

21 August 2020

STUDENT/PARENT/GUARDIAN UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR STARTING THE 2020-21 SCHOOL YEAR



Dear students/parents/guardians,

Please read this Student/Parent Newsletter and then complete the Form Survey which will follow by text.

Aontas – Unity.

Our school motto seems more appropriate than ever as we prepare to return to school in the face of a pandemic, knowing that following the procedures and rules will help to keep each member of the school community safer and healthier and potentially save lives. The atmosphere and ethos of mutual respect that we have built up since the school was founded in 1987 will help us during the year ahead and we are confident that each and every student, staff member, parent/guardian and visitor to the school will take their responsibility seriously and help and support each other.



This is a very different update to our usual back to school message to students and parents. We suggest you read it fully before following any of the live links provided. We have been developing a plan for our community to return to school and would now like to share some element of that plan with you and to give you an opportunity to offer your own positive ideas/suggestions. We are facing into a school year like no other and the more positive ideas/suggestions/solutions we have the better. However, there is only one week remaining and a large amount of work to complete in that time so we recognise that we have to do as much as we can in the short time available and then review and adapt as term proceeds. Full details of our Covid-19 Response Plan is now available on our website www.lucancc.ie.

As consultations with various stakeholders continue and the Department of Education (DoE) updates instructions to schools daily/weekly based on changing health advice, some of the plans outlined may change between now and school reopening so we advise you to keep in touch through our usual communication tools including text/website (www.lucancc.ie)/ twitter (@lucancc1) in the weeks ahead. Please try to limit phone calls to addressing urgent matters or issues not addressed in our communications. Visits to the school are now **by appointment only** and we have an intercom and external hatch at the front of the school for managing visitors (details below).

Calendar Dates

We aim to follow our calendar as posted to you in June with just one change (see Quicklinks for updated calendar on www.lucancc.ie). All of the start-up dates will be **delayed by one day** so that 1st years now attend on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings only with 6th years on Wednesday morning, 2nd and 3rd years on Thursday morning and TY and 5th years on Friday morning. This will allow us to engage in staff induction on Monday 31st August and to start our full timetable from Monday 7th September. Student induction mornings will allow us to return each year group to the school, to explain our plans for minimising the risk of introduction of Covid-19 into the school community and allow time for tutors to reconnect with their class groups to prepare for the term ahead.



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Reminder to anyone attending school who has travelled abroad:

Government policy, which is based on official public health advice, continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. Anyone who is returning to Ireland from abroad **must follow** the HSE advice, at the time of their return to Ireland, for travellers from that country.

At time of writing, it is a requirement for anyone coming into Ireland, from locations other than those with a rating of 'normal precautions' ("green"), to restrict their movements for 14 days, and this includes school staff, parents and children or other students coming from abroad to attend school in Ireland. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible. (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e4ea6-travelling-abroad-from-ireland/>).

If the college has reasonable grounds for believing that its duty of care towards its staff and pupils is being undermined in circumstances where a person has not observed the mandatory requirement to self-isolate for 14 days following return from a non-green list country, the DES has stated that the school can refuse access to said person for that period.

Please email us at admin@lucancc.ie if there will be a delay with your child returning to school for any reason so that we hold your child's place on our roll-book.

It is essential for the health and safety of the school community that families adhere to this advice.

Student feeling unwell at home

If a student is experiencing one or more symptoms of Covid-19 while at home (<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/symptoms.html>) you must **contact your GP** and the student should NOT attend school and follow the HSE guidelines for self-isolation:

(<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/self-isolation.html>).

