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Dear Parents,

I hope you are all well and I hope you are starting to see light emerging in the distance with the remarkable vaccine rollout, the phase 1 gradual easing of restrictions from 8 March and thoughts of a form of normality returning throughout spring and summer. I can't really explain adequately how much I've missed my wider family and my friends, like we all have. In time, I'm really looking forward to seeing them again and I won't miss this crazy virtual world we are all living in at present. I am sick of Zoom, Facetimes, Teams and Googlemeets and I'm looking forward to never saying again, "You are on mute!"

Despite more hopeful news on the horizon, many of us are still struggling with the time we are living through. I'm sure the overwhelming majority of parents are eagerly anticipating next Monday's return for all children. Despite hope on the horizon, life for many is still tough, so please look after yourself and reach out if we can support you, your family or if you are concerned about someone.

The wonderful Sophie Eliis Bexter (of Kitchen Disco fame, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxNYEC6z9\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxNYEC6z9_U)) shared some ideas for managing the final lap of homeschooling which we have found useful in the Conway family. [www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zx88cmn](https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zx88cmn)

### **To business**

This has been a very busy week with announcements on schools reopening to all and much correspondence to my email about how schools have to operate from the Department of Education. Like you, our priority is getting children safely back to St Aloysius. As a father of two, I see on a daily basis how crucial this is for my own girls, for both their education and wellbeing. I am delighted all our children will soon be back in our building.

I am very aware that we must take the safety of all our fabulous staff extremely seriously. Our staff have been coming into school throughout the pandemic and every member of staff has been in St Aloysius, each day since 4 January. As a result of the full return of children I have been busy working with staff, leaders, governors and our Health and Safety advisors to revise our policies, procedures and Risk Assessments. I will share these with you later in the week.

Prior to you receiving our full guidance I want to remind you about a few things:

- Children, with the exception of those children in Y5 and Y6, who have a signed letter from their parents will be expected to be picked up by an adult. It is an expectation that children are picked up via the year group queuing system, we will not allow any children whose parents wait at the school gates, and shout at their child or staff, to leave the playground. Adults, including staff, will be expected to wear a facemask on the school yard.
- School doors will be open from 8.45, no child is allowed, alone on the yard, prior to this. If an adult is accompanying a child, I am relaxed about people on the yard prior to 8.45am, however, any child alone on the playground before this time will be taken to the Breakfast Club. Please remember the school day starts at 9am. The reason we open the doors at 8.45 is to spread entry into school.

- The school will end at either 3pm (Nursery); 3.10pm (Rec, Y1, Y3, Y4) or 3.20pm (Y2, Y5 and Y6). If you have siblings, you can pick up the children at the time of the oldest sibling. If you have siblings at the same time, the staff are happy to wait with your child until you have picked up the youngest sibling first.

### **Helping pupils catch up**

The return of all pupils to face-to-face education in St Aloysius will focus on a broad and balanced curriculum with particular acceleration for those children who we identify. I know how hard working our children are and they will soon be in a strong habit of learning.

### **Face Coverings and Lateral Flow Testing**

The government has stated that, "Children in primary schools should not be asked to wear face coverings or regularly test using the Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) when they return to school from the 8 March."

They have advised there are currently limited public health benefits attached to face coverings for children up to Year 6 and testing primary pupils with lateral flow devices. Primary age pupils may find the LFD testing process unpleasant and are unable to self-swab. The Government has said they will review this approach in the light of any emerging evidence.

Currently, all staff within school will continue to test with Lateral Flow Devices twice a week at home. They have been doing this since mid January 2021.

### **Rapid lateral flow testing for households and bubbles of school pupils and staff**

Around 1 in 3 people with coronavirus (COVID-19) do not have symptoms but can still pass it on to others. Regular testing of people without symptoms (asymptomatic testing) is important to help stop the virus spreading. As lockdown restrictions gradually ease, we all need to play our part to help protect each other. On Sunday 28 February, the Department of Health and Social Care announced that from Monday 1 March, households with primary school, secondary school and college age children, including child care and support bubbles, can test themselves twice every week at home as schools return from Monday 8 March. The twice-weekly test kits can be accessed:

- via employers if they offer testing to employees
- at a local test site
- by collecting a home test kit from a test site
- by ordering a home test kit online

As schools we can not give test kits to parents. This [guidance](#) provides information on who can be tested and how you can get a test. If you choose to use the LFT that is available you do not need to let us know the result, unless it is positive. You would then follow government guidance which includes self isolation for the entire support bubble and seek a confirmation test.

### **Wrap around clubs**

Our breakfast club and after school provision will start to operate from Monday. Whilst the provision will have children from different year groups, when the children are inside we will keep children separated from those in other year groups.

## **Fun Run and World Book Day**

Typically at this time of year we have these two events. It usually involves lots of fun, planned chaos and children mixing between year groups and between schools. Obviously, this year we can not enjoy the typical way we run these events but we are planning to host them still, in a different, socially distant and safe way. We will send further information out to you closer to the time. We have looked at the dates and nationally World Book Day is on Thursday 4 March. We have decided we are going to move the day at St Aloysius until **Friday 12 March**. The children can come dressed in their pyjamas or own home clothes because our theme is going to be bedtime stories.

This year's Fun Run will be taking place on **Thursday 18 March (Infants)** and **Friday 19 March 2021 (Juniors)**. Children can come into school wearing sporting clothing and appropriate footwear to run on the school field/ yard. Each class will still have a warm up led by one of our sports coaches (which will be zoomed into everyone's bubble) and we will spread it out over the course of the morning so all classes participate but in their own bubbles and can be socially distant from other classes. We are trying hard to ensure whilst it is vital that our children are safe, they can still enjoy themselves too.

## **Sensible Parking**

I am increasingly concerned about the parking situation around the school and this is before everyone returns! I believe it is becoming a significant risk to the safety of our children. I appreciate parking near school is difficult. I would encourage you to either walk or park a little further from school to enable the near vicinity of the school to have less parked cars.

## **Returning emotions**

We are very excited to welcome all the children back. We have missed them and their happy faces. Some will be excited and ready to return, some will feel apprehensive and a bit anxious. Both emotions are natural. Please don't worry if your child expresses either one of these emotions. It is important they return, please reach out if we can support you. From 8 March it is in law that your child returns to school, I expect to see all children.

Whilst lockdown is approaching an end, we aren't quite there yet. The following strategies from my weekend newspaper reading were useful to me.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/feb/27/seven-ways-to-cope-until-the-end-of-lockdown>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mg' or similar, located at the bottom left of the page.