

August 22, 2020

We would like to update you on the preparations we are completing to help us all return to school in the face of a pandemic, knowing that following the procedures and rules will help to keep each member of the school community safer and healthier. The atmosphere and ethos of mutual respect that we have built up since the school was founded in 1986 will help us during the year ahead and we are confident that each and every student, staff member, parent/guardian and visitor to the school will take their responsibility seriously and help us support each other.

This is quite a lengthy newsletter and we suggest you read it fully before clicking any of the links provided. We have been developing a plan for our community to return to school and would now like to share some elements of that plan with you and to give you an opportunity to offer your own positive ideas/suggestions. We are facing into a school year like no other and the more positive ideas/suggestions/solutions we have the better. However, as students begin to return to school this week we still have a large amount of work to complete in that time so we recognise that we have to do as much as we can in the short time available and then review and adapt as term proceeds. Any plans that we have in place will be implemented and reviewed very quickly – if they are not working, we will change them immediately. We ask for your cooperation and patience with us as we work our way through the plan. Full details of our Covid-19 Response Plan is available on our website www.stkevinscc.ie since August 19th, 2020.

As consultations with various stakeholders continue and the Department of Education (DoE) updates instructions to schools daily/weekly based on changing health advice, some of the plans outlined may change between now and school reopening so we advise you to keep in touch through our usual communication tools including text/komeer app/website (www.stkevinscc.ie) /[Facebook](#) Page/twitter (@stkevinscc1) in the weeks ahead. Please try to limit phone calls to addressing urgent matters or issues not addressed in our communications. Visits to the school are now **by appointment only** and we will have an intercom at the main reception of the school for managing visitors (details below).



Calendar Dates

Our calendar for the year ahead will be on our website on Monday August 24th, but our opening induction dates remain the same – 1st years (Thursday and Friday 27th & 28th), 5th & 6th years (Friday 28th August) and 2nd, 3rd & 4th years (Monday August 31st). All students will operate from their full timetable on Tuesday September 1st. Student induction mornings will allow us to return each year group to the school, to explain our plans for minimising the risk of introduction of Covid-19 into the school community and allow time for tutors to reconnect with their class groups to prepare for the term ahead.



Reminder to anyone attending school who has travelled abroad:

Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. Anyone who is returning to Ireland from abroad **must follow** the HSE advice, at the time of their return to Ireland, for travellers from that country.

At time of writing, it is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of 'normal precautions' ("green"), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e4ea6-travelling-abroad-from-ireland/>).

If the college has reasonable grounds for believing that its duty of care towards its staff and pupils is being undermined in circumstances where a person has not observed the mandatory requirement to self-isolate for 14 days following return from a non-green list country, the DES has stated that the school can refuse access to them for that period.

Please email us at admin@stkevinscc.ie if there will be a delay with your child returning to school for any reason so that we hold your child's place in school.

It is essential for the health and safety of the school community that families adhere to this advice.

Student feeling unwell at home

If a student is experiencing one or more symptoms of Covid-19 while at home (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>) you must **contact your GP** and the student should **NOT** attend school and should follow the HSE guidelines for self-isolation: (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html>).

A student is not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a close contact of a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html>

If your son/daughter or a family member **has an underlying health condition** and you are concerned about their return to school during the pandemic, please let us know by emailing admin@stkevinscc.ie. Please note that a letter from your GP must be sent to the school if your GP has advised you that your son's/daughter's health condition puts them in the seriously at-risk (or vulnerable) category and they should not attend school. The school will provide remote support for students in this category.

If a student develops Covid-19 symptoms in school:

If a student feels unwell in school, they should inform their teacher as usual. If the student is experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 in school this will be brought to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal promptly. They will be brought to the isolation room set up for this purpose, given specific PPE equipment to wear/use and a parent will receive a phone call and asked to collect their son/daughter as soon as possible from the building beside the main reception. You must then contact your GP for health advice.



Break times & Canteen: We have arranged for both our morning break and lunch break to be staggered to reduce the numbers of students congregating at the same time.

The canteen will provide 1 hot dish for lunch on a Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday. We will communicate in advance as to what the dish is each day. Students who do not like the dish will have to bring their own lunch on those days. A hot lunch will continue to be €1.40. There will be NO shop in operation at morning break, so students will have to bring their own healthy snack EVERYDAY. For now, students will be allowed out of their base classroom for break and lunchtime, but if social distancing is not observed or it becomes a health and safety concern, we will have to review this decision.