A student is not to attend school if they have been identified by the HSE as a close contact for a person with COVID-19 and to follow the HSE advice on restriction of movement: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/managing-coronavirus-at-home/if-you-live-with-someone-who-has-coronavirus.html>

If your son/daughter or a family member **has an underlying health condition** and you are concerned about their return to school during the pandemic please let us know through the **survey** here <https://tinyurl.com/y6m8slut>. This survey was texted to parents on Thursday 20th August and will remain open until Monday at 10am – thanks to those who have already completed it. Please note that a letter from your GP must be sent to the school if your GP has advised you that your son's/daughter's health condition puts them in the seriously at-risk (or vulnerable) category and they should not attend school. The school will provide remote support for student

If a student develops Covid-19 symptoms in school:

If a student feels unwell in school they should inform their teacher as usual. If the student is experiencing symptoms of Covid-19 in school this will be brought to the attention of the Principal (or link Deputy Principal) promptly. They will be brought to the isolation room set up for this purpose, given specific PPE equipment to wear and use and a parent will receive a phone call and asked to collect their son/daughter as soon as possible from the building beside the rear overflow car-park. You must then contact your GP for health advice. We will have a team of First Responders who have undergone additional training for dealing with this situation.

How can I support my son/daughter to prepare for the return to school?

The return to school may be challenging for some students given that school was closed since last March. The following actions would be helpful for you to engage in with your son/daughter:

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- Ask your child/children what they are looking forward to about returning to school and discuss anything that they may be worried about. Sometimes just chatting about your feelings or having a simple plan in place to manage anxiety or worry can help to manage these feelings. Listen, empathise and reassure as much as you can.
- Make sure that your son/daughter knows or can find out which staff members are their 'go-to people' if they need to talk to someone including SNAs (where appropriate) tutor, year-head, link guidance counsellor, link deputy principal. The student induction days will remind students of which staff are in these pastoral care and student support roles.
- Prepare a **student hygiene pack** clearly labelled with student name. This consists of a closable plastic bag or small handbag/bumbag containing
 - small bottle of hand-gel sanitiser,
 - reusable washable face-covering and plastic bag to hold it when not in use (face-mask design must be appropriate for a school setting – use common sense please!),
 - small face towel for drying hands
 - small packet of tissues.



This should be brought into school every day with a fresh face-covering and towel.

- We ask parents and students to view the videos or read the information provided in these links and discuss how students will ensure to follow good practice in school regarding:
 - Corona virus HSE hygiene video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JYhm9oa-DM>
 - Hand-washing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsgLivAD2FE>
 - Respiratory hygiene (coughing/sneezing) and social distancing <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others.html>
 - Using a face covering <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-masks-disposable-gloves.html>
 - Student wellbeing advice https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=bM8IPJ8bQm4&feature=emb_logo
- **Break times:** Arrange for your son/daughter to go home for lunch if possible. Otherwise each student should bring a packed-lunch as the canteen will not be operating for a number of weeks until we can make suitable arrangements. We are working with the Supervalu centre to see what can be achieved for our senior students who usually have permission to visit local shops. Obviously with current regulations they cannot manage a large queue of students during our lunch period. Students will eat lunch in phases while sitting in their base classrooms. Students will also remain in classrooms during little break.
- **Outdoor spaces:** Given that students will be a lot more stationary than usual during the school day, we are investigating a plan for allowing access to certain outdoor areas for specific year groups during break times to give students a chance to walk, kick a ball, shoot baskets, etc. Strict supervision and adherence to hand and respiratory hygiene will be important in these situations.
- **Uniform:** Full school uniform is expected at all times. Details on our website. On the day when PE is on the timetable the full PE uniform should be worn for that day. No access to the changing rooms will be provided.
- **Books:** As we could not hold our school book sale this year all orders have moved to an online system with our book supplier, Bookhaven. Please see website for details. Students should have purchased all of their books and resources before returning to school but should NOT bring in books until teachers have explained what is absolutely necessary for each class. Details of book grant scheme are outlined below. All booklists are on our website.
- **Toilets:** As usual students will ask teachers to access a toilet. We will assign different year groups to different sets of toilets. Students should bring anything they need from their hygiene pack with

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them. Notices will be placed at bathroom areas with strict instructions to have no queues inside toilet areas and to leave the area as quickly as possible. Ongoing supervision will enforce this but students will need to take personal responsibility also. Hands should be properly washed using soap and water in the bathrooms and hand sanitisers must be used after visiting a bathroom.

