

Frequently Asked Questions about Returning to School

1. What time should my child come to school at?

Pupils in 4th and 6th class should come to school for 8.50a.m. They should not be on the school grounds before this time.

Pupils in 3rd/5th class should come to school for 9.00 a.m. They should not be on the school grounds before this time.

2. Can I bring my child onto the school grounds?

The Board of Management requests that parents do not enter the school grounds unless absolutely necessary. Exceptions may be made for parents of children with Special Educational Needs if it is absolutely essential. You are asked to drop your child and leave immediately. Any parent who does come into the yard is expected to adhere to physical distancing regulations, not to stay and chat and stay at least 2 metres away from other people.

3. How will my child know where to go on the first day?

Teachers and SNAs will be on the yard to help with the children lining up.

4. What happens in the mornings?

Pupils are encouraged to walk to school. They should go directly to their line where they will be collected by their class teacher and brought into the school via the designated door. They should remain in their class “bubble” and not mix with children in other “bubbles” They should maintain 1 m distance from each other as much as possible Supervision will be provided each morning by teachers and SNAs

5. What happens at home time?

All classes will be walked to the exit doors by their class teacher. Teachers and SNAs will be at designated spots on the yard to supervise pupils exiting the school via their nearest exit gate where they can meet with you. 4th and 6th classes will leave at 2.30p.m. with 3rd and 5th leaving at the normal time of 2.40p.m. Pupils are not allowed to collect siblings from Junior School. All pupils must stay in their own yards.

6. Does my child need a face mask?

It is not recommended that children attending primary school wear face coverings?

7. Will the teachers and SNAs be wearing face coverings?

Yes. It is now a requirement for face coverings to be worn by staff members where it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from other staff, parents, essential visitors or pupils. In some cases, when dealing with children with hearing impairment or additional needs or due to personal reasons visors will be worn.

8. What will the school / classroom look like?

There will be posters about hand washing, sneezing, cough etiquette on the walls of the classroom and around the school. There will be hand sanitizer at entry points to the school and in every classroom. There will be yellow markings on the floor.

Like every primary school in the country, classrooms have been organised to maximise social distancing as per the Department of Education and Skills Guidelines. Every class is called a Bubble. Every bubble must stay apart from other class bubbles and there will be no physical interaction with other bubbles at any time during the day. Every class bubble has been divided into Pods.

9. What is a Pod?

A pod is a small number of children who sit together in a small group for group work and sharing of educational resources. Each pod is 1metre away from the next pod. Children sit 1m away from the other children in the pod as far as practicable.

10. Can the pods be changed?

The groupings will be changed if necessary dependent on the dynamics of the class and after mid – term break

11. What will the yard be like?

There will be staggered breaks. This will give more space to the bubbles on the yard. There will be two breaks of 20 minutes each for everyone. 4th and 6th class will be on the yard at the same time. 3rd and 5th will be on the yard at a different time. .Each class bubble will have a separate area in the yard to play in and pupils cannot play with children in another bubble. There will be no organised football because each class can only play with children in their own class.

12. Will there be Breakfast Club?

There will be no breakfast club for the moment. We will keep you updated if this changes

13. Will there be After School Clubs?

The priority for the beginning of the new school year is to facilitate a safe return to school for all pupils and staff. There will be no after school clubs for the moment

14. What about the lunches?

School lunches will be provided as usual. Due to the need for staggered breaks, children may be eating their lunch at a different time to last year. On the day that pupils are in from 10.00-12.00 pupils not get lunch as they are in from 10.00-12.00p.m. only

15. Will there be PE?

We are advised to follow the HPSC advice on Return to Sport. PE will be held outdoors as the risk of infection is lower outside. There will be no indoor PE for the present or until the advice changes.

16. How can I contact my child's teacher?

You can contact your child's teacher in the usual way by writing a note in the journal or by ringing the school and leaving a message. Teachers will not be able to take a call during the day.

17. Can I call into the school?

Visitors to the school must be kept to a minimum and will be by appointment only. All visitors to the school must wear a face mask, maintain social distancing of 2 metres and sign the Contact Tracing Log for visitors.

18. How do I contact the school?

You can ring Mairead the school secretary on 4526555 or Lisa (HSCL Co-ordinator) on 083 009 2792. You can also e mail the school at info@stthomas.ie

19. How do I pay the book money?

As you all know we are part of the School Pilot Book Rental Scheme this year. While the text books are free, a charge of €25 is required for all the extras which this year includes art and craft materials, photocopying, IT, School Journal, starter pack of stationery etc. Payment can be made in two ways by using an online payment system (Details to follow) **or** send in the €25 with your child in the envelope provided to them on their first day back.

20. What about the uniform?

Children are expected to wear their school uniform or school tracksuit as usual.

21. Will there be homework?

As the most important aspect of the return to school is your child's health and happiness, much of the time in school will be spent on settling back and becoming familiar with the new routines like handwashing and sanitising. Homework will not be given for the month of September and will be reviewed after that time.

22. Will I need a schoolbag?

Children will not need a bag for September as they will not be getting homework or bringing books or copies home. However, we do understand that getting a new school bag is part and parcel of returning to school and children if they wish can bring the bag but it is not required. Coats will be placed on the back of the chairs. Children should have their own pencil, pens, etc in their pencil case clearly labelled. They should not share their belongings with others for their own safety.

23. What happens if my child is unwell during the day?

If your child is unwell we will make contact with you. It is important that you collect your child as soon as possible. Your child will wait in a safe area with an adult until collected. It is really important that we have an up to date number at which you can be contacted.

24. What can I do to help my child with the return to school?

Have a positive attitude about your child returning to school. If you are nervous they will pick up on that and start to worry.

Make sure we have a working phone number at which you can be contacted

Let your child know about the changes in the school this year .

Do not send your child to school if they are not well

Do not send your child to school if they have any of the following symptoms

- a. High temperature
- b. Cough
- c. Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- d. Loss of smell, of taste or distortion of taste