

Good morning,

We hope that you are enjoying the midterm break. It is great to see the sunshining this morning.

Apologies for sending this email during the break, however, in light of the recent lifting of restrictions, we know that many of you are wondering about the impact of these changes.

We need a little time to rearrange rooms and redo the S&S timetable.

Split break will remain in place on Monday & Tuesday, thereafter we will revert to common breaks.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Year PTM will take place in the school on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A copy of the advice to schools received during the week is attached for your information, the key points from the document are as follows.

### **Government advice on removing restrictions**

*The Government has accepted the recommendations of NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools. Schools should now resume normal school routines and normal teaching and learning activities.*

### **Teaching and Learning**

*The suite of measures set out in the Framework for physical distancing at post primary schools included, reconfiguring class spaces to maximise physical distancing; reviewing timetables, use of live streaming within the school; and accessing available spaces within the local community.*

*As the general requirement for physical distancing no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain these arrangements. Where these arrangements are impacting on teaching and learning, such as live streaming or restricting team teaching etc., they should cease immediately.*

*Use of changing rooms, PE halls and lockers, staff rooms etc. can resume where schools have curtailed access to these facilities.*

### **Introducing these revised measures**

*Apart from the measures affecting teaching and learning, schools have discretion at local level to determine the timescale for introducing the changes outlined. It is not envisaged that timetables would be changed mid-year or work undertaken during the mid-term break.*

### **Mask wearing:**

*It is no longer a requirement for staff or students to wear a mask in school. Staff and students can continue to wear a mask if they wish to do so. Schools should continue*

*to make masks available on request as they are currently doing. Funding to support the purchase of PPE, including masks, will continue to be made available to schools.*

### **Hand Hygiene**

*Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean). Funding will continue to issue to schools for the purchase of PPE, including hand sanitiser.*

### **Cleaning and Hygiene in schools**

*The Department of Education has provided additional funding to support the enhanced cleaning required to minimise the risks of COVID-19. This funding will continue for this academic year and will be reviewed in advance of the start of the next school year.*

### **Staying at home if you have symptoms**

*The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains, both for students and staff. One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school.*

### **School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing**

*With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised. All other measures relating to hygiene (including the provision of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning of service) and preassigned seating will remain in place subject to further review*

### **Parent teacher meetings**

*Parent teacher meetings should resume and schools where parent teacher meetings have not taken place should commence these as soon as possible. All schools should ensure that they have a parent teacher meeting for each year group within this academic year (where these have not already taken place).*

### **Visitors to schools**

*There is no longer a requirement to restrict visitors to schools and schools should revert to the normal arrangements.*

### **35 Hours**

*The arrangement allowing teachers on 22 hours to teach an additional 35 hours was due to finish on 28 February. This arrangement has been extended until the end of the school year and teachers may now deliver an additional 35 hours, from 1 March to 31 May.*

### **Parental Leave**

*The recent changes to the Parental Leave Scheme, allowing teachers to take leave at short notice and to take leave in periods of less than a week to facilitate childminding due to Covid-19, expire at the end of February. Separate advice on parental leave will issue shortly from the Department*

*of Education.*

***Job Sharing/Career Break***

*As previously announced the restriction on engaging in substitute teaching has been suspended for this school year.*

Have a good weekend and looking forward to seeing you all on Monday.

Ann Marie & Brendan