

Ardcoil Mhuire - Frequently Asked Questions

Thank you to everyone who sent in their queries and therefore assisted us in compiling a comprehensive yet, practical list of queries and concerns. We are working hard in the background to implement strategies to ensure a safe return to school for all. These strategies are underpinned by parental, student and staff support. We appreciate that this will be a very different return to school, but we are confident that we can and will be able to provide the excellent education that we are well known for. This is a time of great change and we may not have all the answers to your queries but if we work together, we will be better able to have a safe return to school for all students and staff.

Student: Will we have access to our lockers?

No, not initially. Each student will be allocated a 'Homeroom'. This is where they will store their books and materials. Each year will operate within a group of rooms. It is envisaged that they will only bring essential materials to classes in specialist rooms. We are working with our team of teachers to ensure that materials are kept to a minimum and that optimum use is made of our Virtual Learning environment Microsoft Teams. We are not ruling out lockers this year, but we will only allow the use of same if we are confident that they can be used safely.

Parent: Will students have to wear a mask?

Yes. As per the updated guidelines, we are insisting that all students must wear a mask indoors. If students have a health or learning issue that does not permit the use of a mask, please contact us. It is imperative that every effort is made to keep students safe. Please complete the form below if this effects your child. <https://tinyurl.com/y3lyxazr>

Parent: What procedures will be in place to protect students against Covid 19?

We are fully implementing the DES Return to School Policy Document. On top of these measures, we have implemented the following strategies to reduce the risk of an outbreak.

- ⇒ Three separate entrances and exits to facilitate social distancing (see plan)**
- ⇒ Student-Based Classrooms/ Pods**
- ⇒ Timetable Review to reduce class size and movements**

- ⇒ **One Way System throughout the school building**
- ⇒ **Staggered Recreation Time**
- ⇒ **Additional supervision for recreation times**
- ⇒ **Reconfiguration of classrooms to increase available space.**
- ⇒ **Additional storage procured to reduce clutter in classrooms**
- ⇒ **Hand Sanitisation Stations in all rooms and throughout the school campus**
- ⇒ **Indoor and outdoor signage to remind students of new procedures.**
- ⇒ **Wifi is being installed throughout the building to facilitate greater eLearning opportunities.**
- ⇒ **Devices available for students and teachers**
- ⇒ **Appointment of 2 Lead Worker Representatives to monitor and support the implementation of the policy.**
- ⇒ **Staff / Student Information Sessions at start of new term**
- ⇒ **Staff Teams Meeting to gather ideas and strategies**
- ⇒ **Parent Information Letter**
- ⇒ **Parent Concerns / Questions/ FAQ Form distributed**
- ⇒ **Student health concerns Form distributed**
- ⇒ **An enhanced cleaning and sanitisation programme has been developed**

Student: What date will we be returning to school:

Return to School Dates:

28th August 2020 – Staff Development and Planning

31st August 2020 – Staff Development and Planning

1st September 2020 – Staff Development and Planning

2nd September 2020 – 1st Year Induction (08:55 – 13:10)

3rd September 2020 – 1st and 6th Year Students (08:55 – 15:50)

4th September 2020 – 1st, 5th, 6th Year and 7A Students (08:55 – 13:10)

7th September 2020 – 1st, 3rd, 5th, 6th Year and 7A Students (08:55 – 15:50)

8th September 2020 – All Students Return including TY and LCA.

Student: Will lunch breaks be staggered?

Yes. We have divided the school into 2 groups; Group A and Group B

Group A

1st, 3rd, LCA1 and 5th Year

Break: 10:15- 10:30

Lunch: 13:10 – 13:50

Group B

2nd, TY, LCA2 and 6th Year

Break: 10:55 – 11:10

Lunch: 13:50 – 14:30

Parent: How will students be kept apart at break and lunch time?

By staggering our recreation times, we are halving the number of students in the communal areas at that time. Students will be provided with a comprehensive induction with regards to their responsibility to stay apart to keep themselves and others safe. We have additional supervision in place also, but it is essential that students themselves remain cognisant of the need to keep social distance from others.

Parents: Will students with Additional Needs be supported?

Yes. Our SEN team look forward to working with all students to support them in reaching their potential. Initially this support will centre around settling back into school routines and helping them to integrate with their classmates.

