



Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021

Dear Parents/Carers and Students,

I hope this letter finds you well. Unfortunately, the fight against COVID-19 has had, and will continue for some time to have, profound implications for maintaining the safety of our society. As you are aware a number of mitigations were put in place in the last academic year to try and keep our community safe from catching and spreading COVID-19. These mitigations will remain and continue to be implemented at Breda Academy to ensure a safe restart for all our students and staff.

*'Coronavirus (COVID-19): Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland'* published by the Department of Education (DE) on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August provides a framework for the initial restart of schools. This guidance will be reviewed regularly and amended in line with changes to Public Health Agency advice. I acknowledge that there will be students and parents/carers who may feel a level of anxiety around the return to school after the summer break and it is important that we work together to take all steps possible to keep the school a safe environment for all in our community. However, schools cannot deliver this successful return and safe environment alone – we will need your ongoing cooperation and support.

#### **School building**

- All areas of the school building have been given an extensive clean during the summer break and the school continues to be cleaned daily in preparation for the return of students.
- Signage has been put in place in toilets to remind students to wash their hands and in all corridors to reinforce a 'keep left' policy when moving between lessons. There will also be a one-way system introduced in certain areas of the school to minimise students congregating in corridors.
- There will be a daily end of day cleaning service of school facilities and regular ongoing daily cleaning of touch points around the school and student bathrooms.

#### **Start and end of the school day**

- The start and finish times of the school day will remain unchanged.
- Due to the varying arrival and pick-up times at school of the school and public buses, students will arrive and leave at different times allowing for a staggered, controlled and calm entry and exit of the school building. This will alleviate any potential for congestion and large gatherings of students.

#### **Uniform and PE kit**

- Students are required to wear full school uniform, wear their full PE kit for PE lessons and carry a school bag for their stationery and learning materials.
- Only Years 8, 9 and 10 students will be allowed to wear their PE kit to school on a day when they have a PE lesson. A school day which contains timetabled PE lessons is not a non-uniform day, it is a PE kit day. This means that students who have PE lessons but are unable to participate (e.g. due to injury) must wear their full school uniform on that day.
- Years 11 and 12 must bring their PE kit with them to school on a day when they have a PE lesson and change as normal in our changing rooms.



### **Travelling to and from school**

- Students will be able to travel to and from school using Translink school bus and public bus routes and services.
- It continues to be mandatory for all post-primary aged students to wear a face covering on both public transport and school transport services.
- Parents and carers will not be permitted to enter the school building beyond our reception area unless specifically invited to do so.

### **Face Masks**

- All students must wear a face mask at all times when inside the school building, including classrooms, corridors and confined communal spaces such as toilet spaces.
- This is subject to review by the NI Executive and will apply until Friday 8<sup>th</sup> October at the earliest.
- Students may only take their face mask off when they are eating in the canteen and assembly hall at breaktime and lunchtime, when they are outside of the school buildings at breaktime and lunchtime and when they are taking part in PE activities outside.
- It is the responsibility of a parent/carer to provide their child with a face mask for use during travel and when in school (visors are not permitted).
- If your child is exempt from wearing a face mask please contact the Vice-Principal Mrs Scott by email at [gscott838@c2kni.net](mailto:gscott838@c2kni.net) as a matter of urgency and by Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September at the latest.

### **Student hygiene practices**

- Students will wash their hands with lukewarm water and soap immediately as they arrive at school and then regularly throughout the school day.
- Existing bathroom facilities will be used and washing stations will also be set up in entry/exit locations of the school and it will be the responsibility of each student to wash their hands. Disposable paper towels will be used for hand drying.
- Students will also be told and encouraged to use good respiratory hygiene practices of 'catch it, bin it, kill it' and discouraged from touching their eyes, face, nose and mouth. They will be shown how to cough into their elbow if they don't have a tissue and shown how to cough into a tissue and then dispose safely of it into the nearest bin.
- All classrooms will have a supply of tissues and a bin. I would also encourage all students to carry a small bottle of hand sanitiser and a packet of tissues for their own use.

### **Curriculum**

- All students in each year group will follow a full curriculum timetable including practical subjects.
- The opening of classroom doors and windows will also be encouraged to increase natural ventilation and to reduce contact with door handles.

### **Social distancing**

- Social distancing rules have been relaxed for students.
- However, social distancing of 2 metres will remain in place between adults and as far as possible between adults and students.
- The NI Executive decided that from Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August, schools are no longer required to operate a system of formal protective bubbles.



### **Attendance at School**

- All students are expected to attend school on a full-time basis.
- However, a student who develops symptoms of COVID-19 must stay at home and they must not attend school until they have taken and received the result of a PCR test.
- If the PCR test is positive then they must stay at home for 10 days and inform the school Principal as soon as possible by telephone on 028 90645374 and/or by email at [contact@breda.academy](mailto:contact@breda.academy)
- If the PCR test is negative, then the student should return to school.

### **Self-isolating if you are identified as a Close Contact**

- Self-isolation guidance for students has changed for the new school year and the attached **Public Health Agency Flowchart** should be read carefully by all parents and carers.
- Students will not have to self-isolate after coming into contact with a coronavirus case if they have tested positive for the virus themselves within the previous 90 days.
- If a student is a close contact but has not had a positive test in the previous 90 days, they are advised to self-isolate until they have taken a PCR test.
- PCR Testing is currently conducted at the SSE, Odyssey Car Park drive-through site (Belfast BT3 9QQ).
- The testing centre is open seven days a week 09:00 – 17:30pm.
- Booking can be made for morning test slots from 6pm the previous day. Afternoon booking slots are released at 10am on the day of testing.
- The weblink for booking online is- <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- If you need help booking a test, or have any questions, telephone the free phone number 119.
- If the PCR test is positive the student must self-isolate for 10 days from the onset of any symptoms or, if they have no symptoms, for 10 days from the test result.
- If the first PCR test is negative, then the student can return to school and does not have to self-isolate for 10 days. However, a second test must be booked on day 8 and if this test is positive the student must self-isolate for 10 days from the date of this second test.

### **COVID-19 Symptoms while in school**

If a student develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, they should inform a member of staff and report to the school office immediately. Covid-19 symptoms can be:

- a new, continuous cough or
- a high temperature/fever or
- anosmia (a loss or a change in your normal sense of smell, which can also affect your sense of taste),

The first aider will then assess them and take their temperature with an infrared temperature thermometer. If the student's temperature and condition is in line with symptoms of Covid-19 their parent/carer will be contacted immediately to collect their child from school and they will be advised to follow the PHA guidance for households.



### **Expectations of Students**

- A welcome back to school assembly will be given to all students on their first day in school.
- It is expected that all students will return to school with a mature and responsible attitude regarding the serious nature and prevention of catching and spreading Covid-19 and with the appropriate focus and behaviour for learning.
- If a student flouts or ignores the safety arrangements and rules put in place to prevent the catching and spreading of COVID-19, such as, wilfully refusing to adhere to safety arrangements and/or deliberately coughing or spitting at students or staff, this will mean they will be sanctioned, up to and including exclusion from school.

We are very much looking forward to welcoming our students back to Breda Academy. I would like to thank you for your patience and understanding in what has been a challenging time. I would very much appreciate your continued support as we move forward together and it will be essential that we work together to ensure that we can keep the school and wider community as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely

**Mr P Perry - Acting Principal**