



Tuesday, 28th July, 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope that you and your family are keeping well and enjoying the summer break.

This letter is to share with you some exciting, new developments at our school and to answer some questions about the Government's advice for reopening schools which was published yesterday evening.

We very much look forward to welcoming your children to school next month. Until then, I will continue our plans and preparations to ensure our school reopening is a joyful experience for children and to reassure you that Brannoxtown CNS is as safe as possible for your children.

With kind regards,

Dr. Sarah FitzPatrick, Principal

New Developments at Brannoxtown CNS

1. New Outdoor Play Spaces at Brannoxtown CNS

The development of new, outdoor interactive play spaces for children at our school is well-underway. The following will be completed and on-site, ready for children when our school reopens:

Wooden Benches (x3)



Mud Kitchen



Wooden Teepee



Pallet House





Outdoor Blackboard (x2)



Raised Beds



We are hugely thankful to Ballymore Homes for their donation of €1,000 and to Cllr. Tracey O' Dwyer, community nominee on our Board of Management, for securing this donation for our school.

2. Busy Fingers Afterschool at Brannoxtown CNS

Busy Fingers will provide an Afterschool Club for children at our school this Autumn. For children who wish to complete any homework before going home and/or play outdoors with friends, the Club is available Monday to Thursday, up to 4:30pm and will be outdoors as much as possible. Details (including forms) are available on our homepage: www.brannoxtowncns.ie. Keep an eye out for Busy Fingers signage which is almost ready for placement beside our school signs at both school entrances.

Questions and Answers about School Reopening

1. What was published yesterday?

Yesterday, the government published the **COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of schools** (the Plan). You can read the full Plan on the [government's Back to School page](#) which is to be regularly updated for school communities.

2. What's in the Plan?

- The Plan outlines practical steps for schools to minimise the risk of infection by COVID-19 through prevention, early detection and control.
- The Plan outlines requirements for schools including: actions to review and minimise risks and processes to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19, and more.

3. What are the main requirements for schools?

- Each workplace, including our school, is required to have a **COVID-19 Response Plan** which includes a range of documentation such as a Health and Safety Risk Assessment.
- Staff will complete Covid-19 Induction Training and a Return to Work Form before returning to school.
- A Staff Lead Worker Representative (and Deputy) will be appointed to monitor and support actions to minimise the risk of COVID-19, working with the Principal and Board of Management.

4. What does the plan say about Physical Distancing?

- Where possible staff should maintain a minimum of 1metre (m) distance and where possible 2m from one-another and from visitors to the school.



- It is not always possible or appropriate for staff to maintain physical distance from children, e.g., if a child sustains an injury and needs first aid.
- Physical distancing will look different across classes with children at different ages and stages of learning.
- A distance of 1m should be maintained between desks or between individual pupils (children from 3rd to 6th class) this recommendation is not expected to apply to children from junior infants to 1st class.

5. What is the advice on Class Bubbles and Class Pods?

- Children and their teachers can be organised in Class Bubbles (i.e. a class grouping which stays apart from other classes as much as possible).
- Individual Pods (1 m apart) can be organised within the Class Bubble and between individuals in the pod, whenever possible.
- Class Bubbles and Pods are intended to limit contact and sharing of facilities between children. This advice is more relevant to large classes/schools and less so, for Brannoxtown CNS.

6. Are children or staff required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

- Staff or children are *not required* to wear PPE in schools. PPE is available for staff if a child has intimate care needs, requires first aid or is a suspected case of COVID-19.
- The Plan says cloth face coverings are *not suitable* for children under the age of 13.
- Staff are advised to maintain physical distancing instead of wearing a face covering.
- A clear visor may be worn by staff to reduce exposure to fluid/respiratory droplets.
- Disposable gloves are not recommended. Instead, good hand hygiene is emphasised.

7. What are the requirements for hand washing/cleaning?

The Plan describes good hand hygiene. Schools are asked to ensure hand-washing/cleaning facilities are readily available and a rota is in place for regular hand-cleaning by staff and children:

- On arrival at school
- Before eating or drinking
- After using the toilet
- After playing outdoors
- When their hands are physically dirty
- When they cough or sneeze.

8. What changes will be visible at the school when it reopens?

- Parents and all visitors to the school must be by prior arrangement. All visitors will use hand-sanitiser (from one of the three dispensers in the foyer).
- All visitors will use the blackout sign-in/sign-out book on the podium in the foyer to log their arrival and departure times using their own pen or the pen provided which will be cleaned after use.
- Schools are advised that arrangements for visitors should be restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal, confirmed by the Secretary.
- All appointments at our school will be confirmed by Liz Kavanagh, school secretary, and can be requested at the school's email: brannoxtowncns@kwetb.ie.



9. What does the Plan say about Physical Distancing outside the school?

- When dropping off/collecting pupils, physical distancing of 2m is encouraged, where possible.
- Walking/cycling to school is encouraged as much as possible, if possible.
- Congregations of people at school entrances are to be avoided.
- To reduce congestion at school entrances, all access points are to be used. At Brannoxtown CNS, Junior Infant and new families are encouraged to park in the Baptist Church for the initial weeks of school and to walk their children to/from school via the pedestrian gate in front of the 1885 schoolhouse.
- Staggered drop off/pick up times may be implemented. At our school, we have planned a different collection time for Junior Infant children for the first three weeks of school.

10. What are the requirements for cleaning the school?

- Plans are underway to provide a *daily clean* of the school which prioritises frequently touched surfaces (such as toilets, sinks, door handles and the stairs banister).
- All staff will have cleaning products to clean and disinfect their own workspaces, daily.
- Waste in classroom bins will be emptied daily.
- Schools will receive funding for additional cleaning to minimise the risks of COVID-19.

11. What happens if a child enrolled at Brannoxtown CNS is suspected of having have COVID-19?

- If you think your child may have COVID-19, the advice is unchanged, i.e., to keep your child at home (self-isolation), check symptoms and call your GP.
- If your child is suspected of having COVID-19 while at school, you will be asked to collect your child immediately.
- Until you arrive, your child will be cared for by a member of staff in the designated isolation area, a minimum of 2m away from other staff and pupils.
- If your child is too unwell to go home or advice is required, the school is to contact 999 or 112.
- The HSE contact tracing process will inform any staff/parents in close contact with a diagnosed case.
- The HSE will provide instructions and ask that staff and pupil confidentiality is maintained.

12. What can parents do to support children to return safely and happily to school?

Encourage/help your child:

- To practice good respiratory hygiene, i.e. covering your mouth and nose with a tissue/your bent elbow when you cough or sneeze and disposing of the used tissue immediately and safely into a nearby bin.
- To avoid behaviours that involve hand to mouth contact such as putting pens or pencils in their mouth.
- To regularly clean the contents of their pencil case and belongings.
- To understand that not sharing belongings is important for everyone's safety and doesn't mean that we don't want to share with others, but that it is what we do to protect one-another.

13. What are the next steps for the school?

The Plan includes a detailed list of actions for Principals before school opens. To date, many have already been completed at our school, including the installation of touch-free hand-sanitisers, procurement of cleaning supplies, set-up of our blackout sign-in/out book and painting and deep cleaning of classrooms. Our next steps focus on completing risk assessments and other requirements. Balancing necessary health and safety measures/messages with a focus on schools as joyful places of learning will be key. Our goal is to do everything possible so families can rely on the certainty of our school opening, and remaining open, for the next school year. I will update you on any further developments before school reopens.