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School Newsletter November 2021

COVID-19




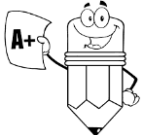



On the 1st October the Departments of Health and Education instructed that identification of, and communication with, close contacts of positive cases of COVID-19 in schools would cease.






I am greatly relieved that Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly and Minister for Education Norma Foley this afternoon announced that a system of identifying close contacts of positive cases of COVID-19 in schools will recommence by the 29th November. The new testing system will be primarily based on the provision of free-of-charge voluntary home antigen tests for school children identified as close contacts, supplemented by the continued availability of free PCR tests when the need arises or when a parent has a concern. The new system may not be ideal and is very different from the previous close contact testing regime for school children, however it at least relaunches a system of systematically identifying close contacts in schools and advising those children to take a COVID-19 test.

Our school will inform parents of positive cases in classes. A text will be sent to classes that have reported positive cases. Individual pupils and/or staff members cannot and will not be identified in the texts. Please note that the antigen testing regime has not begun yet and when it does, not all children in the class may initially be identified as close contacts, but parents of all children in the class will be informed. Information currently available on the new system is here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/f5630-ministers-foley-and-donnelly-confirm-arrangements-for-a-new-system-of-antigen-testing-of-asymptomatic-close-contacts-in-primary-schools/>

There is undoubtedly a spike in COVID-19 cases in our community at present and it is absolutely essential that all members of our school community follow public health advice. Anyone who displays symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend our school setting and must undertake a PCR test. COVID-19 tests can be booked at <https://covid19test.healthservice.ie/hse-self-referral/>.

It is vital that we all play our part in protecting the health of our school community. **Children should not attend school and should attend for a PCR test if they or anyone in their household displays symptoms of COVID-19:** fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above) - including having chills, dry cough, fatigue (tiredness), loss or change to your sense of smell or taste (this could mean they're completely gone or just different to normal), nasal congestion (runny or blocked nose), conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes), sore throat, headache, muscle or joint pain (aches and pains), different types of skin rash, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea, chills or dizziness.

<p><u>Face Coverings</u></p> 	<p>All adults entering the school grounds should wear a face covering unless an exception applies. We would greatly appreciate your co-operation in this matter for the safety of our school community</p>
<p><u>Parent-Teacher Meetings</u></p> 	<p>We traditionally host our face-to-face Parent-Teacher meetings in the school at the end of November/start of December. Given current restrictions we will be unable to host face-to-face meetings in the school in the coming weeks. We hope to host face-to-face meetings in the school in February, and if not, they will be conducted via phone call at that time.</p>
<p><u>Team Hope Fundraiser – 26th November Christmas Jumper Day</u></p> 	<p>Every year our school supports the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal. However this year, due to Covid-19, it is not possible for pre-filled shoeboxes to be made, sorted through and distributed. This obviously presents as a huge challenge to the Team Hope charity as the poorest of communities need our support now, more than ever. Team Hope have launched their 2021 campaign, encouraging us to fill virtual shoeboxes online at a cost of €20 each. We are asking families for their support to enable us to fill virtual shoeboxes and we will hold a Team Hope fundraiser on Friday 26th November (Late Late Toy Show day!). The children are invited to wear a Christmas jumper (or Christmas-themed/Christmas-coloured clothing if the children do not have a Christmas jumper) on the day and will be asked to make a donation of €2 to Team Hope. More information can be found at https://www.teamhope.ie/christmas-shoebox-appeal/.</p>
<p><u>Christmas Cards</u></p> 	<p>Well done to all the children on their hard work designing their Christmas cards! The sample cards have gone to print and are expected to arrive in the school tomorrow. Thank you to our Parents' Association for organising the children's Christmas Cards and your support of this initiative is greatly appreciated.</p>
<p><u>Christmas Raffle</u></p> 	<p>Our annual Christmas raffle organised by our Parents' Association will take place again this year. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the raffle will take place virtually and tickets will be available for purchase online through Aladdin e-payments. The Christmas Raffle is our school's main fundraiser each year and we would very much appreciate your support this year, so be sure to get your tickets to be in with a chance to win some amazing prizes!</p> <p>If any of our parents or guardians have any business connections and could secure donations of prizes for the raffle, we would be delighted to hear from you via phone or e-mail.</p>

<p><u>Christmas Panto</u></p> 	<p>Following the success of last year's online Helix panto, we have arranged for a special viewing of this year's Helix panto "Red Riding Hood" in the school in the week before the Christmas holidays. Treats will be provided to the kids also to celebrate a great term's work. There will be no charge for this event and further information on this will follow in December.</p>
<p><u>Allianz Pupil Personal Accident Insurance</u></p> 	<p>This year we will again offer Allianz Insurance's <i>Pupil Personal Accident Insurance Scheme</i> in our school. Pupil Personal Accident Insurance is a benefits policy that covers medical and dental expenses following an accident. The school will participate in the 24-hour cover scheme for pupils which costs €9 for the year. The fee will be payable via Aladdin Connect. A separate communication about the insurance scheme will be sent to parents/guardians.</p>
<p><u>First Communion</u></p> 	<p>Best wishes to the children who will be receiving their First Holy Communion this Saturday 20th November.</p>
<p><u>Extra layers</u></p> 	<p>As the school and classrooms have windows open to ensure good ventilation, pupils should wear a base layer under their uniform and may also bring an appropriate fleece top or extra jumper to wear in class if required.</p>
<p><u>Bicycles, Scooters, Flickers</u></p> 	<p>The two new bike racks areas are working very well, however adults and children entering the school grounds on bikes/scooters/flickers etc. must dismount at the school gate and walk through the school grounds to ensure the safety of all.</p>