Parent: Will students be able to take off their masks in class as my daughter finds it very claustrophobic?

The wearing of masks is a challenge for us all, but it is for the safety of everyone that we must insist that masks are worn indoors. We are working with our wellbeing teachers to organise wellbeing breaks for students during the day where they can go outside, remove their mask and get some fresh air.

Parental support is essential for the successful implementation of the return to school policy. It is important that you encourage your daughter to maintain a safe social distance and to adhere to all procedures. This is a pandemic and we must work together to keep your child and all of our community safe.

Student: Will we get a timetable for our lessons on the first day?

Yes. Each child will receive their timetable and the new break and lunch and operational arrangements will be explained in full.

Parent: Will the pupils return to school full time?

Yes, as per the framework, we are preparing for a full return to school. Our team will be working with students to ensure that all classes are setup online in the event that a return to eLearning is necessary due to local or regional lockdowns.

Parent: What do my students need for the school year starting back?

Students will require their textbooks and stationery. It may be a good idea to wait and get a list of required copies and materials from teachers as each teacher will have their own preferences. Teachers are working to reduce the amount of materials required for each subject.

Student: How will exam students be supported?

We are very fortunate to have excellent teachers in Ardscoil Mhuire who consistently go above and beyond to prepare their students for state exams. This preparation continued during the lockdown with resources being provided online. While this is not the same as face-to-face teaching, it was imperative for students to maintain their focus during the lockdown.

The State Exams Commission have also indicated that the state examinations for 2021 will have increased choices for students. Our staff will work with their classes in each subject to prepare them for same.

Each teacher is being provided with a device to ensure that all resources are available to them in the event of a further school closure. While we hope this doesn't become a reality, it is important to be prepared for same. Any online teaching will take place using the Microsoft Teams Portal.

Parent: What type of face mask should we buy?

We ask that you refer to the [hse.ie](https://www.hse.ie) website where they give a comprehensive review of how to best wear face coverings and masks. Homemade or reusable masks are perfect and there is absolutely no need to buy expensive coverings.

Parent: How will the girls manage PE wearing masks?

We hope that PE can run as normal. We are awaiting guidance in relation to the wearing of masks for PE. It is hoped that PE can be facilitated outdoors as much as possible. Students must wear their PE gear to school on the day that they have PE scheduled. They must wear their school jumper over their PE gear. Changing facilities will not be available.

Parent: Where will they store their face mask when not in use?

All students should bring a small plastic sandwich bag for the hygienic storage of face masks when not in use.

Parent: What happens if my daughter is sick and I have to come to pick her up?

In the event that your daughter has symptoms of Covid-19, they will be brought to the isolation room in line with procedures. You will be contacted and requested to bring her home as promptly as possible.

You will be phoned by the office to come and pick her up. When you arrive, you must phone the school phone and indicate that you are outside. You will be invited to come up to the school and enter via the left-hand door which is exclusively for visitors. Inside this door, there is a small foyer that will have a sign-out book. Your child will then come out and meet you. We ask that you do not come through the second door unless invited by one of our team. Visits to the school should be kept to a minimum.

Student: What happens if a student does not follow the rules in relation to face coverings?

Face coverings and social distancing are an integral part of life in Ireland at present. Students who fail to comply will be sanctioned using our code of behaviour. Failure to comply with these guidelines is considered a very serious offence as it is potentially putting students at risk of contracting the virus. Parents will be contacted and requested to bring the child home.

Student: Will we be returning to online teaching?

It is our hope that school can take place in a face to face setting. In the event of a return to distance learning, it is imperative that students have access to a device and participate in their lessons as provided by their teachers. It is our intention that all lessons will be taught according to their timetable.

Parent: If I keep my child at home with a head cold or other illness, will they be able to access classes?

It is a major logistical challenge to facilitate classes online. For this reason, initially classes will only be streamed in the event that all students in a particular lesson cannot fit in the designated room. This may only be a case for a very small number of students.

We will be constantly reviewing the situation and will provide additional clarification if necessary. If your child is missing, we suggest that they contact their teacher via email to catch up on the material missed.

Will hot meals still be provided?

