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Acting Principal Mr Paul Berne | BA Hons | PGCE

14th August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope our entire Edmund Rice College community remains safe and well as the Summer comes to an end. I hope that you have had the opportunity to unwind after an extremely challenging year. In my previous correspondence, I outlined that I would be in touch if the Department of Education guidance in relation to 'Education Restart' changed. As you are aware, the guidance has now changed, as the Education Minister announced that all pupils can return to school full time in September.

Based on this we have updated our risk assessments and made a number of adjustments to the guidance which was sent out to you via letter at the end of July. Whilst it is the intention for all pupils to return to school, we will continue with the induction process as previously detailed. This means that from Tuesday 25th August to Friday 4th September, pupils will come to school in half year groups, with each year being divided into two groups- A and B which were previously assigned. All pupils will undergo a period of induction which includes gaining an understanding of the new protocols and procedures, Google Classroom training and a pupil wellbeing audit. During Induction, there will only be 50% of pupils in at one time. This staggered start to the term at half capacity will enable Edmund Rice College to promote confidence in a full reopening of the school, allowing all students to feel at ease on their return. It will also enable us to determine any issues that need reflected on and reviewed before full school opening and allow us to put additional measures in place if needs be. If you are unsure of the group your child has been assigned to, please contact the school office. Pupils will only be in for their period of induction which is outlined in the attached booklet. Full school will resume for all pupils from Monday 7th September 2020, in line with government guidance.

I have enclosed a revised booklet outlining our school restart plan for August. This plan has been written in line with the renewed guidance from the Department of Education to provide you with all the information on how we intend to reopen Edmund Rice College. Please read the revised booklet thoroughly and discuss with your child as there are a number of changes from our normal routine. It must be noted that this guidance is subject to change based on Public Health Advice. Any changes will be communicated to you via email over the coming weeks so please ensure the office staff have your most up to date email address.

There are a number of important changes in the revised guidance that I would like to bring to your attention. Edmund Rice College strongly recommend the wearing of face masks for all pupils and staff. With the relaxation of social distancing in schools, we would ask that pupils wear an appropriate face covering (unless medically exempted) so that the entire school community is protected. We would ask parents to support this and provide a face mask for their child and their own individual sanitiser bottle for use during the day to complement the sanitiser stations on arrival. Whilst pupils will remain in protective bubbles, it will not be possible to keep the full school in classrooms for the duration of the day. Therefore, at lunch time, pupils will be 'zoned' in different areas of the school, depending on the weather. Furthermore, only pupils who are entitled to free school meals will be able to access canteen food for lunch from September 1st 2020. All pupils should bring a healthy break as the canteen will not operate at break time. At lunch, all pupils should bring a packed lunch. From 1st September, lunch will be provided for free school meal pupils only.

Whilst there will not be blended learning, we will maintain the use of Google Classroom for homework and assessments. All pupils will be trained how to use this during their induction and will be assigned to their individual classrooms. This training will also be extremely beneficial in the event of school closures due to a COVID-19 spike. I will email out a parental training video on Google Classroom also, enabling you to get involved in your child's learning.

If you have not already done so, please inform Mr Berne or Mr O'Hare if your child or member of your household identifies in any of the vulnerable categories due to pre-existing health conditions. This will enable us to compile a risk assessment for your child. When the school reopens, please do not send your child to school if they are unwell or displaying a high temperature. This will ensure the safety of all our pupils and staff.

Unfortunately, at this time, it is not possible to offer our breakfast club supervision or extracurricular activities. We will make this facility available again when it is safe to do so. There should not be any pupil in school prior to 8:45am unless they must use the school transport system. Whilst we do not encourage this, we also appreciate that for some pupils there is no alternative method for arrival to school. If you have exhausted all other options and must send your child on a school bus, they should wear a face mask for the duration of their journey. On arrival to school, they will be 'zoned' and supervised in bubbles until registration.

It is important that the guidelines outlined in our revised restart booklet are strictly adhered to. This guidance has been set out to ensure we are all safe. In the forthcoming weeks, this guidance will be constantly reviewed, and any changes will be communicated to you. Please check your email regularly and visit our school website and social media accounts to help keep you informed.

I am looking forward to welcoming all our pupils back to school. I would like to thank you for your support throughout the challenges of the last number of months and the challenges that lie ahead. I know that together we can ensure our entire school community is safe, enabling us to continue to deliver excellent educational experiences for all our pupils.

Take care and God bless,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P Berne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

P Berne
Acting Principal