- **Label everything:** We will try to return all lost items promptly to students but if lost items are not identifiable, they will have to be dumped. This applies to bottles of water and lunch boxes also.
- **Contact details:** Please ensure that we have correct contact details for parents/guardians/carer in case your son/daughter becomes ill. Please email any changes to your details to admin@lucancc.ie
- **Code of Behaviour:** We are updating our code to include: "Students will comply with Covid-19 arrangements and protocols that are implemented for the health and safety of all." Please discuss what this means for your student.
- **Journal:** Your initial €50 payment to the voluntary contribution includes the cost of the student journal. We will distribute the journal to students during their induction session. Students should use the journal as usual to record homework/notes/announcements. Parents should sign the journal weekly as normal. Teachers may not be collecting and signing the journals at the moment but will still monitor students progress on our electronic student management system VSware.
- Use the school **VSware system** to keep an eye on any notes about your student's progress as paper journals will be used much less frequently by teachers this year. If you do not yet have or have forgotten your VSware access username and password this will be reissued to students when students return.
- **Options:** Any further change requests for options or class placement should be addressed to the relevant Year Head and will be reviewed when students return.
- **Lockers:** Thanks to all students and parents who cooperated with the emptying of lockers earlier this week. At the moment, we are considering still allowing students to store excess items in a locker and will arrange to assign a locker to each student during induction week. Students will have restricted access to lockers before and after school and social distancing requirements apply. This will remain under review. Students should NOT bring in books during the induction week but should have a copy/A4 refill pad and a pencil case that they can use in class. Teachers will review their plans to reduce the number of books and resources that students need to bring to class. Students should not share books/copies/resources. Don't forget – your initial €50 payment to the voluntary contribution (or the locker payment for 1st years) includes a padlock and 2 keys for the locker.
- **School insurance:** All student are included in the 24 hour student insurance scheme this year provided that parents have paid the initial €50 of the voluntary contribution.
- **Mobile phone:** If your student owns a smart phone we advise every student to download the National Covid Tracker and to bring their phone into school, keep Bluetooth switched on, keep the phone on **but on silent (not vibrate)**. Parents can, if they wish, give their under-16 year old students permission to download this app as the digital age of consent is 16. Please decide what is in the best interests of your child. As usual, mobile phones that are observed or used by students without a teacher's permission will be confiscated.
- **Wipe down:** All school personnel including students will need to develop a habit of using the disinfectant wipes provided to wipe down their work area before and after use. This includes the student desk and any part of the chair that is a touch point (top of back of chair and sides of chair).

What we are doing to keep students, staff and visitors safe?

We are following the Department of Education guidelines and are carrying out the following actions to make the school environment as safe as possible for our staff, students and visitors:

- As advised by the HSE all staff, students and visitors to the school must wear a **face-covering**. Anyone who for medical reasons is advised by a GP not to wear a face-covering must contact the

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school in advance of attending so that alternative arrangements can be made for the health and safety of all.

