

Ballyclare Secondary School



August 2021

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Parent/Carer Information for the New School Year - August 2021

This guidance has been developed to allow Ballyclare Secondary School to start the new school year in a safe way and to protect our entire educational community. The strategic objective is to provide the best possible education for our young people while reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission within school. All information is in line with DE guidance.

As we start the new school year Ballyclare Secondary School will be a COVID-Safe, welcoming and supportive environment for our entire community. As we receive daily updates on COVID-19 cases and numbers appear to be rising once again, I appreciate that there may be considerable anxiety around returning to school and we must ensure that we take all possible steps to keep everyone safe.

This guide has been created to outline the measures and procedures that are in place and follows the latest information from the PHA and the Department of Education, which was released, to school on 18th August 2021.

The Department of Education is asking all schools to adopt a range of approaches and actions which when implemented, create a safe environment, where the risk of transmission of infection is reduced and we keep everyone safe. This includes:

- Minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that pupils and staff who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, **do not attend school. (DE will provide further guidance before pupils return to school).**
- Cleaning hands more often than usual - pupils and staff will be encouraged to regularly wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly, or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered. (Note that sanitiser is not a substitution for hand washing).
- Face masks should be worn inside school by all post-primary pupils - in corridors and classrooms.
- Ensuring good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach.
- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.
- Minimising contact and mixing, as far as possible. Whilst schools are no longer required to operate a system of protective bubbles we are required to support effective contact tracing. We will continue to ensure that pupils remain in consistent groups.

Return to School

In preparing for our return to school guidelines have been put in place for all staff and pupils of Ballyclare Secondary School and everyone must follow these on their return to school.

This guidance aims to help staff and pupils stay safe and healthy in a school environment that has changed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A number of key areas are covered:

1. A clean environment
2. School transport
3. School routines

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4. Classrooms
5. COVID-19
6. Pupil behaviour and support

A Clean Environment

The health, wellbeing and safety of our pupils and staff remains the highest priority. Regular and thorough attention to hygiene is essential to deter the spread of the virus.

- While school has been closed over the summer months the cleaning team have been completing an enhanced clean of all parts of the building. We will continue to implement additional cleaning protocols to ensure exceptional hygiene standards.
- The school will be thoroughly cleaned each evening. The cleaning regime will pay particular attention to touch surfaces including desks, chairs, light switches, door handles, windowsills and bannisters. Sinks and toilets will be cleaned more regularly throughout the day.
- There will be routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects such as key boards and telephones.
- Where classrooms have sinks, these will be made available for pupils to wash their hands.
- All classrooms will be equipped with a “**Keep Clean, Keep Safe Box**” which contains hand sanitiser, box of tissues, hand soap and paper towels (for all rooms with a sink), antibacterial/virus wipes, disinfectant and disposable cloths, disposable gloves and disposable masks
- Hand sanitising materials will be available at the main entrance points for school. It must be noted that hand sanitising is only a support mechanism for hand hygiene and does not negate the need to wash hands. All pupils are required to wash their hands as soon as they arrive at school and regularly throughout the day.
- The practice of good respiratory hygiene should be followed the “catch it, bin it, kill it” approach.
- Signage reinforcing the hygiene messages is displayed throughout the school.
- Surfaces in dining halls will be wiped down and disinfected in between each sitting.

School Uniform

While Coronavirus can land on fabrics and remain for some time, schools are not a high risk environment and where possible all young people should wear **full school uniform as normal**.

Face Coverings

COVID-19 usually spreads by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking. These droplets can also be picked up from surfaces, if you touch a surface and then your face without washing your hands first.

The latest scientific advice from the World Health Organisation, and from the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientific Officer, is that face coverings should be worn within education settings, unless a reasonable excuse applies under public health guidance.

Subjects where social distancing is possible such as drama in a large hall, face coverings are no longer required.

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(This will be reviewed on 8th October 2021)

Social distancing, regular hand hygiene, good ventilation and covering coughs and sneezes are vitally important in controlling the spread of the virus.

When wearing a face covering you must wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting it on and after removing it. It is very important not to touch the face covering while you are wearing it. If the mask becomes damp, it must be replaced.

Within post- primary settings:

- **It is compulsory for post-primary pupils to wear face coverings in school and at drop off pick up areas unless an exemption applies. All pupils must bring their own face-mask to school.**
- Pupils can remove their face masks when seated in the canteen.
- Schools should also be aware that some persons (including children) are exempt from wearing face coverings and this should be treated sensitively. **No one will be excluded from school for failure to have or wear a face covering.**
- Face coverings should not be shared with others.

School Transport

The Education Authority is responsible for ensuring the provision of all home to school transport. This is provided on either **dedicated school transport services or on public transport services.**

Dedicated school transport includes Translink buses that are only used by pupils and not used by the general public, privately operated bus services that are only used by pupils and taxis.

Public transport services are scheduled bus and train services that are used by both pupils and the general public.

Children showing any symptoms of COVID-19 **should not travel** to school.

