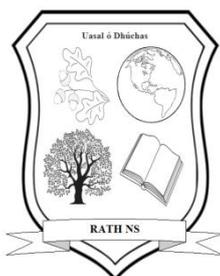


## *Scoil Náisiúnta an Chroí Ró-Naofa*

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# *Nuachtlitir Meán Fómhair*

Fáilte romhaibh ar ais tar éis an samhradh. Tá sé iontach a bheith ar ais den chéad uair ó mhí an Mhárta. Welcome to the 2020/2021 school year, one which we hope will be enjoyable and productive for all. It is a return to school like no other year. Never before have we had to manage a school reopening during a global pandemic. Thank you to our entire school community for your efforts so far. However, it will take a sustained and combined effort in the months ahead to ensure we keep everyone safe and keep our school open.

Some of the notices below are related to Covid-19 and our continued efforts to manage it as best we can given the guidelines provided and the resources at our disposal. As I've referenced in recent weeks, this is an evolving process and advice and guidelines are changing frequently as we learn more about the virus. I will keep you informed along the way and pass on information if and when necessary. I understand that receiving regular messages from the school can become tiresome and we might be struggling with some 'Covid fatigue' at this stage, but I'd ask you please to pay careful attention to any notices or communication from the school. As the months progress, this will test our resolve but we must work together and follow all guidelines in order to protect our school community and keep our school open.

I'd also like to assure you that the staff are endeavouring to keep the school experience as normal as possible. Some activities or common practices will need to be postponed for the year, but we will try, where possible, to ensure that the pupils are given a whole, rounded school experience.

### **Updated Public Health Advice from the HSE**

On Friday last, public health advice for schools arrived from the Department. The guidance document runs to 11 pages but we have extracted the key points or takeaways from it:

- **Parental responsibility re assessing child's fitness for school:** 'Children with a blocked or runny nose, but no fever can attend school, but if they require paracetamol or ibuprofen for their symptoms, they must not attend school for 48 hours and GP assessment for testing is indicated.'
- **School's responsibility to maintain confidentiality:** 'Schools do not need to inform parents that a pupil or staff member has been removed due to their symptoms. Other pupils or staff do not need to be removed from class. HSE Departments of Public Health will take action if the person has confirmed Covid-19 infection on testing, which will include HSE advice and guidance on communication to school pupils and staff where needed.'
- **Parental responsibility to access GP advice:** 'The parents / legal guardian of the sick child should contact their GP as usual, to discuss clinical concerns. If it is determined by the GP that the child/pupil requires to be tested for Covid-19, any other household contacts should be removed from the school setting.'
- **Parental responsibility after a child is sent home:** 'If a symptomatic child has a Covid-19 'not detected' result, the child should remain at home until he/she is clinically well enough to return to school, unless parents are specifically asked by HSE Public Health for their child to remain excluded because of other investigations e.g. if the child is a known close contact of a now confirmed case. All diarrhoea symptoms need to have been resolved for 48 hours prior to return to school.'
- **School's responsibility to await medical officer of health contact:** 'The Medical Officer of Health (Consultant in Public Health Medicine, MOH), and teams will liaise directly with the school and inform them of the confirmed case as necessary; will undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment to inform any further

actions and recommendations by the Medical Officer of Health.’ It is the school’s responsibility to wait for the Public Health Authorities to advise them of any action that needs to be taken.

### **Opening / Closing Times**

Our school opens at 9.20am. *No child should be on the school grounds before 9am* as we are not insured before then. School finishes for Junior Infants and Senior Infants at 2pm (Junior Infants finish at 12:30pm this week) and for all other classes at 3pm.

We encourage you to use the church car park if possible in an effort to alleviate traffic congestion outside the school. The path from the school to the gate at the end of the field will be supervised by a member of staff at 3pm each day.

### **Junior Infants**

Well done to our new Junior Infants who have settled so well in the last few days. Tús maith leath na hoibre! From Monday next **September 7<sup>th</sup>**, they will finish at their normal time of 2pm. Their finishing time remains at 12:30pm for this week only.

### **Uniforms and Gear**

All tops should be marked clearly with your child’s name. As you’re aware, class bubbles (classrooms) cannot mix during the school day. This provides an additional challenge in terms of supervising break times. However, unlike most schools, we are fortunate to have the use of a large grass playing area. Each class have been given a designated play area on the grass and we are asking pupils to wear football boots or spare runners. An old tracksuit bottoms or shorts might be a good idea also to keep school uniforms clean. All gear to be kept in a sealed boot bag or backpack in storage boxes outside classrooms.

