

Dear Parents/Carers

### **Arrangements for the Start of the New School Year: Primary One**

Our updated School Restart Plan provides information about our arrangements for reopening the school to pupils in September 2021. It is important to note however, that the Public Health advice at the time of reopening will prevail over any of the planning assumptions we have made in our Restart Plan. The Covid-19 virus continues to have implications for society and we may need to adjust our plans to address any issues that may arise as the children return to school.

This plan sets out some general points about the arrangements for the children's return to school. There is also some information which relates specifically to the return of children in Primary One and this is included under the heading 'Arrangements for Primary One Pupils'.

### **Supporting Children to Return to School**

We want to ensure that the children are excited and relaxed about coming back to school. It is important we work together to alleviate any such issues. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher or Mrs Downard (Vice-Principal) or Mrs Murray (SENCO) to discuss any specific concerns you may have about your child's return to school. Some of the mitigations and new routines which were introduced last year will remain in place initially and we will ensure that the children are reminded of these on their return.

### **Hand Hygiene**

Children should continue to be reminded of the significance of hand hygiene in preventing the spread of the Covid-19 virus. To prepare children for restarting school, you should ensure that they know how to wash their hands properly for at least twenty seconds with soap and water. This will be particularly important for younger children. The children will continue with the regular hand washing routine which was implemented last year.

Due to allergies and possible skin reactions, staff will not administer hand sanitisers to pupils. However, if parents of older pupils feel that their child should use hand sanitiser, then children can bring some to school for their own individual use. This should be labelled with their name and should not be shared with other pupils.

### **'Catch It, Bin It, Kill It'**

We would encourage you to remind your children of the importance of good respiratory hygiene and encourage them to follow the 'Catch it, Bin it, Kill it' approach. Children should be discouraged from touching their eyes, face, nose and mouth. Please show them how to cough or sneeze into their elbow if they do not have a tissue. When using a tissue, they should be shown how to cough or sneeze into it and then dispose of it safely into the nearest bin. Your help in building a level of routine in relation to respiratory hygiene would be much appreciated.

### **Social Distancing for Pupils**

It is acknowledged that young children cannot reasonably be expected to remain apart from each other throughout the day and that children flourish mentally, physically and emotionally through interactive play.

Although the use of formal bubbles is no longer required, the school will continue to adopt a cautious and measured approach which will seek to maximise the time where pupils are in a consistent group. In order to mitigate the risk of virus spread, classes will continue to be organised in 'protective bubbles' initially and we will assess the situation as the year progresses.

Given the lower level of risk associated with activities taking place outdoors, it may not be necessary to adhere rigidly to demarcated zones for each class during play time.

### **Social Distancing for Parents**

It is important that parents/carers continue to maintain appropriate social distancing when children are entering/exiting the school grounds. We have not staggered the start/finish times for each Year Group in order to minimise disruption for families who have children in different Year Groups. However, your ongoing co-operation in reducing congestion and interactions around the entry/exit points would be greatly appreciated.

We must all accept our collective responsibility to prevent virus spread. Whilst we understand the importance of connecting socially with other members of the school community, we strongly advise parents/carers not to congregate around the site. It is important to remember that the identification of positive cases in our school community can result in disruption for the affected class(es). It is essential that each of us does everything we can to prevent this.

In order to keep the number of adults coming on to the school site to a minimum, it is recommended that only one parent/carer should escort the children from their household to school. Where children are capable of making their own way independently to and from their classroom/supervised muster point, they should be encouraged to do so and parents should only escort them as far as the school gates.

We appreciate that on the first day of school for Nursery and Primary One pupils more than one adult may wish to accompany the child. However, after your child's first day at school, we would ask Nursery and Primary One parents to adhere to the recommendation for only one adult to accompany children to and from school.

### **Traffic Management**

The school has a Traffic Management Plan the aim of which is to keep the site a safe place for all users. Parents/carers are asked to note that, in the current circumstances, there may be an increase in the number of pupils walking/cycling to and from school. Therefore, you should exercise extreme care and attention when driving into and exiting from the Parish Hall and Church car parks. Signs notifying users of 5mph speed limits are clearly displayed. All drivers are asked to adhere to that limit and to show courtesy and consideration to other car park users. Parking indiscriminately, such as mounting pavements, double parking, stopping on yellow lines, obstructing access points and parking near junctions causes danger to pupils and other road users.