We are working with our lunch provider Dolans again this year. However, for 2020/2021 all orders must be placed on the Centra App. This app is pre-loaded with our healthy menu and allows parents to purchase and pay for their daughter's food online. This will irradiate the need for students to queue to order food. Their food will be delivered to the school before their designated lunch time. If your child is in Group A, please choose the 13:00 slot and if your child is in Group B, please choose the 13:30 slot. We have an information sheet available on our app to assist you with the use of this APP.

Please see information sheet attached.

Parent: What should I do if my child is a little off, but I know it's not COVID?

If your child displays any one of the symptoms of COVID then you must keep your child at home and consult your GP. Information about the symptoms of COVID may be found here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/472f64-covid-19-coronavirus-guidance-and-advice/#symptoms>

Parent: Does my child need to bring their own hand sanitiser/mask/gloves?

Your child should bring their own mask. Further guidance on this is provided in this document.

While we will have approximately 60 hand sanitising dispensers in the school, we advise each child brings in their own small bottle of hand sanitiser which they should have in their possession at all times.

Your child may not bring gloves as we have been advised that these pose a potential source of infection for other people when discarded. If hands are washed/sanitised this provides optimal protection.

Parent: What if I want to drop off something to my daughter, maybe she forgot her lunch?

As you know, we need to keep contacts to a minimum to help protect everyone from the virus. If you do need to visit the school to drop off something, you must phone the office on 0909642206 from your car. You will then be invited to come up to the main entrance and sanitise your hands. You must wear a mask. Inside the visitor's door (left hand side) there will be a number of plastic boxes. You will be asked to place your child's belongings in a prescribed box. You must not enter the second door into the main school building. The child will then be asked to collect this at the next break/ lunch. We really do need to keep visits like this to a minimum. Perhaps you could order the child's lunch using the Centra App if that was appropriate.

Student: How will we recognise our teachers/ friends if we are wearing masks?

All teachers will wear a name tag for the first few weeks. We will also be asking first year students to wear a name tag until you get to know everyone. It is extremely important that you build up positive relationships with the girls in your year regardless of the pandemic.

Student: Are there designated doors for coming in now?

Yes, and we will let you know this during your induction. There will be 3 student entrances and exits which will be clearly sign posted. It is essential that you follow the one way system once inside the building. Please see the plan attached.

Parent: What will you do if you have a suspected case of COVID?

The Department of Education & Skills has mandated the following procedure to be used:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/48037-dealing-with-a-suspected-case-of-covid-19-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

We have comprehensive plan in place in the event that a child develops symptoms during the day.

Parent: What arrangements are in place for cleaning?

The Department has set out the requirements here:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e30d9-hygiene-and-cleaning-in-schools-covid-19-response-plan-for-safe-reopening-of-schools/>

The school has put in place arrangements with the contract cleaners and with the caretaking staff to ensure that the cleaning arrangements are fully compliant with the public health advice. Also, the school has purchased additional sanitising devices that will help ensure surfaces are hygienic.

Arrangements for ensuring work surfaces are sanitised will be shared with students during their induction on return to school.

Student: What do I do if I feel unwell?

Tell your teacher immediately. You must continue to wear your mask. Avoid touching surfaces, objects or anyone else. If you cough or sneeze you should cover your nose/mouth with a tissue and put this in the bin after using it. Your parents/guardians will be called and, if necessary, your doctor will be called, or the emergency services, as appropriate.

Parent: Is there guidance on the use of face coverings?

Yes. You should read and become familiar with the information at the link below and ask your child to do the same.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

Student: Will we all be using the same entrances?

No. Each year has been designated an entry point to reduce congestion and provide space for hand sanitisation.

Please see map attached. You are asked to familiarise yourself with this and ensure that you only use your designated entrance.

Student: What do we do with our mobile phones if we move to a specialist room?

We strongly advise all students to leave their mobile phone at home. If necessary, the office will call a parent/guardian to deliver an urgent message.

The school will not be responsible for the loss of any device.

Parent: Will the classrooms be well ventilated?

Yes. We are asking that a window is left ajar during lessons. This may lead to learning spaces being a little colder than we would like. Students are encouraged to wear a long-sleeved garment, eg. Skins to keep them warm. Full school uniform must be worn in class at all times.