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Dear Parents,

Key Dates

Our new term commences for all Year 7 pupils on Monday 24th August 2020. During this week we will also have some individual appointments scheduled for pupils with additional educational needs.

Year 6 pupils will commence school on **Tuesday 1st September 2020.**

Year 5 pupils will commence school on **Wednesday 2nd September 2020.**

Year 4 pupils will commence school on **Thursday 3rd September 2020.**

We are bringing the children in one year group at a time to have the space to respond to our the routines in a calm and organised fashion. We want them to feel safe and welcomed back to school in a comfortable and reassuring way.

The above dates are a change to our scheduled school calendar and a new school year calendar will be issued in due course.

Start and Finish Times

All children will be arriving with staggered start and finish times which will be determined by classroom proximity to different entrances.

Some classes will be arriving at **8.45 am** and the school day for these classes will finish Monday to Thursday at **2.45 pm**, and Friday **1.30 pm**.

Some classes will be arriving at **9.00 am** and the school day for these classes will finish Monday to Thursday at **3.00 pm**, and Friday **1.45 pm**.

Some classes will be arriving at **9.15 am** and the school day for these classes will finish Monday to Thursday at **3.15 pm**, and Friday **2.00 pm**.

Some classes will be arriving at **9.30 am** and the school day for these classes will finish Monday to Thursday at **3.30 pm**, and Friday **2.15 pm**.

These staggered times are to ensure there is no mass gathering outside the school building each morning and afternoon. A class will be designated an entry door and an arrival time. This will allow the class to arrive and enter school before the next class arrives. Where there are siblings we would ask that they arrive at the later slot together. The start and finish times are dictated by the classroom they occupy in September, and there is still work to be done here.

Class Teaching Arrangements

If the children return with the 1 metre social distance expectation in the guidance we cannot get full class sets into many rooms. In addition to the 1 metre social distance rule between pupils, there is a 2 metre rule between staff and staff to pupils. We have ear marked classes for our assembly hall, music room, dining centres and computer suite. As you already know our ambition and endeavour is to bring all children back full time.

With 1 metre social distancing we have to reduce class sizes to <26 pupils and construct additional class groups within each year group. Our internal classes in the main building cannot accommodate more than 20 pupils. I have to hope and believe that these measures will not be required, but on return to school the teaching arrangements may be temporarily altered. This temporary adjustment however, allows for all pupils to be welcomed back to Strandtown full-time. This arrangement is also dependent on us finding nearly 300 additional desks!

Teachers will teach from the front of the classroom to follow the 2 metre social distancing rule that applies to staff. There will be no 'at the elbow' support from teachers or classroom assistants.

Communication in August

We will commence connecting each of our classes on Dojo w/c 17th August. You will be sent a video sharing the start and finish times, the location of your school entrance point and some footage of the classroom. We will give you the information you require through this platform. During this week we will invite you to e-mail your child's class teacher with any information that you feel is relevant for supporting the children on their return to school. The first day for each year group will include a thorough orientation on the new protocols for hygiene and movement around the school.

Return to school arrangements

Attached to this email is a list of resources that we would kindly ask you to acquire and send with your child on their first day. Please ensure these have been fully cleaned before sending into school. School will provide plastic wallets for each pupil and this will hold their books and personal resources. Under current guidance there will be no sharing of resources within the classroom. School bags will not be required in school and the only thing which should be transported from home is the packed lunch. There may be some important personal items and these can be kept safely in the lunch box bag during the school day.

The guidance also refers to children in school being contained within their own class 'bubble'.

Therefore it will not be possible to run a breakfast club, extra-curricular after schools programmes, have school assemblies or host school meals in the dining centres. All children will be having packed lunch in their rooms, and children entitled to free school meals will have a packed lunch provided. **Please note that due to payment changes over the summer months, Free School Meals will only be available in the form of a packed lunch from Tuesday 1st September 2020. Parents also need to re-apply for entitlement to Free School Meals for September 2020.** Children will have their lunch within their own classroom and their teacher will supervise their periods of outdoor play to ensure social distancing is adhered to.

The assembly hall will be used as a class learning space and PE activities will only be facilitated outdoors. At this stage only outdoor pitch shoes are required. Pitch shoes are to be sent with the pupils on the first day of school in a draw string bag and will remain in school on their peg.

School uniform from September will be the wearing of the green polo shirt in place of a shirt and tie. This change in policy is to make it easier to wash uniform frequently. As you may be aware we are participating in the East Belfast Re-cycle School Uniform Scheme. For information contact: barbarasmith@eastsidepartnership.com

Windows in classrooms will be opened to ensure a healthy circulation of air in classrooms. Internal doors will also be left open to aid ventilation.

The standards of cleaning within the school remain a priority for the promotion of the health and safety of our school family. Over the summer there will be a thorough clean of the whole school building and we will be implementing additional cleaning protocols to ensure exceptional hygiene standards.

At this stage we are progressing with the plans above in line with DE Guidance 'New School Day'. Our hope remains that restrictions are eased further in the 8 weeks remaining before the start of term. However, I would ask you to be aware that many of the arrangements may be subject to change as current scientific advice and guidance may alter.

The moment I have a definitive understanding of the restart position I will update you on the arrangements.

Thank you for your ongoing support, understanding and patience.

Kind Regards,

Victoria Hutchinson