Please note, spaces in the Parish Hall car park may fill up quickly at drop off/pick up times so we would encourage as many parents/carers as possible to use the Church car park. This will also help with social distancing.

### **Wearing of PPE**

School staff may, on occasions, wear items of PPE which might include wearing visors and/or gloves and/or an apron and/or a mask if they are giving first aid to a child, assisting a child with toileting or if the staff member's own personal circumstances requires additional protective measures to be taken in certain situations.

### **Children Showing Symptoms of COVID-19**

If your child has any symptoms of having the Covid-19 virus he/she should stay at home and, in accordance with the latest Public Health advice, you should book a PCR test. If the test is negative, your child and his/her siblings may return to school.

If a pupil displays symptoms of Covid-19 whilst at school, he/she and any siblings within the school setting must be sent home and advised to follow the PHA guidance for households with a possible Covid-19 infection.

If there is a confirmed positive case of Covid -19, the school will adhere to the Department of Health's 'Test, Trace and Protect' strategy. This requires the tracing of close contacts and isolation to break transmission chains. Children between the ages of 5-17 who are not fully vaccinated and are identified as a close contact should self-isolate and book a PCR test as soon as possible. If the PCR test is negative, they can end their self-isolation and should arrange to take another PCR test eight days after the last known contact.

Children under the age of five are encouraged, but not required, to take a PCR test. They do not need to isolate unless they develop symptoms or have a positive PCR test.

Parents, pupils and staff share a duty of care to one another and so in that respect, it will be important for all of us to comply with the PHA processes for self-isolation and testing.

In order to ensure we have accurate records of everyone who has been in contact with anyone who tests positive, it will be necessary for us to record the name and contact details of everyone who enters the school buildings even if it is only for a short time. This will include any parent visiting the school for an appointment with a member of staff.

### **School Uniform**

As previously communicated at the end of June, it is our intention to reinstate the wearing of full school uniform from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. Children should only wear their PE uniform on those days on which they have PE or they are going on an educational visit.

### **School Bags and Other Items**

Children should continue to use the book bags which were supplied by the Parents and Friends Association in September 2020 to carry their any books or worksheets to and from school. Teachers will continue to provide children with pencils, other stationery and any other items they may need while they are at school and so pupils should not bring pencil cases, toys or other items to school. If your child needs any additional items to support his/her learning needed, the class teachers will advise you of these in due course.

### **Breaks and Lunches**

All children should continue to bring a healthy break to school and, where they are not availing of a school meal, they should also bring a packed lunch. Children may bring a reusable water bottle and a lunch bag to school. It would be helpful if these items were labelled with the child's name.

School Meals will resume on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021. The menu can be viewed in the Parents section of the school website and App.

On occasions, parents/carers drop in items for children's breaks and lunches after the school day has started. Due to current recommendation to reduce circulation in the school building, we would respectfully request that you have everything organised fully before dropping your child off at school.

### **Payments and Cash Handling**

The Education Authority is continuing to work towards the implementation of cashless payment procedures for school meals and other school activities but unfortunately, this option is not yet available in St Joseph's. Therefore, we would ask that payments to the Education Authority or the school should, where possible, be made by cheque. If you are sending cash to school, we would ask you to place it in an envelope or wrapping which is labelled clearly showing what the payment is for. Please try to ensure that the correct amount of money is provided in order to reduce the requirement to give change. This will improve efficiency and may also help to reduce potential spread of infection.

### **Morning Club, 1 2 3 After School Club and After School Activities**

Morning Club and the 1 2 3 After School Club will begin operating from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.

We hope to be able to offer the full range of after school activities which would have been available to the children prior to the onset of the pandemic. We will recommence these activities as soon as practicably possible.