We would ask students to get out for fresh air as much as possible and we have tables and chairs outside to allow for them to do this. They should ensure they always have a coat in case of bad weather. Given that students will be a lot more stationary than usual during the school day, we encourage students to walk, kick a ball, play basketball, etc. Strict supervision and adherence to hand and respiratory hygiene will be important in these situations.

Uniform: Full school uniform is expected at all times. Details on our website. On the day when PE is on the timetable, PE gear should be worn for that day. Please note that this should be appropriate clothing and no see-through leggings/clothing or low-cut tops should be worn. No clothing should be worn that would expose tattoos or piercings etc. No access to the changing rooms will be provided.

Books: Students will be issued with their books in the first few weeks of school. We will be asking teachers to work from online materials as much as possible to allow students to keep their books at home as they won't have access to lockers in school. They will need to bring some books to school but this will be clearly explained to them by their teachers.

Toilets: As usual students will ask teachers to access a toilet. We will assign different year groups to different sets of toilets. Students should bring anything they need from their hygiene pack with them. Notices will be placed at bathroom areas with strict instructions to have no queues inside toilet areas and to leave the area as quickly as possible. Ongoing supervision will enforce this, but students will need to take personal responsibility also. Hands should be properly washed using soap and water in the bathrooms and hand sanitisers must be used after visiting a bathroom. Unfortunately, we have had examples in the past of damage being done to toilet areas. This is always unacceptable but given the necessity for hot water and good hand hygiene this is especially more important than ever. Any student found causing damage to toilets will be suspended immediately.

How can I support my son/daughter to prepare for the return to school?

The return to school may be challenging for some students given that school was closed since last March. The following actions would be helpful:

- Ask your child/children what they are looking forward to about returning to school and discuss anything that they may be worried about. Sometimes just chatting about your feelings or having a simple plan in place to manage anxiety or worry can help to manage these feelings. Listen, empathise and reassure as much as you can.
- Make sure that your son/daughter knows or can find out which staff members are their 'go-to people' if they need to talk to someone including SNAs (where appropriate), tutor, year-head, chaplain, guidance counsellor, deputy principal. The student induction days will remind students of which staff are in these pastoral care and student support roles.
- Prepare a **student hygiene pack** clearly labelled with student name. This consists of a closable plastic bag/small handbag containing

1) small bottle of hand sanitiser



- 2) reusable washable face-covering and plastic bag to hold it when not in use (face-mask design must be appropriate for a school setting – use common sense please!)
- 3) small face towel for drying hands
- 4) small packet of tissues.

This should be brought into school every day with a fresh face-covering and towel.

We ask parents and students to view the videos or read the information provided in these links and discuss how students will ensure to follow good practice in school regarding:

1. Corona virus HSE hygiene video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JYhm9oa-DM>
2. Hand-washing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsgLivAD2FE>
3. Respiratory hygiene (coughing/sneezing) and social distancing
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html>
4. Using a face covering <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>
5. Student wellbeing advice
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=bM8IPJ8bQm4&feature=emb_logo

Label everything: We will try to return all lost items promptly to students but if lost items are not identifiable, they will have to be dumped. This applies to bottles of water and lunch boxes also.

Contact details: Please ensure that we have correct contact details for parents/guardians/carer in case your son/daughter becomes ill. Please email any changes to your details to admin@stkevinscc.ie. It is also essential that you download the Komeer App to your smartphone so we can communicate with you in a more cost-effective manner.

Code of Behaviour: We are updating our code to include: "Students will comply with Covid-19 arrangements and protocols that are implemented for the health and safety of all." Please discuss what this means with your son/daughter.

Journal: We will distribute the school journal to students during their induction session. Students should use the journal as usual to record homework/notes/announcements. Parents should sign the journal weekly as normal. Teachers may not be collecting and signing the journals now but we will still monitor students' progress on our electronic student management system VSware. Use the school **VSware system** to keep an eye on any notes about your student's progress as paper journals will be used much less frequently by teachers this year. If you do not yet have or have forgotten your VSware access username and password, this will be reissued to students when students return.



Lockers: At the moment, we are saying that students have no access to lockers. We may review this after talking to students in the opening days and trial it for some year groups. If this happens, students will have restricted access to lockers before and after school and social distancing requirements will apply. This will remain under review. Teachers will review their plans to reduce the number of books and resources that students need to bring to class. Students should **never** share books/copies/resources.

