

Sion Mills Primary School  
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11<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

In his announcement on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> August Mr Weir stated that,

**“Strict social distancing requirements between all pupils will be relaxed from a specific distance to the best spacing that can be achieved but will remain in place between adults and, as far as it is practicable between adults and pupils. Schools should continue to implement as much social distancing as is practical and where physical capacity and curriculum delivery permit.”**

This amendment allows schools open for all children in full classes.

However, prior to this statement and with only broad guidance issued in June 2020, we were expecting to operate a ‘Bubble’ system initially. (Further detailed guidance from DE is expected by Thursday of this week.) In the interim, we researched how children returned to full-time education in the Netherlands and other countries where schools successfully brought all the children back during May/June 2020. Initially classes returned to school using a phased approach. It is our plan in Sion Mills PS to operate the Bubble A and Bubble B approach, as described on the school website in early July, for 2 weeks beginning Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

The governors and staff believe this to be an appropriate approach due to the rationale outlined below.

Smaller groups (the Bubbles) will allow staff:

- Introduce children to new procedures and routines in a measured and calm fashion;
- Support and baseline children’s emotional understanding of returning to school following the sudden imposed halt to their normal routine in March 2020;
- Baseline and ascertain appropriate starting points for children’s learning following the sudden and imposed halt, as above.

In the Netherlands it was noted that after four weeks, due to this measured start to the return to school, staff, parents and most importantly children felt much more confident and **all** children returned to full-time lessons in June.

*The above, of course is subject to Public Health and DE guidance which would over-ride any plans outlined. We would keep you informed of these.*

In order to allow you time to plan, the attached Phased Restart document will outline the timetable for your child/ren.

**Key points:**

1. Primary 7 children will attend for two days in Week 1 and Week 2 as directed by Mr Weir in his June statement;
2. P1 – P6 children will attend for one day during Week 1 and 2 days during Week 2;
3. Due to Free School Meals vouchers being paid until 31<sup>st</sup> August ***school meals will not*** be available until 1<sup>st</sup> September;
4. Nursery children will receive information regarding their attendance from Miss McGeedy;
5. P1 children will have a shorter school day initially (parents will receive details from their child's teacher);
6. P3 children will stay until 3pm each day;
7. When detailed guidance is published by the Department of Education later this week, it will be posted on the school website specific to each class;
8. Children from P1 – P7 should enter the school grounds through their allocated entrance gate (see Phased Restart August 2020 document) where they will be met by school staff and directed to their classroom.

***During the phased restart we will not operate a staggered start/pick-up time due to smaller numbers of pupils attending school. Social distancing signage will be in place and we hope parents will adhere to this guidance as well as the PHA guidance of not gathering in groups. Activity will be monitored by school staff and may subject to change if health and safety of our school community is deemed of any concern.***

9. Due to Coronavirus restrictions parents **may not enter** the school grounds without an appointment.

If you have any queries regarding the above, please contact the school from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Kind regards,

Oonagh McNelis

## Phased Restart August 2020

Week 1 - beginning 24 <sup>th</sup> August				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
P7 Bubble A	P7 Bubble A		P7 Bubble B	P7 Bubble B
P4K Bubble A P1H Bubble A P1S Bubble A	P2K Bubble A P3L Bubble A P5/6C Bubble A	P5/6McG Bubble A P4K Bubble B P1H Bubble B P1S Bubble B	P5/6McG Bubble B	P2K Bubble B P3L Bubble B P5/6C Bubble B
<i>Apart from P7 all children will be in school for one day in Week 1</i>				
Week 2 - beginning 1 <sup>st</sup> September				
Bank Holiday	Bubble A	Bubble A	Bubble B	Bubble B
<i>All children, including P7 will be in school for 2 days in Week 2</i>				
Week 3 - beginning 7 <sup>th</sup> September				
All classes attend five days per week				

Bubble A	Bubble B
Boys and girls from P1 – P7 who <b>do not have</b> brothers or sisters at our school. Twins are also in this group.	Boys and girls from P1 – P7 who <b>do have</b> brothers or sisters at our school.

Please use the gates indicated below to enter school grounds, from 8.50am

GATE 1	GATE 2	GATE 3
P1S		P4K
P1H		P5/6C
P2K		P5/6McG
P3L		P7C