### **Arrangements for Primary One Pupils**

**Start Date:** you will be provided with a start date at your induction meeting with your child's P1 teacher.

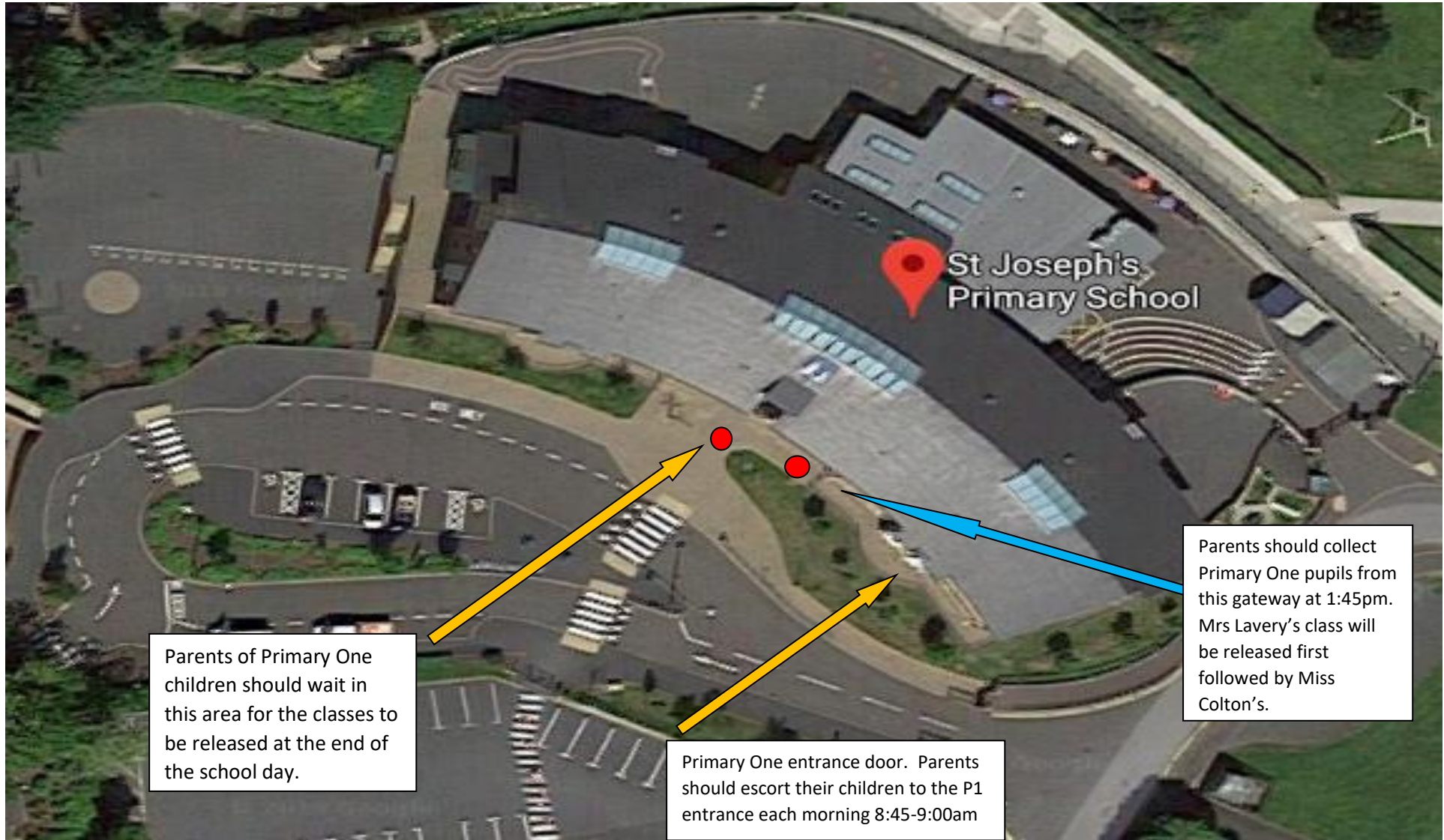
**Morning Drop off:** 8:45-9:00am. Parents should escort their children to the Primary One entrance door. The children will go straight into their classrooms. The paved area should be used to maintain a social distance between staff and parents dropping children off. Staff will be stationed at the door to supervise entry. Parents should observe social distancing as they leave the school site.

**Afternoon Pick Up:** 1:45pm. Parents should wait for the Primary One children on the paved area adjacent to the main entrance. Staff will lead the children to the exit gate and ensure there is a secure hand over to parents. Miss Colton's class will be released first followed by Mrs Mc Crory's. On wet days, children will be released from the P1 cloakroom exit door.

This plan and the precautions set out in it have been put in place to help stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to ensure that we all take responsibility for this. These arrangements will be kept under review and any changes will be communicated to you as appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Dominic Donnelly



Parents of Primary One children should wait in this area for the classes to be released at the end of the school day.

Primary One entrance door. Parents should escort their children to the P1 entrance each morning 8:45-9:00am

Parents should collect Primary One pupils from this gateway at 1:45pm. Mrs Lavery's class will be released first followed by Miss Colton's.