

20th August 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

I hope that you are enjoying the summer and that you and your family are remaining safe and well.

I wrote on the 12th August advising I would give further information once DENI provided details in relation to COVID-19 regulations for 2021-22. DENI published its guidance on Wednesday 18th August. You can access the full document through the DENI website or by following the link <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-schools-and-educational-settings-northern-ireland>

While we are considering the full implications of this guidance for the College, there is a number of points which I would like to bring to your attention at this stage for the beginning of the new school year.

Public health guidance with respect to **social distancing** of 2 metres remains in place between adults, and as far as possible between adults and pupils within the College. Social distancing guidance applies across all areas of the school estate, both indoors and outdoors.

Although the use of **formal bubbles** is no longer required in schools, the need to support effective contact tracing means that we will continue to maintain year group bubbles into the start of the new term. Pupils will continue to be encouraged to move around outdoors where possible.

The guidance states that it is strongly recommended that post-primary pupils wear a **face covering** at all times when inside school buildings, including classrooms, corridors and confined communal spaces such as toilet areas. The Executive agreed on the 12th August that this requirement would, subject to review, apply until the 8th October.

It is mandatory for all post-primary school age pupils to wear a **face covering on all public and school transport** unless they have a reasonable excuse not to. We remain aware that some persons (including children) are exempt from wearing face coverings. If your son falls into this category, then a medical letter must be provided to his Form Teacher/SWO.

Pupils will be provided with **year group badges** which help ensure that year groups remain together. Pupils must wear these badges on the lapel of their blazer at all times.

Pupil drop off and collection for those travelling by car remains in place from the Sports Pavilion. Separate entrances for junior and senior pupils also remain in operation.

Personal hand and respiratory hygiene measures remain a fundamental aspect of preventing transmission of the virus and we will facilitate good practice including providing hand sanitiser at key areas including entry and exit points, and request all pupils to carry their own hand sanitiser, tissues and face coverings.

While **St. Colman's school uniform** should be worn at all other times, **full College PE uniform** must be worn on days when your son has PE; we appreciate your support with this.

Further details in relation to **extra-curricular activities** will follow in due course.

Lateral Flow Device (LFD) testing in schools is available to all College staff and pupils. To date, pupils in years 8-14 have been offered to participate in the LFD testing programme. This testing is voluntary, with parental consent required for children under 16 years and agreement from pupils over 16 years required. I have attached to this letter, a previously issued letter and consent form which can be returned to your son's tutor at the start of the term.

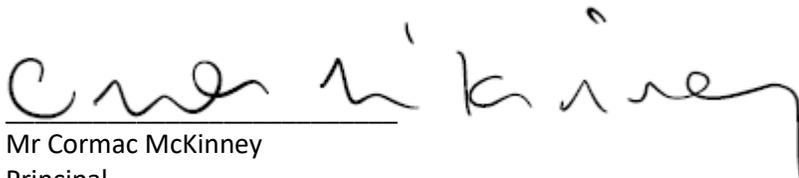
You are reminded that if anyone displays **symptoms of COVID-19**, they, and any members of their household within the school setting, must be sent home and advised to follow PHA guidance for households with a possible COVID-19 infection. The College has specific requirements to keep a full record of such actions and request that a parent, guardian record their acknowledgement of this action. You are asked to note that from the 16th August, close contact guidance changed in Northern Ireland.

The Department guidance notes that if an individual child or a small number of pupils within a class or across a year group have to self-isolate for a designated period due to COVID-19, parents/guardians should talk directly to the College about provision of education materials. The College will support pupils as much as possible, however, because in these circumstances teachers will be continuing to teach all classes during the school day, expectations must be realistic. The College will only employ **remote learning** in circumstances where a class or group of pupils are required to self-isolate because of COVID-19, or in the event the school has to close due to COVID-19.

In short, while there is some reduction to the restrictions, many of the arrangements which were in place last term will remain. As a school community, we will continue to strive to do the best that we can to keep all members of the College family safe. Covid-19 remains an issue which we have to manage; your support and encouragement is greatly appreciated.

Finally, I would like to draw to the attention of senior pupils that a '**Big Jab Weekend**' has been announced for this Saturday and Sunday, to give people even more opportunities to get vaccinated against COVID-19. The promotion on 21/22 August will see Northern Ireland's mass vaccination centres offer walk-in first jabs for all adult age groups.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cormac McKinney', written over a horizontal line.

Mr Cormac McKinney
Principal