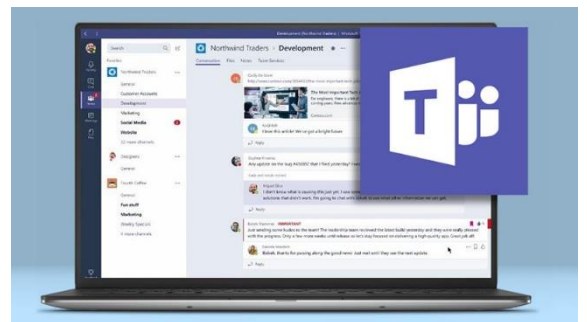
Mobile phone: If your student owns a smart phone we advise every student to download the National Covid Tracker and to bring their phone into school, keep Bluetooth switched on, keep the phone on **but on silent (not vibrate)**. Parents can, if they wish, give their under-16 year old students permission to download this app as the digital age of consent is 16. Please decide what is in the best interests of your child. As usual, mobile phones that are observed or used by students without a teacher's permission will be confiscated.

Wipe down: All school personnel including students will need to develop a habit of using the disinfectant wipes provided to wipe down their work area before and after use. This includes the student desk and any part of the chair that is a touch point (top of back of chair and sides of chair).

What we are doing to keep students, staff and visitors safe?

We are following the Department of Education guidelines and are carrying out the following actions to make the school environment as safe as possible for our staff, students and visitors:

- As advised by the HSE all staff, students and visitors to the school must wear a **face-covering**. Anyone who for medical reasons is advised by a GP not to wear a face-covering must contact the school in advance of attending so that alternative arrangements can be made for the health and safety of all.
- Updating our **Code of Behaviour** to include: “Students will comply with Covid-19 arrangements and protocols that are implemented for the health and safety of all.” If any aspect of the procedures in place prove to be a challenge for a student to comply with, we expect that you as a parent will contact the school prior to your child returning so that we can discuss special arrangements if possible. Issues that arise will be dealt with sensitively, but we ask you to understand that with almost 430 people in our school building daily we must err on the side of ensuring the health and safety of all. We are expecting further additions to the code of behaviour to be issued by the Department of Education next week. ***This rule will not be included in our student journal which is already printed, so we ask you to ensure that your son/daughter is aware of this.***
- **Teaching and learning:** Our initial phase of teaching and learning will focus on settling the students back into school routines and good learning practices, reviewing aspects of courses from last year, building student confidence and growing strong relationships. The Department of Education has reviewed assessment/examination structures and have made appropriate changes to the Leaving and Junior Cert/Cycle exams and teachers will communicate this to students. Homework practices may be different for the first term and teachers will work within their subject teams to outline what is expected. Specific wellbeing sessions will be organised through the SPHE/CPSE programme and in senior cycle pastoral care classes. Timetables are available on VShare but will change over the coming week as we adjust it to prepare for students returning to school.
- **Going Digital:** We started to make use of Microsoft 365 Teams when schools closed last March. It is vitally important that students continue to access their classes on Teams. We will provide training for all 1st year students to ensure they can make best use of the suite of apps available through 365 and will provide additional support and training to other year groups also. Teachers will be avoiding collecting copies/workbooks etc. for now and there may be an increase of work assigned and collected through Teams. Teachers may ask students to use the Teams app on their mobile phone during class time. If full or partial school closure is required at any stage in the future, we will be using Teams as the main digital resource to continue teaching and learning. We have also invested in additional computer and laptops for use by students in school.
- Changing our room allocation so that groups of **students remain in classrooms** and teachers move to them. This will reduce the movement of students around the school and will allow year groups to be grouped in certain areas of the school as much as possible. Movement





will still be necessary to access practical classrooms. Students must ensure they follow the one-way system and keep socially distanced at all times.