### **Message from our Parents’ Association**

The role of the Parents’ & Guardians' Association is to work in close collaboration with the Principal, Staff and Board of Management to create a strong partnership between home and school. The current Covid-19 restrictions mean that new challenges will arise in respect of how the Parents' & Guardians' Association will operate this year and further information will be provided in the coming weeks. We would encourage all parents and guardians to join our private Facebook page 'Rath NS Parents Council (2020/2021)' for updates. The Association would like to welcome back all students and staff and to wish them all the best as they begin their academic year. We would also like to offer our sincere thanks to Mr. Fitzgerald, Ms. McCormack and all the staff for putting measures in place to protect our school community during these unprecedented times- ní neart go cur le chéile.

### **Gaelic Football**

Unfortunately, Cumann na mBunscol Laoise have informed us that they’re suspending all competitions for Term 1 at least. The situation will be reviewed after Christmas.

However, staff members have committed to training the boys and girls after school between 3pm and 4pm. Boys will be on Tuesdays and girls on Wednesdays. As all activity is outside and pupils will be going home at 4pm and not re-entering the classroom bubble, we can take different class groups at the same time. This is similar to training sessions taking place with any local sporting organisation at present. Pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> Class to 6<sup>th</sup> Class are welcome to participate and we will commence next Tuesday and Wednesday (Sept 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>). Donnie Brennan (Laois GAA Coaching & Games) will commence a block of football coaching with Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class children on Tuesday September 8<sup>th</sup>. This will run for 4 Tuesdays and pupils are encouraged to bring in appropriate gear on those days, including gum shields. Coaching and games staff must adhere to the comprehensive Covid-19 Plan from Croke Park. These guidelines are very similar to those used to run Cúl Camps nationally throughout the summer.

### **Music Generation Laois**

We will once again engage with the services of Music Generation Laois to provide high quality performance music education at a heavily subsidised cost. Unfortunately, we can’t continue with our regular singing

programme. Instead, Senior Infants, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, 2<sup>nd</sup> Class and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class will partake in a new programme which will now include body percussion, musical games and music appreciation. Students will have their own unique instrument pack to use, with their names on the pack. They will have singing exercises for students to undertake at home, similar to during school closures so the groundwork made is not lost, and singing not blacklisted entirely. The cost per child for the year will be €10. Many thanks to our Parents' Association for helping to subsidise the cost also.

Our very popular Harp programme will once again be available to all children in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Classes with our excellent tutor, Siobhán Buckley. More time will be allowed for sanitising between classes and Music Generation Laois have indicated that they will have enough harps for pupils to take home for practice (they would have them for the year at home). Those who take a harp home will need to pay a security deposit but no rental. Further details will be provided to parents of children in these classes in the coming days.

### **Book Rental & Requisites**

The school financial year commences today, September 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, payments for book rental, insurance & requisites for the 2020/2021 school year are payable from today and through the month of September. You will be provided with a link to Aladdin online payments. Cheque or cash are acceptable, but we encourage all parents/guardians to avail of our online payment option if possible. Please contact Amanda ([office@rathns.com](mailto:office@rathns.com) / 0578626270) if you require assistance. We have reduced payments across the school this year to reflect the school closures in recent months.

### **Stay Safe**

The class teachers will be covering the Stay Safe programme in the coming months. The aim of the programme is to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying through the provision of a personal safety education programme for children at primary school level. More information can be found on the Stay Safe website <http://www.staysafe.ie/index.htm>

### **Code of Behaviour**

Last September we began to implement our new Code of Behaviour across the school. The feedback from staff and pupils is that it's a very fair and clear document, and it allows the pupils to learn in a safe environment. Our traffic light system is predicated on our four basic school rules:

1. I have respect for people and for property.
2. I do my best in class and allow others to do the same.
3. I behave in a proper manner around the school.
4. I play safely and fairly.

At the beginning of another school year, we will familiarise the children with the rules once more and how our code of behaviour operates. You should have received a copy last year, but it is also available to download from the website. Our overarching aim is to promote positive behaviour and respect for one another.

### **Peanuts (Lunches)**

I'd like to remind you that we have pupils in our school with a severe nut allergy. We respectfully ask you not to send peanuts or any products containing nuts to school. We also operate a healthy eating policy so lunches should not contain any sweets, chocolate, crisps or fizzy drinks.

### **Sacraments**

We still await dates for our First Communion and Confirmation Masses. We will inform you as soon as we hear.

Mr. T. Fitzgerald  
Príomhoide