

22 May 2020



Dominic Bergin (BA(Hons NPQH)
Headteacher

Dear Families

I am writing to inform you of our arrangements for Year 10 after half term. As you know the government has asked us to provide face to face learning to supplement the digital experience. They have specifically done this with Year 10 and Year 12 as of course they will have exams in less than a year from now and we need to get back to the new 'normal' as soon as possible. I agree that this is important and also that a face to face learning experience is better than a virtual one.

However, in these unprecedented times we must also ensure the safety of students, staff and families. In this letter I hope to set out the ways that we are going to make this happen.

Some Year 10 students will be invited in on the week beginning 1 June for individual sessions but subject to guidance next week and reassurance on some key issues we anticipate the vast majority of the year group will be back on the week beginning 15 June. Students will be in for either AM or PM sessions during the week beginning 15 June and 29 June. During these weeks and in the other weeks students will of course be expected to continue to engage with their online learning and there should be an increasing number of online lessons. There will be an AM and PM group each week and students will have a core session (English, maths and science) and their option session each week.

These timetables will be emailed individually to students and families in the week beginning 1 June subject to government advice. Clearly we are also in a very different situation at the moment and so we will have to have very different expectations for these sessions. As I have said students will be split into an AM and PM group but we will also have slightly staggered starts for classes within these groups so that we can ensure social distancing and having the correct number of students in one place at one time. Classes will have between 10 and 15 students in them. The school has gridded the classrooms and corridors we are using and we have ordered sanitisers and have built hand washing into the day.

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Students will be met at the front door and escorted off site and of course we will have to have some pretty strict rules on social distancing and interaction. These are attached. I know they look draconian and we looked at ways of making them sound a bit nicer but the practicality is that certainly for now we have to ensure that everybody is absolutely as safe as possible. Unfortunately 'don't do this' and 'don't do that' is necessary for the moment so that we all stay safe.

We are also going to ask students to come to school in full uniform and hope that this forewarning gives you the time to find it! We do have some freshly laundered uniform in school if this is an issue. Please contact Ms McLaughlin if this is the case. This has been the source of great debate about the cleanliness of uniforms compared with the cleanliness of everyday clothes. This is one of a number of 'never thought I'd have this conversation' conversations that I've had in the last few weeks. As there is a week between sessions then there is a good time to get uniform clean. As we are constantly looking at how to minimise the risk of infection we must insist that students do not wear any other outside coat, top or hoodie.

Also, the school will provide a stationery pack and an exercise book to take notes in so that the student can make notes to supplement their online learning. All extended writing and marking will continue online.

At this point there will be no meal facility on site and we thought that families on free school meals would prefer to continue to receive the vouchers rather than try and give out a sandwich.

The advice from the government is here, please don't forget that this guidance is largely written for the primary sector who are organising much more of a return to school at present but it is very clear on what medical reasons a child would have for not attending.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/closure-of-educational-settings-information-for-parents-and-carers/reopening-schools-and-other-educational-settings-from-1-june>

We have also thought long and hard about PPE, which way back in the midst of time used to mean Pre Public Exams for us! Government guidance is clearly that a face mask is not necessary but in the first instance this will be allowed, but absolutely not compulsory at school, as I think this may alleviate the fears of some staff and students. The same will not be the case with gloves which we will not have in the classroom. Gloves can easily spread infection in a way that a face covering would not. We have also ordered some medical PPE for any first aid issues where distancing is not possible.

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This is of course all with the caveat that Government guidance may change in the next two weeks and we will only fully know that we have the go ahead on 28 May.

If you have got this far down this very lengthy letter then firstly well done, and secondly you may well be thinking what is the point? Rigid rules, no breaks, limited interaction and still the underlying problem in society. I have full sympathy for this point of view and given how challenging this has been to organise for 300 children then the idea of working out how this will work with 1100 students is something else again.

