



Dear Parents,

We hope you had an enjoyable and safe summer. We are delighted to inform you that Ballyheane N.S will re-open as scheduled on Thursday, 27th August, with a full return for all pupils. Our new Junior Infants are invited into school on Wednesday, 26th August for an induction morning from 10am to 12noon.

However, due to Covid-19, there have been a number of changes made within our school. Our "Return to School Plan" has been guided by the Roadmap published by the Department of Education and Skills. Please note, that this plan may change as guidance from the relevant Government Departments is received as the school year progresses.

We appreciate your support as we try to safely re-open our school. Please be patient as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year.

It is imperative that all parents adhere to the plan as outlined below.

Drop-off in the mornings

- The school will open to receive children from 8.55am (to 9.10am).
- It is imperative that no child is on school grounds before 8.55am.
- Children from Junior Infants – 2nd class will enter school grounds through the stile from the church carpark. (Entry Point A)
- 3rd - 6th class children will enter school grounds through the side gate near the front of the church .(Entry Point B)
- Children who travel by bus will enter school grounds via the main gate at the front of the school. (Entry Point C)

(Reference Appendix 1 at the end of this document to view entry/exit points)

Once on school grounds children will enter the school building in three designated entrances where their class teacher will be awaiting their arrival. There will be no congregating on the yard.

While we will be delighted to see each other again, hand shaking and hugging will not be allowed.



- Children from Junior Infants – 2nd class will enter the school building through the main front door. 3rd and 4th class will enter the building through the PE hall door that opens onto the playground. Children from 5th and 6th class will enter the school through the back door at Ms. Kelly's classroom.
- Upon arrival in the school building children will go straight to their classroom sanitising on the way in. (There will be sanitation stations at each entrance and in each classroom)

Where practical, all internal doors will be left open to minimise hand contact with common surfaces.

Collection at 1.50pm and 2.50pm

- School will finish at 1.50pm for Junior and Senior Infants and at 2.50pm for 1st to 6th class.
- The children will depart via their entrance door and exit point. The children from Junior and Senior Infants will be collected from the stile.(Entry point A). We reiterate that a **2metre distance** must be observed by all adults. **Face masks** should also be worn.
- We ask parents from 1st to 6th class children to remain in their car/carpark if possible. Movement of your child from school grounds will be closely supervised by a class teacher in line with Department of Education Guidelines.

Physical Distancing in the Classroom ...Bubbles and Pods

We are currently working on upgrading our procedures and routines within the school to ensure that there is as much Physical Distancing as is possible in our building. Thankfully, we can facilitate all children being seated at 1metre distancing from 3rd to 6th class. As per Department of Education and Skills Guidelines, children from junior infants to 2nd class are not required to social distance.

Physical Distancing will be achieved in two ways: -

Increasing Separation. This will be achieved by re-configuring within the classrooms to maximise physical distancing. Each classroom will be referred to as a bubble and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles. Within the bubbles, children will be organised into pods (3rd to 6th). A pod is a group of children who will sit together and who will stay in their pod while in the bubble, or classroom.



Decreasing Interaction. This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There will be designated routes for each classroom (bubble!) to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms at break time. Bubbles will have different break times and designated yard spaces in the playground.

Visitors to School

An **appointment** must be made in advance by parents and visitors to access the school building. A **contact tracing log** will be kept of all visitors.

Parents need to contact the school in advance by email or telephone in the event that they need to collect early. Parents will not be allowed to drop items, for example lunch, forgotten books etc.. to their child's classroom. They must contact the school via email or phone and leave the item in a designated place in a sealed bag/box.

Parents are asked to adhere to the 2metre distance and the wearing of a face mask when meeting with a member of staff.

