MOHILL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

 Mohill, Co. Leitrim (071)9631122/9631208

Principal: Ms. Úna Duffy

Deputy Principal: Ms. Martina Callinan

19th August 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you are aware, the Government in August 2020 made comprehensive plans for the safe and sustainable reopening of schools and we, in turn, planned in accordance with Government guidelines to prepare to receive back our staff and students in a safe manner.

We are ever grateful for the combined efforts and co-operation which saw us safely through last year. As we move into a new school year, staff, students, parents, contractors and visitors again have a responsibility, both as individuals and collectively, to have due regard for their own health and safety and that of others as we try to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Mohill Community College.

The Department of Education has, in its recent guidelines, requested that we update our Covid 19 Response Plan in line with Department of Education amendments. However, the amendments are minimal, and the guidance is that schools will continue to operate with the same infection prevention and control measures already in place. We are reminded that these Plans are based on the Government’s Work Safely Protocol which reflects the most up to date public health advice for the workplace.

Please note our updated Covid 19 Response Plan will be available on our school website shortly.

**MCC Infection Prevention and Control Measures: what we have done and will continue -**

* Installed hand sanitising stations in all classrooms and on corridors, as well as entry and exit points. Students will sanitise hands on entry to the building, and to each classroom.
* Displayed posters and other signage to highlight the need to prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19. This includes signage in all toilet areas highlighting the need for hand hygiene, and other posters highlighting coughing and sneezing etiquette.
* Made the necessary changes to the way we utilise our school layout, emphasising our one-way system and identifying one entrance (front door as always) and two exits.
* Nominated different areas for class group for break and lunchtime.
* Redesigned classrooms to support physical distancing - most classrooms are 49 sq m$²$ with desks placed at 1 – 1.1 metre apart. Strict seating plans will apply in all rooms.
* Removed unnecessary clutter to facilitate ongoing cleaning of the school.
* Made arrangements to intensify cleaning in line with government advice.
* Identified and prepared an isolation area (First Aid Room in Technology Block).
* Removed access to school lockers as social distancing is not possible within the confined spaces at locker areas.
* Cancelled Breakfast Club on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
* Arranged that caterers will NOT provide lunches as social distancing in a queue situation is more difficult.
* Arranged for the gradual return of each year group (August 27th – September 1st) so that a comprehensive induction/reintroduction into Covid-prevention practices can be given.
* Arranged for restriction of visitors and parents to essential purposes only and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the principal.
* Planned to maintain a detailed sign in/sign out log of those entering the school facilities as the prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in restricting the spread of the virus.
* Made changes to Code of Behaviour to include spitting and use of chewing gum among the list of unacceptable behaviours which will result in immediate sanction.
* Added to the Code of Behaviour a *Health and Safety Control of Covid Policy for Students*
* Arranged for daily review of our plans and practices.
* Anticipate delivery of CO2 monitors next week to be in place in classrooms in advance of students’ return.

As valued members of our school community, what can you do in this shared effort to keep our students, staff and all our families safe?

**Before school:**

* Assist us with maintaining social distancing in the mornings. If your son/daughter gets dropped to school or walks to school, please do not drop them off/send them to school until 9.05am. This will allow the (approx.) 200 students who travel by bus to be appropriately socially distanced in the school from 8.30am.
* When students arrive to school at 8.30, they will go to their designated seat where they will be supervised. There will be no opportunity to walk back down town.
* When students arrive to school at 9.05am, they go directly to relevant classroom for Class 1.
* Encourage walking where possible – students travelling by car might consider drop off in Church grounds and walk from there?!
* If your son/daughter is ill: **please do not send students who are ill to school**.
* Follow HSE advice at all times. This includes following public health advice if you are identified by the HSE as a close contact of Covid 19 or if you are living with someone who has symptoms of the virus.
* Ensure that your son/daughter has their face covering(s) for the day

**During the school day:**

* If your son/daughter forgets something: do not drop in the item. Please note that students will not be permitted to phone home to have forgotten items dropped in. Nor will school personnel be asked to handle such items for delivery to students. This is to reduce the number of visitors to the school to only what is absolutely essential and by prior appointment with the principal.
* Students are reminded to bring home their own belongings each evening. Lunchboxes and jackets must not be left lying around. All ‘Lost Property’/unclaimed items will be gathered at the end of each week and disposed of.
* Encourage your son/daughter to spend time each evening planning for their classes the following day – careful thought into the books which will be needed and those which can be left at home will greatly help in reducing the weight of schoolbags and reduce the likelihood of forgetting.
* Ensure that your son/daughter has their own supply of pens, pencils etc.
* No Visitor Policy: please respect our ‘No Visitor Policy’.
* If you need to contact the school: please do so by phone or email.
* Absence notes/appointment notes: absence notes and appointment notes can be emailed to mohillcommunitycollege@msletb.ie or phone 071 9631122/31208.
* Ensure that our contact details for parents/guardians are fully up to date on VSware. VSware details will be our contact log for your household in the event of a suspected case.
* If your son\daughter starts to develop symptoms of Covid – 19 while in school, they should immediately report to a member of staff. Please reinforce this message.

**General points to support our efforts:**

* Please view Department of Education training materials which are online.
* Constantly repeat the important points of regular hand washing/hand sanitising and the avoidance of physical contact.
* Parents/Guardians are requested to promote confidence.
* getting used to being back at school may take time.
* time will be given to the experience of settling back in/in the case of First Years adjusting to a very new environment with the new experience of wearing face coverings.
* teachers understand that students have had different learning experiences during the school closure period.
* School life will not be the same: discuss with your son/daughter the reality that school life – for the moment at least – cannot be the same!
* Encourage your son/daughter to comply fully with all new arrangements whose sole aim is the creation and maintenance of as safe an environment as possible.

**Key Points**

All members of the school community – Staff and Students - are requested to follow HSE advice at all times. This includes following public health advice if you are identified by the HSE as a close contact of Covid 19 or if you are living with someone who has symptoms of the virus.

Facial coverings will be worn at all times.

Students who arrive by bus will have designated seating areas from 8.30am to 9.05am.

Students will have designated areas at break time.

Sixth Year students only will be permitted to go down town at Lunchtime. They are reminded of a shorter lunchtime and the need to be back to class 7 on time.

Access to the toilet is in smaller monitored groups to ensure social distancing at washbasins.

Movement to other rooms is an unavoidable aspect of subject choices and different levels. When students move to a different classroom, they will wipe down the desk and chair with a sanitising wipe before they sit in their designated place. On leaving each class, they will use hand sanitiser.

Journal will not be used to enter signatures - signatures will be uploaded to VSware. You are requested to check VSware frequently. Student attendance can also be checked by parents/guardians.

Students may be requested to present that work online for corrections.

We will be trying to reduce the amount of paper generated and handled.

Students may wear an additional layer of clothing – this layer will be additional to rather than a replacement of items of uniform.

**How will we update you?**

* Latest advice from the Government and Department of Education and Skills will be published on the school website. We may on an ongoing basis have to adjust our plans and procedures in line with that advice.
* Our Covid 19 Response Plan – with August 2021 updates - will be published on the school website.
* We will text using VSware text system when needed.
* VSMail will be used to forward useful links and Department of Education resources.
* Follow HSE advice at all times. This includes following public health advice if you are identified by the HSE as a close contact of Covid 19 or if you are living with someone who has symptoms of the virus.

Thanking you in anticipation for your support, as we look forward to a new school year.

*Úna Duffy Martina Callinan*

Ms. Úna Duffy, Principal Ms. Martina Callinan, Deputy Principal