- Delay bringing students in for one day to allow Monday 31st August to be a staff day for familiarisation with Covid-19 school procedures so that they can in turn familiarise students at induction sessions. **Updated calendar** is on quicklinks on our website;
- Updating our **Code of Behaviour** to include: "Students will comply with Covid-19 arrangements and protocols that are implemented for the health and safety of all." If any aspect of the procedures in place prove to be a challenge for a student to comply with we expect that you as a parent will contact the school prior to your child returning so that we can discuss special arrangements if possible. Issues that arise will be dealt with sensitively, but we ask you to understand that with 1000 people in our school building daily we must err on the side of ensuring the health and safety of all. We are expecting further additions to the code of behaviour to be issued by the Department of Education next week. ***This rule will not be included in our student journal which is already printed, so we ask you to ensure that your son/daughter is aware of this.***
- **Teaching and learning:** Our initial phase of teaching and learning will focus on settling the students back into school routines and good learning practises, reviewing aspects of courses from last year, building student confidence and growing strong relationships. The Department of Education is reviewing courses and assessment/examination structures (especially for 3rd and 6th years) and teachers will communicate this to students as more details before available. Homework practices may be different for this first term and teachers will work within their subject teams to outline what is expected. Specific wellbeing sessions will be organised through the SPHE/CPSE programme and in senior cycle pastoral care classes. Timetables are available on VShare but will change over the coming week as we adjust it to prepare for students returning to school.
- **Going Digital:** We made great use of Microsoft 365 Teams when schools closed last March. It is vitally important that students continue to access their classes on Teams. We will provide training for all 1st year students to ensure they can make best use of the suite of apps available through 365 and will provide additional support and training to other year groups also. Teachers will be avoiding collecting copies/workbooks etc. for now and there may be an increase of work assigned and collected through Teams. Teachers may ask students to use the Teams app on their mobile phone during class time. If full or partial school closure is required at any stage in the future, we will be using Teams as the main digital resource to continue teaching and learning. We have also invested in additional computer and laptops for use by students in school.
- Changing our room allocation so that groups of **students remain in classrooms** and teachers move to them. This will reduce the movement of students around the school and will allow year groups to be grouped in certain areas of the school as much as possible. Movement will still be necessary to access practical classrooms. Students must ensure they follow the one-way system and keep socially distanced at all times.
- Removing all non-essential items from classrooms so that **additional space is available for students** and staff to practise social distancing. Students will be seated at a distance of 1m shoulder to shoulder and staff seats will be placed at a distance of 2m from students as outlined in the DES guidelines. All available space in the school is being used for increasing social distance between students. Maintaining a physical distance of 2m is advisable where possible and especially as people move around the school.
- The size of our classrooms and the need for social distancing means that classes will often need to be split in two. Teachers will arrange for **students moved to a satellite room** to carry on with relevant work and will ensure that there is a rota of students that stay or move to maintain fairness.
- Install **exterior hatch** in window to outside entrance for visitors. This will allow visitors to the school to collect information or request information through the external hatch without having to enter



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the school building. We have an **intercom button** on the outside pillar closest to the front door that visitors should press and then wait at the hatch. This arrangement will start from Monday 31st August.

- **Forgotten items:** Please avoid dropping up items that your son/daughter has forgotten. We will not be able to pass them on. Emergency items only (e.g. medicine) should be labelled and dropped in through the exterior hatch before 10am so that we can call your student to the office using the school intercom.
- Students will not have access to the front office phone to phone home but in case of emergencies can ask a staff member to make a phone call for them and pass on a message.
- We carried out a **deep clean of the building** using Noonan Contractors including the hire of cherry pickers for removing cobwebs and dirt from high ceilings;
- Install polycarbonate **screens** on every teacher and secretary desk for staff/student protection and purchase moveable tall screens on castors for use in year head/guidance counsellor/resource/DP/P office spaces;
- Install **hand sanitiser** stations at every entry/exit point, inside classrooms and near other touch points around the school (eg water fountains);
- **Water fountains** will be wiped down regularly and should only be used to refill water bottles. **Student cannot drink directly from the water fountains.** We will keep this under review and will have to disconnect the water fountains if we observe unsafe practices. Teachers will not be able to refill water bottles for students.
- Communicate with staff prior to opening to consult on procedures and arrangements for start-up;
- **Communicate with parents/guardians and students** about procedures and arrangements for start-up. We will have supplies of disposable face masks in each classroom in case a student forgets their mask. Ongoing incidents of forgetting a mask will lead to a phone call by tutor to parent to remind them of the need for face masks.
- Placement of **signage** around the school to ensure clear directions re entrances/exits/one-way systems/toilet queues;
- Employment of **additional teachers** using additional teacher allocation to act as supervisors for students who cannot remain with class group due to social distancing and to engage in additional supervision;
- Employ an **additional cleaner** during the school day to clean toilets, wipe down touch points, restock cleaning items in classrooms;
- Appointment of an **additional caretaker**;
- Planning for **support for students** finding the new arrangements challenging through our guidance team, SEN team and SNA team;
- Use of **wellbeing resources** provided for SPHE classes by NCCA and NEPS to help settle students back into school;
- Survey parents about **health risks** of students or family members and how we can best support students;
- **Survey parents** to gather any further good ideas;



