

Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration

We require your cooperation in the completion of a 'Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration' as recommended by the HSE for your child/children. This on-line form which you can complete simply via your smartphone or tablet/laptop/computer has been shared with you by text and email

COVID-19 Response Plan

Our school has updated its COVID-19 Response Plan. Our School COVID-19 Response Plan includes the following:

- COVID-19 Policy Statement
- Lead Worker Representative (LWR)
- Procedure in dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19

Our school Covid-19 Response Plan is available on our school website.

Key Messages for all Stakeholders (students, staff and parents/guardians)

1. Everyone needs to play his/her part to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community while recognising the importance of education for the health and wellbeing of students and society as a whole.
2. Everyone must make every effort to minimise the risk of infection.
3. Everyone needs to reduce the likelihood of the spread of COVID-19 within the school itself, if an outbreak in the school is detected.

Knowing the Symptoms of COVID-19

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 it is important to know and recognise the symptoms.

They are:

- high temperature
- cough
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste
-

If your child/children complains of any of these symptoms, please keep your child/children at home and phone your GP without delay.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing will continue to be applied in so far as is possible and in a practical way to facilitate the learning environment. We will make all efforts to achieve this by increasing separation by utilising and reconfiguring all available space in the school. Other measures that have been taken include efforts to maximise physical distancing, reviewing timetables, reconfiguring classes, accessing available spaces within the local community and decreasing interaction.

Coming to and from school

All schools are encouraging students to walk or cycle to school if they can do so. Parents/guardians are required to observe and respect all social distancing protocols in relation to any contact with the school. This includes maintaining a two metre distance to other families when dropping off or collecting their children from the school and any contact with the school.

Any visits to the school are required to be made in advance through the school office.

When students arrive at school, they should proceed directly to their base classroom which will be assigned to them once they return to school. Students should not congregate in groups close to one another. Assigned entrances and exits will be given to all year groups when they return as was the case before Christmas.

Face Masks

We are very grateful to students and their parents/guardians for supporting the essential requirement to wear face masks in our school. Updated advice from Public Health, the HSE and the Department of Education outlines the reasons for this requirement.

Cloth face coverings are recommended for staff and students. Cloth face coverings act as a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from travelling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the face covering coughs, sneezes, talks or raises their voice. Cloth face coverings are therefore intended to prevent transmission of the virus from the wearer (who may not know that they are infected) to those with whom they come into close contact. Face coverings must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive to any member of the school community.

Public Health Messages

It is essential that all households observe the following over the next few months;

1. Check for Symptoms - Please make sure all staff and families are aware not to attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid-19 infection.
2. Symptomatic household members - no-one should be attending school if they have any household member who has signs or symptoms of Covid-19; they should be restricting their movements until it is clear whether the household member has Covid-19 infection or not.
3. Close contacts - All staff and children need to restrict their movements and undergo testing if they have been told by their doctor / HSE services that they are a close contact of a case of Covid-19; they should not be attending school.

Contacting/visiting

Access to the school by parents and guardians will be far more restricted than ever before while we live through the current pandemic. The advice from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET) makes it clear that schools must restrict access to the campus outside of students and staff. Only in **very exceptional circumstances** should students be collected from school during the day. Appointments for students should be made outside of the school timetable if possible.

Changes to the Code of Behaviour Policy during Covid-19

In light of the need for students to be more mindful of attending school during the current Covid-19 climate, an amendment to the Code of Behaviour Policy is required so that students will be aware of specific rules on their return to school. Our guiding principle when making any changes or adjustments to this policy is to be able to keep all of our students, families and staff safe.

How to prepare for the return to school - how can parents/guardians help?

As students have missed several months of life at school, it is totally understandable that it will take some time to adjust to returning to school-life in the new reality we find ourselves.

You, as parents/guardians can help with this adjustment by starting to encourage your child/children to change their routines and habits between now and start of the school year. Going to bed a little earlier, preparing uniform, schoolbag, school books etc. are all helpful in preparing students for the return to school-life. There is an excellent range of supports available on www.loveparenting.ie specifically for parents to help with this. These resources have been created specifically for parents to use with their children and cover these areas;

- Having the chats
- Routines
- Managing your child's anxiety
- Parent Self-Care
- Maintaining Routines

<https://loveparenting.ie/back-to-school-resources/>

Current First Year Students

Step Up To Secondary School is a fantastic resource developed by Planet Youth and their partners. It has a number of resource pages for parents and students. Each resource page has a number of topics to browse through. Some topics have additional information such as advice, videos or extra research. You can access this site here - www.stepup.ie

Supporting the wellbeing of students

There will be a significant emphasis on promoting the wellbeing of our school community as part of the Department of Education's overall plan to ensure a successful return to school as we all continue to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both the Department of Education and we as a school, appreciate that we are living through exceptional times which impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times. People have been naturally worried about the risk to their physical health and that of their loved ones and have been challenged to varying degrees by the public health measures that were put in place in Ireland to control the spread of the virus, such as staying at home and school closures.

Wellbeing including physical activity

Our staff have developed excellent strategies and ideas to promote wellbeing across our school community. NEPS, the Department's National Educational Psychological Service, has developed advice and resources for keeping Children and Young People well during Covid-19. These resources aim to support children and young people's learning and wellbeing at this time.

In the context of wellbeing, NEPS has included a reference in its advice for young people and for parents of young children for the need for physical activity as part of everyone's daily routine while schools are closed.

There is an excellent range of supports available on www.loveparenting.ie specifically for parents to help with this. These resources have been created specifically for parents to use with their children and cover these areas;

- Having the chats
- Routines
- Managing your child's anxiety
- Parent Self-Care
- Maintaining Routines

For information, the relevant text can be found at the following links:

Advice for Young People:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/advice-to-young-people-while-schools-are-closed.pdf>

Advice for Parents:

<https://www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Announcements/guide-for-parents-supporting-children.pdf>

Contacting the School

Please do not hesitate to contact us at the school via this email address info@desmondcollege.ie and we will do all we can to address your query as soon as possible. In the meantime, please follow the advice of the HSE and the Government;

Additional Information

Other announcements regarding schools will be available on www.gov.ie as well as regular updates from us in the school.

Thank you for your continued support of our school and we look forward to being in contact with you soon again.

Vourneen Gavin-Barry

Principal

Desmond College,

Newcastlewest,

Co Limerick