However, I would say two things. Firstly, at some point our children need to be taught again and our school has great teachers and your child will benefit from that interaction. Secondly, although we have put lots of restrictions in place your children will be seeing their friends again and that is a big thing. When I have been cycling, or walking the dog or walking to work in the last few months the real joy has come from seeing a cycling friend or a parent or a student and having a short distanced conversation with them. We definitely shouldn't underestimate the importance of that small but vital interaction.

We will publish our ongoing risk assessment on the school website and I will be answering questions at a Parents Forum on Thursday 4 June at 6.00pm.

Please stay safe and have a good half term.

Yours faithfully



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Headteacher



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'Keeping it Simple for Staff and Students' Expectations on your return The Elmgreen School

Education is one of our most important rights, and whilst the school has worked hard to ensure you could access your subjects via google classroom, being taught by your teacher is key. We are delighted that you are returning to the classroom, however, the Covid 19 pandemic means that things must be different to ensure we are all safe. Over the next few weeks it is essential that you do the following.

When coming to school

- **You should try to walk or cycle to school**
- If you do use the bus, you should socially distance – **don't sit next to someone** – even if they are your friend
- If you use the train follow the guidance - sitting in the appropriate seat and remaining two metres away from other passengers whilst waiting on the platform or going through the barriers. If it is busy you may need to queue outside the train station
- **Come straight to school** – don't go to the shop as you are trying to limit contact
- **Keep two metres apart** as you walk down the pavement – don't walk as a group. Remember to give other people plenty of room – two metres
- **Don't wait for your friends**
- **Make sure have brought a bottle of water - water fountains at school will be off**

When coming in to school

- Stay two metres apart at all times. **You can't touch each other in any way**
- **Turn off your mobile phone and put it in your bag – where it stays. If it goes off or is visible whilst you are on the school site you will be sent home**
- Use the hand sanitizer to **wash your hands**
- Follow the signs and go straight to your classroom. This will be the only classroom you will be in that day
- To limit contact the Market Square and outside spaces won't be open
- When in the classroom a teacher will supervise until the lesson starts. You need to bring a reading book

When in the lesson

- There will be fewer students in your classroom than normal – about 10 to 12
- **You are to remain at your desk** and not share equipment. This is to maintain social distancing. Please ensure you bring your own: two pens, a pencil, a rubber, a ruler, a calculator a glue stick and highlighters
- **You need to follow our normal school rules** – listening to teachers, focusing on your learning and when working independently working in silence
- Lessons will be only 1 hour 45 minutes. Unless we are aware that you have a medical reason requiring you to go to the toilet, you will remain in class

At the end of the lesson

- At the end of your lesson your teacher will escort you off site.
- **You then need to go straight home and not wait on other student(s)**
- **If you are on site all day a teacher will escort you to a lunch space**

When going home

- Please try and cycle or walk
- If you are travelling home by bus, you will need to wait at the bus stop – waiting two metres apart. Enter the bus calmly
- If you are traveling by train, remember to remain two metres apart on the platform
- You need to maintain social distancing when on the bus
- **You should not go into takeaways or wait outside. We are all trying to limit contact and make it less likely that we have the virus or that we give it to someone else, especially someone we love**

Below is a list of key rules. If these are broken you will either be sent home or informed that you can't return to The Elmgreen School until we have either met your parents (via an online platform) and the Headteacher has determined, you are able to do so.

Key Rules

- Maintain social distancing on the way to school, whilst at school and on the way home
- Do not wait for friends before or after school – go straight home
- Follow instructions in class, around the building or outside school
- If your phone goes off or is visible whilst you are on site, you will be sent home

If you keep breaking the rules

It may be the case that the school determines that you sadly are unable to come to school. If that is the case, you will be required to work from home. Reasons for such a decision would include:

- One instance where you fail to abide by the above rules, such as social distancing or failing to work in class
- One instance where you fail to follow instructions, including the instruction to go straight home and not congregate in a group outside school
- Your phone going off or being visible on the school site

If a student makes a threat to another child or a member of staff, including the threat of coughing or spitting on another person, this will be viewed as a serious breach of the school behaviour policy.