- Removing all non-essential items from classrooms so that **additional space is available for students** and staff to practise social distancing. Students will be seated at a distance of 1m shoulder to shoulder and staff seats will be placed at a distance of 2m from students as outlined in the DES guidelines. All available space in the school is being used for increasing social distance between students. Maintaining a physical distance of 2m is advisable where possible and especially as people move around the school.
- We will have an intercom system at the reception area. This will allow visitors to the school to collect information or request information through the external hatch without having to enter the school building. We will have an **intercom button** on the outside wall near the reception that visitors should press and then wait at the hatch area. However, we will insist that you make an appointment to come to the school if you need to see a staff member but urge you to keep these to a minimum/in cases of absolute emergency only. Any student returning from suspension will have their return-to-school meeting with Mr Duffy/Mr Barry or relevant Year Head at 3.40pm on the day before they are due back from suspension. If your son/daughter has a dentist appointment, needs to leave early for any reason, please ring the office on 01-6266277 or ring Mr Barry on 086 7961399. You can also make an appointment by emailing admin@stkevinscc.ie, tonybarry@stkevinscc.ie or ciaranduffy@stkevinscc.ie. All visitors will be asked to sign our contact tracing log before being admitted to the main part of the school.
- **Forgotten items:** Please avoid dropping up items that your son/daughter has forgotten. We will not be able to pass them on. Emergency items only (e.g. medicine) should be labelled and dropped in through the exterior hatch before 10am so that we can call your student to the office using the school intercom.
- Students will not have access to the main office area at all.
- We carried out a **deep clean of the building** using Noonan Contractors.
- Install **hand sanitiser** stations at every entry/exit point, inside classrooms and near other touch points around the school.
- Communicate with staff prior to opening to consult on procedures and arrangements for start-up.
- **Communicate with parents/guardians and students** about procedures and arrangements for start-up. We will have supplies of disposable face masks in each classroom in case a student forgets their mask. However, it is essential that all students have their own cloth mask/face-covering. Ongoing incidents of forgetting a mask may result in refusal to enter the school premises.
- Placement of **signage** around the school to ensure clear directions re entrances/exits/one-way systems/toilet queues.
- Employment of **additional teachers** using additional teacher allocation to engage in additional supervision.
- Have **additional cleaning hours** during the school day to clean toilets, wipe down touch points, restock cleaning items in classrooms.
- Planning for **support for students** finding the new arrangements challenging through our guidance team, SEN team and SNA team.



What responsibilities do you as a student have?

We are planning our school environment and practices to try to ensure the safety of all – you our students, our staff, visitors to the school and our wider community. As we are doing our best to keep you safe, we ask you, our students, to do everything in your power to keep other students and staff members safe too including:

- As ever we Expect the Best **for** you and **from** you.
- ***Wear a mask.*** Design must be appropriate for a school setting – you know what we mean! (Doctor's note needed if you can't wear one for medical reasons).
- Practise appropriate ***hand hygiene*** by washing hands with soapy water regularly or using hand sanitiser.
- Practise ***social distancing*** at all times.
- ***Watch the videos*** at the links we have provided in this newsletter in relation to the above items.
- Put steps in place to ***mind your wellbeing*** – this is a challenging situation and everyone can benefit from having tips and ideas for staying calm, being kind (to yourself and others) and gently remind each other about the special arrangements in place.
- Know the names of your key ***support staff members*** and talk to them if you have concerns about anything. We really want to listen to any concerns you have so that we can help you settle back successfully into a school routine.
- Follow our ***code of behaviour*** including our new rule about Covid-19 measures
- Please ***arrive on time*** for school – if you are late go directly to your assigned classroom and offer your explanation to your teacher who will mark you present/late on the electronic system. We will not be using the late book system this year.
- ***Bring a packed lunch or €1.40*** for hot lunch in canteen and follow the rota for lunch as explained by your tutor.
- ***Enter and exit*** through the door specified for your year group and use the usual ***one-way system.***
- Ensure you have your own ***labelled, reusable water bottle.*** Fill this at home please before coming to school.
- ***Chewing gum*** is not allowed in the school and using chewing gum or disposing inappropriately of chewing gum will be considered a serious issue due to increased health concerns. ***Spitting*** is also included in our code of behaviour as an unhygienic activity and carries increased health concerns in current times.
- We will send specific instructions by text to parents of each year group about your ***return to school for induction.*** Please ensure that you follow these carefully and just bring a ***notebook/copy and pen*** with you.
- Return to school with a positive outlook, ready to meet your classmates, your teachers and other staff and ready to do your best to get back into good learning habits.



We will use student induction sessions to advise you of any further arrangements we have in place. We are constantly proud of our students and we have no doubt that you will also exceed



our expectations of what is achievable during these very strange and somewhat daunting times. Communication is going to be even more important than ever and may be more challenging than usual when we cannot see each other's faces clearly. We will need to continue to be patient with and kind to each other.

Extra-curricular Activities

We hope that we will be able to offer some extra-curricular activities after we have completed an initial settling in period. Our teachers have been fantastic at committing their time to the many and varied activities that we run and will investigate the possibility of running some activities given the restrictions and arrangements in place. We would really like to be able to offer students some of the fun side of school life. We will update you as plans develop.



Finally

For every question answered in this newsletter, you have probably thought of many more. If you are happy with arrangements as outlined, just let us know. If you have other ideas/suggestion/queries, then please let us know also. We cannot promise to get everything perfectly correct from the start or to follow through on every suggestion, but we will listen and learn and continue to review our practices as the school year proceeds.

Thanks for your continued support, and working together we can work our way through the challenging time ahead,

Tony Barry
Principal

Ciarán Duffy
Deputy Principal