Active travel such as walking and cycling, where it is safe to do so. Using active travel for pupils' journey to school carries the lowest risk of transmission of COVID-19 and will bring a range of health benefits as part of a healthier lifestyle.

It is mandatory for all pupils aged 13 and over to wear a face-mask on school and public transport.

Travelling by car

Cars **are not permitted** on the school grounds and parents/carers should leave children off at the school gates on the Doagh Road or Avondale Drive. Parents/carers are **should not leave pupils off before 8.30 am.**

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School Routines.

New protocols and measures are in place to keep everyone safe. They are simple and clear so that everyone will feel reassured.

- There will be **clear signage** in and around school to assist with the flow of pupils in the building. We will be operating a “one way” system. **All staff will supervise pupil movement around the school at the change of all lessons.** This is very important for protecting everyone.
- Even though pupils passing in corridors and short periods of contact does not present a significant risk to staff or pupils. **All pupils and staff must wear a face- mask in the corridors.**
- One-way system will be in place on the bottom floor of the main teaching block. **It is vitally important that all pupils follow this particularly pupils coming down the stairs at the back of the school. Pupils must progress along the music corridor.**
- One-way system will be in place on the second and third floor of the main teaching block. Pupils must go up the front stairs and down the back stairs. Pupils will move up the front stairs of the main teaching block and down the back stairs.
- Pupils moving from the new English and Geography Rooms to the **bottom floor** will use the red staircase.

Pupils must keep to the left side of the corridors and stairs when moving around the school

Entering and leaving the building

At lunch time:

Year 8 will use the Main Front Doors – Pupil Entrance

Year 9 will use the PE Doors

Year 10 will use the PE Doors

Year 11 will use the Main Front Doors – Pupil Entrance

Year 12 will use the Main Front Doors

Year 13 and 14 will use the PE Doors

For pupils in Years 8 to 12 we will be operating a stay- on -site policy during lunchtime for all pupils. Pupils in Years 13 and 14 may leave school during their lunchtime.

At the end of the school day pupils may leave by the front door and use all sets of stairs.

To avoid congestion pupils will be released at the end of the school day from between 2.55 pm and 3.00 pm.

We will also limit the number of people who have access to the building. To ensure this, **parents/carers should only enter the school when it is essential to do so and with an appointment.** We must adhere to track and trace procedures.

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We will be using all available space within school to ensure the best spacing of pupils can be achieved in school. This will include the use of the halls and Lecture Theatre as teaching areas.

Public health advice is that although COVID-19 spreads from person to person through small droplets, aerosols and through direct contact, **there is a relatively low risk of virus transmission associated with surface contacts in schools**. The risk from sharing resources such as library books or bringing schoolbags into school is extremely small. Pupils **should bring their school bag and pencil case to school**.

The small risk presented by sharing resources such as pens and computers in school can be further reduced by regular hand hygiene and regular surface cleaning practices. There is no need to quarantine items either after shared use in the classroom or after they have been in a pupil's home.

In circumstances where an individual who has tested positive has used resources while symptomatic, taking those resources out of use for a few days further reduces the already small risk of infection from surfaces.

Good ventilation

Public health advice is that the virus that causes COVID-19 is spread through very small aerosols and droplets released in exhaled breath. These aerosols can be carried in the air and could cause infection if they are inhaled. The risk of virus transmission through aerosols and airborne particles is lower in a well ventilated space where fresh air is able to flow and so schools are encouraged to mitigate this risk by maximising the ventilation of all indoor spaces as much as is practicable.

The use of ventilation, whether natural or by mechanical means, should be maximised as far as practicable. School activities are encouraged to take place outdoors wherever possible. Where activities take place indoors, schools should seek to have doors and windows open wherever possible.

The opening of doors and windows should be encouraged to increase natural ventilation and also to reduce contact with door handles.

However, propping open of doors into corridors, external doors, security access systems and any other fire safety doors is prohibited.

All windows in classrooms should be open to ensure a healthy circulation of air during and between classes. Windows in the corridors will also be open at all times.

Social Distancing

Social distancing remains a key aspect of measures to be taken in school to mitigate the risks of virus transmission. Whilst there has been some relaxation of social distancing guidelines it is recommended that we should endeavour to implement as much social distancing as is practical where physical capacity and curriculum delivery permit.

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Staff will be required to maintain a social distance of 2 metres from other members of staff and as far as possible from pupils. Social distancing guidance applies across all areas of school both indoors and outdoors.

Signage to demarcate social distancing will be displayed as a means of educating pupils on the importance of good practices.

“Protective bubbles” Whilst there is no requirement to keep pupils in ‘protective bubbles’ this was a very effective way of minimising interactions between groups. **In order to support effective contact tracing pupils remain in consistent groups, where possible.** Our school timetable for 2021/22 has retained some ‘protective bubbles’ in its structure particularly in Key Stage 3.

The school extra-curricular programme will be running again this year. All staff who are holding any extra-curricular activities must draw up a Risk Assessment for the activity.

