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Rathfriland High School

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RATHFRILAND, NEWRY
CO. DOWN, BT34 5PZ

Principal: Mr I Matthews, MEd., BEd.(Hons), PQH (NI)

1st January 2021,

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I trust that you are keeping well and hope that despite the continuing challenges posed by Covid, you were able to enjoy the Christmas holidays and time with family.

Can I also take this opportunity to wish each of you a very Happy New Year.

As you may be aware, the Executive announced a number of changes yesterday relating to the planned return to school for all pupils in N. Ireland.

I received this guidance yesterday evening, with further clarification arriving this afternoon. I want to provide clarity on how the revised guidance impacts on pupils in Rathfriland High and allow parents to plan accordingly. Please find below a summary of the key points which will apply to your child / children between Monday 4th January and Friday 29th January (subject to further changes in guidance).

Key Points

Staff Development Day – Monday 4 th January	No change, pupils should not attend school.
Tuesday 5 th January – planned first day of Term 2	Staff preparation for online learning – pupils should not attend school.
Wednesday 6 th January – Friday 8 th January	Pupils in Years 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 will be taught remotely using online learning platforms or existing resources. (Except Year 12 on 7 th and 8 th January)
Thursday 7 th January and Friday 8 th January	<p>Pupils in Year 12 only should attend school for face to face learning in English and Mathematics ahead of GCSE examinations in week beginning 11th January:</p> <p>Monday 11th January M2/M3 Maths, 09.15 start</p> <p>Thursday 14th January English Unit 4, 09.15 start</p> <p>All other pupils should remain at home and engage with remote learning.</p>
'RHS Online Learning Grid'	Parents will receive a grid detailing work available in each subject for all year groups, commencing Wednesday 6 th January. This will allow parents to support their children during remote learning. The document will be sent via the SIMS Parent App.

Week beginning 11 th January	<p>Year 12 pupils should attend school for face to face learning and teaching.</p> <p>Pupils in Year 8, 9, 10 and 11 should remain at home and engage with remote learning materials.</p> <p>These arrangements will remain in place from 11th January to 29th January unless further guidance is issued.</p>
School Transport	<p>School transport will operate as normal for Year 12 pupils travelling to school from Thursday 7th January.</p> <p>Year 12 pupils must wear a face covering on all school transport (unless medically exempt).</p>
School Meals	<p>School Meals will be available for Year 12 pupils on Thursday 7th and Friday 8th January and each day from Monday 11th January – Friday 29th January. Pupils may use the canteen facilities (grab and go) or bring a packed lunch. As usual, pupils will not be permitted to leave school at lunchtime unless in possession of a home lunch pass.</p>
Free School Meals	<p>Pupils in receipt of Free School Meals will receive a direct payment week beginning 11th January.</p>
Supervised Learning for vulnerable children and children of key workers	<p>Vulnerable children and children of Key workers can continue to attend school in January for supervised learning (please note this means provision of a facility to engage with remote learning under supervised conditions).</p> <p>Definitions of vulnerable and Key Worker Children are included at the end of this letter.</p> <p>Please note that parents of vulnerable or key workers' children who wish to avail of supervised learning should make such arrangements by contacting the school on 02840630374.</p>
Year 12 pupils	<p>Year 12 pupils attending school for revision sessions and face to face teaching must now wear face coverings in all settings, including the classroom (unless in possession of a medical exemption certificate).</p> <p>Increased social distancing measures from those that existed during term 1 will be in place, pupils must observe these procedures and follow relevant signage, instructions and designated areas for break and lunch.</p> <p>These procedures are in place for the safety of all pupils and staff and I encourage you to discuss the importance of abiding by the revised procedures with your child. Please be aware that any pupil refusing to adhere to the guidelines and therefore presenting an increased risk to other pupils and staff may be sent home.</p>
Year 12 exams	<p>English and Maths exams will be facilitated, in accordance with public health guidance and increased social distancing on 11th and 14th January.</p>
Illness or pupils displaying Covid symptoms	<p>Any Year 12 pupil displaying Covid symptoms should not attend school and should follow the guidance detailed on the school website.</p> <p>Pupils who are ill or are required to isolate should advise the school, this is particularly important if absence will impact on their ability to sit examinations.</p>

Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is 'on-the-edge' of receiving support from children's social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds

Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan>)

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Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (Jan 21)

(Please note that if one parent meets this definition then the child can attend school)

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

I am sure we all shared the hope that the New Year would see a return to some form of normality sooner rather than later. I am very conscious of the impact further disruption will have on our children but appreciate the need to implement these measures in the face of rising levels of infection and the prospect of increased transmission rates. Please be assured that as a school we will continue to provide support for your child academically and pastorally. School staff (not ill or isolating) will remain in school during this time to provide face to face learning for Year 12 pupils and support other pupils remotely. You can also contact us if you have concerns regarding your child.

I would ask that in line with current guidance, parents do not visit the school site unless absolutely necessary and having made an appointment.

I look forward to welcoming all our pupils back to school when circumstances permit and I will remain in contact with you as the situation continues to evolve.

Kind regards,

I Matthews

Principal

Rathfriland High School