What responsibilities do you as a student have?

We are planning our school environment and practices to try to ensure the safety of all – you our students, our staff, visitors to the school and our wider community. As we are doing our best to keep you safe, we ask you, our students, to do everything in your power to keep other students and staff members safe too including:

- Practise our motto **Aontas/Unity** and embody our ethos of mutual respect.

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- **Wear a face covering** (usually a face-mask). Designed must be appropriate for a school setting – you know what we mean!
- Practise appropriate **hand hygiene** by washing hands with soapy water regularly or using hand sanitiser.
- Practise **social distancing** at all times.
- **Watch the videos** at the links we have provided in this newsletter in relation to the above items.
- Put steps in place to **mind your wellbeing** – this is a challenging situation and everyone can benefit from having tips and ideas for staying calm, being kind (to yourself and others) and gently remind each other about the special arrangements in place.
- Know the names of your key **support staff members** and talk to them if you have concerns about anything. We really want to listen to any concerns you have so that we can help you settle back successfully into a school routine.
- Follow our **code of behaviour** including our new rule about Covid-19 measures
- **Print out your timetable** just before you come to school. Timetables are available on VShare but will continue to change over the coming week as we work to prepare for your return. If you do not have your logon details you can get them when you return to school.
- Please **arrive on time** for school – if you are late go directly to your assigned classroom and offer your explanation to your teacher who will mark you present/late on the electronic system. We will not be using the late stamp system this year.
- Try to arrange with your parent to **go home for lunch** if you live close enough to the school – otherwise **bring a packed lunch** and follow the rota for lunch as explained by your tutor.
- Use the **outside pitch area** assigned to your year group during lunch time.
- **Enter and exit** through the door specified for your year group and use the usual **one-way system**.
- Ensure you have your own **labelled, reusable water bottle**. Use the water fountains to refill the bottles but do not drink directly from them. Hand sanitise before and after you use the fountain.
- **Chewing gum** is not allowed in the school and using chewing gum or disposing inappropriately of chewing gum will be considered a serious issue due to increased health concerns. **Spitting** is also included in our code of behaviour as an unhygienic activity and carries increased health concerns in current times.
- We will send specific instructions by text to parents of each year group about your **return to school for induction**. Please ensure that you follow these carefully and just bring a **notebook/copy and pen** with you.
- Return to school with a positive outlook, ready to meet your classmates, your teachers and other staff and ready to do your best to get back into good learning habits.

We will use student induction session to advise you of any further arrangements we have in place. We are constantly proud of our students and we have no doubt that you will also exceed our expectations of what is achievable during these very strange and somewhat daunting times. Communication is going to be even more important than ever and may be more challenging than usual when we cannot see each other's faces clearly. We will need to continue to be patient with and kind to each other. You've got this!

Financial Assistance

We realise that the return to school period is a very expensive time for parents.

The **Book Grant** is provided by the DES and administered by the college to those who need financial assistance to purchase school books and equipment. Book grant application forms are available on our website under Quicklinks. Completed forms should be emailed to admin@lucancc.ie by Wednesday 26th August 2020 and a member of our admin team will be in touch when we receive your application. Book grants can only be redeemed through Bookhaven.

