

**Return to School – August 2020**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope you and your loved ones are keeping well in these very challenging times for our entire school community. The world as we know it has changed dramatically since March 12th. We have all had to adapt to a new way of living including social distancing, wearing face coverings and hand sanitising. None of us thought that it would be so long until we saw each other again in person. All our staff members are looking forward to seeing your son/daughter in person very soon.

I am taking this opportunity to let you know that the Senior Management Team and a Covid-19 Response Team have been working tirelessly over the summer to ensure that the school is a clean and safe space to which your son/daughter will return in late August/early September.

Your son/daughter will see many changes to the school when they return. I want to reassure you and them that these changes are to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our students, staff, parents and wider community. The school is guided by the DES and the HSE and will always follow best practice.

When staff and students return to school, an assembly / induction class will be take place regarding procedures and practices to manage the risks associated with Covid-19. They will be introduced to the new measures the school has put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. They will be provided with information regarding what is expected of all of us, the symptoms of Covid-19, respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, physical distancing (increased separation and decreased interaction), use of PPE/masks, impact on school activities and what procedures will be followed if there is a suspected case of Covid-19 in the school community.

In order for us to continue to maintain and provide a clean, safe learning and teaching environment, we have been working hard to implement the [Covid-19 Response Plan for safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary Schools.](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/c6657-covid-19-response-plan-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-re-opening-of-post-primary-schools/) (DES publication 27th July 2020). The schools Response Plan will be published on the school website prior to our return to school.

Some students may be unable to return to school due to specific high-risk health conditions. Please contact the Principal by emailing the school at info@hfcs.ie if this applies to your son/daughter.

**A detailed letter will issue from the school next week informing you of the return dates for students and the substantial changes that have been made in order to comply with the guidelines issued by the DES to enhance health and safety for all**. In the meantime, I would like to draw your attention to just a few of the modifications we have made:

* Deep cleaning of the school is ongoing and will be completed prior to the start of the school year.
* There will be daily inspections of school buildings and utilities to ensure cleanliness.
* Extra cleaning staff will be employed.
* Hand sanitisers are available in classrooms, toilet facilities, corridors and common areas.
* The school has purchased a fogging machine to increase the speed and frequency at which key areas such as bathrooms and classrooms can be cleaned.
* A one-way system will be in operation for all students and staff throughout the school.
* Covid-19 signage is on display throughout the school.
* Classrooms have been changed to comply with DES social distancing guidelines.
* **All members of the school community i.e. Students, Teachers, Support & Ancillary Staff** will be required to wear face coverings similar to those worn on public transport and in shops as a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
* Parental and visitor access to the school is for essential purposes only. All visits to the school must be pre-arranged and parents/guardians/visitors must wait outside until their appointment time. **Parents must not present at the school without a confirmed appointment**.
* All visitors to the school must wear a face covering and sign the Contact Tracing Log at reception.
* Two Covid-19 School Co-ordinators (Lead Worker Representatives) will be appointed in the school to ensure compliance with statutory obligations.
* To minimise gathering in large groups, lockers will not be available while Covid-19 is in the community. If you have purchased a locker, the school will organise a refund via EasypaymentPlus.

The cooperation and assistance of all members of the school community is absolutely essential to reduce the spread of Covid-19. We all need to work together to keep the whole school community safe. I understand that some students, staff and parents may be anxious about our return to school. I wish to reassure you that the school staff will continue to work hard to ensure that the school is a safe and clean space to which your son/daughter will return.

I wish you and your families continued good health and look forward to seeing our students very soon.

Brenda Kelly

Principal