School Day

8.20 am	Senior Teachers will be on duty throughout the school/in playground/school gates and driveway/entrance points.
8.40 am	Period 1 - Pupils will arrive to school and move directly to their period 1 class. All teachers must be in class at 8.40 am to receive pupils. Parents should not leave pupils off before 8.30 am.
9.15 am	Period 2
9.50 to 10.20 am	Junior Break 9.50 to 10.05 am If weather is inclement, pupils will remain with class teachers who will be required to supervise for break time. Junior Assembly 10.05 to 10.20 am Senior Break 10.05 to 10.20 am If weather is inclement, pupils will remain with class teachers who will be required to supervise for break time.
10.20 am	Period 3
10.55 am	Period 4
11.30 am	Period 5
12.05 pm	Period 6 - Year 8 and 9 Lunch

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12.40 pm	Period 7 – Year 10 and 11 Lunch
1.15 pm	Period 8 – Year 12, 13 and 14 Lunch
1.50 pm	Period 9
2.25 pm	Period 10
3.00 pm	School finishes for all pupils. Teachers can begin to release pupils from 2.55 to 3.00 pm.

Classrooms

The health and wellbeing of pupils and staff and the provision of positive learning and teaching environments are paramount. Classrooms and workspaces will be reconfigured to follow the government guidelines.

- Teachers will teach from the front of the classroom to adhere to the 2 metre social distancing rule that applies to all staff.
- There will be no “at elbow” support.
- Individual pupil booklets/workbooks will be used as far as possible and these will remain in the classroom or in the pupil school bag.
- Work to be marked and assessed will be submitted electronically if possible to reduce teachers carrying pupil work home at the end of the school day.
- In classrooms with sinks, pupils should wash their hands at the start of the lesson. Hand sanitiser is available in all classrooms for staff and pupil use.
- If pupils are using computers/laptops they must clean the computer and workstation using the materials provided at the end of the lesson.
- Pupils will be allocated to a desk within the classroom and staff will keep a record of all seating plans. **This is essential for track and trace purposes.**

Physical Education

When pupils return in September 2021 they will take part in practical PE lessons. **Pupils must wear their full school uniform to school every day and the school PE Kit on days when they have PE.**

COVID-19

If a pupil becomes unwell in school and it is suspected that they have symptoms of COVID-19 the pupil will immediately be told to put on a facemask, (provided in the classroom box) and will be immediately removed to the medical room. The pupil will be collected from school as soon as possible. It is vitally important that up to date contact details are available for all pupils and that there is someone available to collect children from school should they become unwell.

While waiting to be collected the pupil will be moved to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. This will be the nurse’s room and **not the front entrance hall.**

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Appropriate supervision will be provided and the room will be well ventilated with the windows open.

A trace of the pupil's contact and space usage over the previous 72 hours will be carried out and appropriate cleaning measures applied.

Staff and parents/carers will be informed immediately of a confirmed case along with contact and space usage.

Parents/carers will be informed if their child has been in contact with the pupil and advised accordingly.

Lateral Flow Tests

Lateral Flow Testing Programmes aim to identify pupils and staff who are infected but do not realise it so they can be advised to isolate so reducing the risk of them unwittingly spreading infection in the school and elsewhere. This will help to break the chain of transmission of the virus. It is for this reason that the Department encourages all staff and pupils who are offered these testing programmes to participate.

Lateral Flow Tests do not replace the current PHA testing protocols. Anyone with symptoms (even if they have had a negative LFD test result) should still self-isolate immediately according to PHA guidelines and follow advice given.

The Lateral Flow Testing Programme is an additional layer of mitigation against COVID-19 in schools.

Testing is voluntary and no pupil should be tested unless informed consent has been given by the child's parent or guardian, or the child if they are over 16, and the child is willing to be tested.

Lateral Flow Testing is available to all Ballyclare Secondary School pupils and are to be conducted **at home** with a result given within 30 minutes. Consent forms will be distributed at the start of term.

Participants are encouraged to test twice each week during school terms and to upload their results (either positive or negative) to the online portal in order that these results can be collated.

Those who test positive must immediately self-isolate to avoid passing the virus on to others and book a PCR test to confirm the result.

StopCOVID NI Proximity App

The StopCOVID NI Proximity App assists in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in Northern Ireland, by anonymously contacting people who have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. All pupils are strongly encouraged to download this

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free application to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and should comply with PHA protocols on self-isolation.

Blended Learning

Ballyclare Secondary School will continue when possible to provide remote learning for pupils who may be required to self-isolate. However, expectations by parents/carers must be realistic as staff will also be teaching full classes during this time.

Pupil Behaviour

The school **Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy** has been adapted to address COVID-19 related incidents.

The adapted policy allows sanctions up to and including exclusion for pupils:

- *who fail to follow instructions relating to health and safety protocols,*
- *who wilfully refuse to adhere to arrangements of social distancing and*
- *who deliberately cough or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk.*

This policy will be followed robustly as a means of protecting the health and safety of the entire school community.

(Guidance taken from Coronavirus (COVID-19) Northern Ireland Re-Opening Schools EA Guidance for Schools 18th August 2021)

Mrs K Bell

Principal