What Happens if a Child is Sick or there is a suspected case of Covid-19

"It is critical that people stay at home if unwell" (Reopening our schools, the Roadmap for the full return to school p.11)

- Children should not come to school sick. Please keep your child at home if they have any of the following symptoms:
 - Cough
 - High temperature
 - Sore throat
 - Breathing difficulties
 - Shortness of breath
 - Headaches
 - Loss or change in sense of taste and smell (as per HAS/NPHET/WHO guidelines)

If you are in doubt whether or not to send your child to school, please err on the side of caution.

- In the event that a child becomes sick at school as a suspected case of Covid-19, they will be required to wear a disposable mask provided by the school and will be isolated in the designated isolation area in the school. A distance of 2m will be maintained at all times.



- Parents will be contacted and asked to collect their child and contact their GP (Parents/Guardians must be contactable at all times during the school day)
- If necessary the HSE will be contacted to provide further guidance to deal with the incident

Cleaning Regime

- A strict cleaning regime will be implemented.
- Considerable removal and purchase of new furniture and resources is being undertaken to allow for this stricter cleaning regime.
- We have purchased electrostatic foggers which are highly effective and efficient in a school context. Each class teacher will have one. It is environmentally friendly, safe and touch dry within minutes. This will be used to sanitise in addition to the regular cleaning. Fogging will not be carried out in the room when children are present.
- Windows will be open as much as possible to allow air to circulate.
- Each staff member will also have additional cleaning duties during the course of the day.

School Uniforms/Tracksuits

We will follow our normal practice in relation to school uniforms and tracksuits. Uniforms should be worn every day, except on P.E days (when the school tracksuit is to be worn), or when otherwise requested by teachers. P.E days will be confirmed on return to school.

Parents who have ordered school tracksuit tops from Elverys will be notified via text when their top is ready for collection in Elverys, Castlebar.

As a school, we strongly advise that children should wear their school uniforms or tracksuits only for school-related activities. They should be taken off straight after the child arrives home from school for the day.

PPE

- Staff members are not required to wear PPE. However, for a limited number of staff, PPE will be used occasionally due to the nature of certain work activities or work areas. These might include roles such as:
 - ✚ Assisting with intimate care needs, for example first aid
 - ✚ One to one teaching
 - ✚ Where a suspected case of Covid -19 is identified while the school is in operation. In this situation the pupil and teacher will both be required to wear a disposable mask.

Scoil Mhuire



Phone: 094 903 0803
Email: ballyheanens@gmail.com

*Ballyheane,
Castlebar,
Co. Mayo.*

*Beal Atha hEin,
Caislean a'Bharraigh,
Co. Mhaigh Eo.*

Curricular Changes

It is of primary importance that pupils can settle happily back into school and that they can pick up and progress in their learning, experiencing as full and as enjoyable a curriculum as possible.

- The month of September will largely be devoted to revising various aspects of the curriculum which need to be revisited from the last term in their previous class.
- There will be a strong emphasis placed on wellbeing as your child readjusts to a classroom context and all it entails. There will be no homework given to children for the first few weeks of September so children won't need to bring home their school bag, books etc..
- Children will be reminded about the importance of handwashing, respiratory etiquette etc.. on a regular basis.
- In the case of a shut down we will communicate with you via text and email. It is very important that we have **your correct email address on our school system**. Please forward the email address you wish to be used for school communication purposes to ballyheanens@gmail.com
- Children will also be using the "Seesaw" App next year. When it is up and running, the respective class teachers will be in contact with you.

We hope that this "Return to School Plan" has provided you with some degree of clarity regarding the return of your child to school on Thursday, 27th August for our new school year. We will keep you updated as new guidelines and recommendations continue to be issued from the Department of Education / H.S.E / NPHET.

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. This will be achieved by all of us working towards this common goal.

Kind regards,

Anne-Marie Kelly & Staff of Ballyheane N.S

Scoil Mhuire



Phone: 094 903 0803
Email: ballyheanens@gmail.com

Ballyheane,
Castlebar,
Co. Mayo.

Beal Atha hEin,
Caislean a'Bharraigh,
Co. Mhaigh Eo.

Appendix 1: School Entry / Exit Locations

