

Dear all,

I hope you and your families have been enjoying a lovely mid term break.

As you will have heard this week, the Government has accepted the recommendations of the NPHE to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask-wearing and physical distancing in schools. Therefore, on our return to school tomorrow staff and students will no longer be required to wear masks or face coverings.

If members of staff or students wish to continue wearing face masks or coverings, they may do so. It is important that those who wish to continue to wear masks or face coverings feel comfortable in doing so and that we all, as a school community, remain supportive and mindful of the differing situations of our colleagues, our students and families.

So, your sons and daughters are welcome to continue to wear masks if that makes them feel more comfortable. We will continue to have a limited supply of masks available from the main office for students who require one in the course of the school day.

Students will continue to be encouraged by teachers to sanitise their desks before and after use and to use the provided hand sanitiser at every opportunity.

With the lifting of the limit on student numbers in classrooms and the requirement to physically distance, the use of Learning Hubs will be phased out in the next couple of days until the classrooms have been reconfigured. This presents a most welcome return to in-class teaching and learning for all students.

Advice relating to COVID-19 Symptoms, Cases and Close Contacts:

The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains – for students and staff alike. 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. If infection is not introduced, it cannot be spread. With effect from Monday, 28 February, the following advice applies in relation to COVID-19 symptoms, cases and close contacts

:<https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/60083-covid-19-reframing-the-challenge-continuing-our-recovery-reconnecting/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/0fc0d-government-announces-that-most-of-the-public-health-measures-currently-in-place-can-be-removed/>

Critical components of the collective response in relation to COVID-19 continue to apply including **self-isolation if symptomatic** (even if fully vaccinated/boosted). Continued use of good infection prevention and control measures such as hand washing, respiratory hygiene, and ventilation is advised. The Hepa Filters in every classroom will remain in use to monitor the air quality on an ongoing basis.

Students should continue to enter and leave the building via their year group doors as normal. All classes begin at 8.45am and all year groups will finish p9 at 3.55pm

The one way system of moving around the school will also be retained, as indeed it predates the COVID mitigation arrangements.

All students will be going to break 11.25am -11.35am tomorrow morning and to lunch at 12.55pm- 13.55pm. We will ask them to continue to use their dedicated areas outside.

We will commence assemblies for 1st, 2nd, 3rd, TY, 5th and 6th Year one day each week - days will be confirmed with the year heads on our return to school this week. Assemblies will be a new experience for our 1st and 2nd years but tutors and Year Heads will explain the new routine to the students in advance.

It will take a number of days for the PE changing rooms to be made accessible again and prepared for use by students. So, for the time being, students will continue to be permitted to wear PE gear, under their school jacket, on timetabled PE days. Arrangements for the remainder of the year will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

We have managed as a school community of staff, students and you,our families, to provide stability for our young people throughout these past two years despite the enormous challenges that the pandemic presented to our daily lives, and familiar working routines. In order to maintain a sense of stability throughout these immediate changes and onwards towards the end of the school year, I would ask you to encourage your son or daughter to speak with their Tutor or any member of staff if they have any questions or concerns around these changes or any other aspect of school life in the weeks ahead.

To those students in 3rd and 6th year, our State Examination candidates, the entire staff would like to extend our congratulations for the way in which you approached the recent Mock Examinations and conducted yourselves throughout. We look forward to supporting you in the remaining weeks leading to your Oral and Practical Examinations and thereafter the written examinations in June. If you continue to work to the best of your ability you can be sure that you will be proud of your achievements in August/ September 2022.

Our thanks too go to our TY students for their work during their recent and very successful Community Care placements before the mid term break; and to the group who returned today from the ski trip to Sestrieres all of whom behaved impeccably. We're proud of the work of all PCS students and staff and look forward to a very positive and productive term ahead.

Kind Regards,

Helen Dargan
Principal