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The ***Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance*** is **not** administered by the school and is a means-tested once-off payment aimed at helping families with the extra costs when children start school each autumn. Details are available here: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/41eb8b-back-to-school-clothing-and-footwear-allowance/>

LCA arrangements

The DES document about the LCA outlines the curricular and assessment changes for our 6th year group. As work experience will not be available for students on Wednesdays we will provide work for half of the class while the other half engage in vocational and career research and other related topics. Then the two groups will switch for the second time slot.

TY arrangements

Our Programme Coordinator Ms Higgins has been working to arrange some online activities for our TY group to complement the largely classroom-based activities that will start our year. If you have secured work experience and the workplace can accept your placement in full compliance with all health regulations, then please bring the relevant forms back to Ms Higgins and if there are no further restrictions in place, you should be able to attend. Many students may not be able to get work experience during the first term. DES advice is that students should remain in school during these two weeks and follow the usual timetable but we are investigating a number of possible options that may compensate for the lack of work experience in the first term and will keep students updated with developments. Volunteer Ireland <https://www.volunteer.ie/> has lots of ideas for how to volunteer from home and TY students can choose something from this website for their voluntary work.

Resource Room

We are retaining the resource room for use by our students with additional needs. Some of our students may find the new systems very challenging and our SNAs and SEN team will work to support students and teachers in preparing for and managing situations and will keep in contact with parents as the need arises.

Supervised Study

We hope that supervised study can take place this year after we have completed an initial settling in period but we will review this after our start-up period and communicate with 3rd and 6th year students and parents at that time.

Extra-curricular Activities

We hope that we will be able to offer some extra-curricular activities after we have completed an initial settling in period. Our teachers have been fantastic at committing their time to the many and varied activities that we run in Lucan CC and will investigate the possibility of running some activities given the restrictions and arrangements in place. We would really like to be able to offer students some of the fun side of school life. We will update you as plans develop.

Board of Management and Parents' Association

Our Board of Management and Parents' Association have been working with us to ensure that we have all necessary policies and plans in place for reopening the school and to help us to get messages out to parents, graduates and the wider community. They wanted us to pass on their very best wishes to the whole school community for a successful start-up and offered their thanks to everyone who has contributed in any way to preparing for the return of staff and students.

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Thanks

I wish to thank everyone who has worked so hard to prepare the school for reopening. Admin staff, teachers, SNAs, caretakers, cleaners, parents, volunteers have all offered help to the senior management and leadership team.



The team at DDLETB has offered us fantastic support throughout the challenging times we have had since March. Every problem, issue and query raised with them has been met with patience, offers of help and innovative solutions. We are very grateful to be a member of the family of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board schools. We also thank our sister school management teams who continue to share best practice.

Thanks to everyone who has offered an idea, a suggestion, some help, kinds words, a positive thought. Every little helps.

Let's hope we can all continue to support each other through the year ahead. We have heard the phrase **'we're all in this together'** so often since we closed in March, but it is so true. We are a very strong community in Lucan Community College. It is not going to be easy but we have overcome challenges before and come out stronger on the other side. **Ní neart go cur le chéile! Aontas!**

Finally

For every question answered in this newsletter, you have probably thought of many more. That's what the survey coming soon is for. If you are happy with arrangements as outlined, just let us know. If you have other ideas/suggestion/queries then please let us know also. We cannot promise to get everything perfectly correct from the start or to follow through on every suggestion, but we will listen and learn and continue to review our practises as the school year proceeds.

Our thoughts and prayers are with those in our school community who are dealing with family illness or bereavement and who have family and friends in the at-risk category and who have been providing front-line services throughout. We know that this pandemic has affected so many of you in challenging ways. This is not an easy time and we send you all our best wishes and positive thoughts.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this long and detailed newsletter which has hopefully reassured you about the return to school process and I hope that you can really enjoy the remainder of your Summer break.

Diane Birnie
(Principal)

