

VERITAS



# *Dominican College Wicklow*

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Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope that this letter finds you well and that you are looking forward to your daughters return to school as much as we are. We have all had to adapt to a “New Normal” as we protect ourselves and our loved ones from Covid 19. As we approach the return to school we are very conscious that both you and your daughters have many questions in relation to how we intend to welcome our students and staff back in a safe manner and in keeping with the Roadmap for Reopening Schools published by the Department of Education and Skills.

A Covid-19 Response Plan has been put in place and has been ratified by the Board of Management. This plan is a comprehensive document which will be available on our website over the coming days.

We have been working hard to prepare our school campus so that upon her return your daughter will feel safe and supported after the lengthy absence from the school. Some of the changes that have been put in place on the school campus may take a while to get used to, but in time and with your support we will all adjust to our new teaching and learning environment. As is the reality nationally and internationally the situation is constantly evolving in relation to Covid 19. We will, at all times be guided by the National Health advice and by the Department of Education and Skills. We will therefore constantly review the measures that we have put in place.

Below you will find a comprehensive FAQs section. We would hope that this will answer any question you may have. Should you have any further questions upon reading the FAQs please do not hesitate to contact us at [info@dcw.ie](mailto:info@dcw.ie).

When we were compiling the enclosed FAQs, we contacted our Parents Association requesting their input in an attempt to ensure that we were addressing the real concerns and questions that parents have. I would like to thank our Parent Association for their input as it has proved invaluable in the process.

We look forward to welcoming our incoming First Years. The transition from Primary school to Second Level can be a challenge but it is equally an exciting time for students as they make a new beginning. We will do our best to support and reassure them.

Thank you all in advance for your support and consideration over the coming year. Working together we can help your daughter to have a fruitful and happy year in a safe and healthy environment.

Lorraine Mynes, Principal

Neal Martin, Deputy Principal

## Before school begins

### When is my daughter returning to school?

Our students are returning to school on the week beginning August 31st. There is a staggered introduction for students throughout the week. The timetable for students return is as follows:

**Monday** 31st August 9.30-13.00 **First Years** return to school

**Tuesday** 1st September 9.00-13.00 **Sixth Years** return to school  
10.00-13.00 **Third Years** return to school

**Wednesday** 2nd September 9.00-13.00 **Fifth Years** return to school  
10.00-13.00 **Second Years** return to school

**Thursday** 3rd September 9.30-12.30 **TY** students return to school

**Friday** 4th September 8.50-15.15 All students in school as per timetable-first full day.

### What do I need to do before returning?

As is the case in a normal school year, parents are expected to ensure that their daughters are prepared to return to school. This includes: getting the school uniform (including the PE uniform) and books, and ensuring your daughter has the correct equipment for each subject.

As this is such a unique situation we would also encourage you to speak to your daughter about their return to school. School will be different, and we need all our stakeholders to follow our new protocols for the safe return of students and staff. Students need to respect and understand the social distancing guidelines put in place.

Each student will be getting a Return to school Covid-19 form, which must be returned to school. Parents will receive more information on this over the coming days. 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 students. Restricting your movements means staying indoors in one location and avoiding contact with other people and social situations as much as possible.

### Covid - 19

We would ask all parents and students to familiarise themselves with Covid-19 symptoms:

- High temperature
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Cough

### What equipment do I need to get?

This really depends on the subjects your daughter is doing. You can check the booklist (which is available on the school website) for subject specific equipment. This is very important this year as students will not be allowed to share equipment. Students must have their own supply of pens, rulers, pencils, colouring pencils etc. If a student is using an iPad they need to check to make sure everything is in good working order and that they have the correct books downloaded.

Each student should also have their own hand sanitiser (small bottle) and face covering.

### My daughter has an underlying health condition - what should I do?

If your daughter has a serious medical condition and you are worried about her returning to school, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Mynes or Mr Martin.

### How does my daughter get to school?

This will depend on your own family circumstances. Students who are coming to school on a bus, should be advised by the bus operator on the protocols in place.

If you are arriving at school by car, we would like to remind parents that cars are not permitted inside the school gates. We share our campus with Holy Rosary primary school and the Dominican sisters, and there is insufficient space for parents' cars to safely enter the grounds before and after school.

Where possible, we would encourage students to walk or cycle to school.

When students enter by the main gate, social distancing should be clearly observed.

## **First day**

### **Where should my daughter go on the first day of school?**

On the 1st day of school, all students should proceed to Fatima Hall where they will be greeted by their year head and tutors. They will be instructed from there where to go.

### **What equipment / books should they bring?**

On the first day students do not need to bring their books. Students should bring their pencil case, and a notepad / copy.

### **Can I pay the registration fee on this day?**

Yes. Students can pay the registration fee on the first day. In order to do so we would ask parents to place the money / cheque in a sealed envelope with the student's name, year group and amount.

However, we would encourage Parents/Guardians, where possible, to make payments through the Easypay. The icon to access Easypay is at the bottom of the landing page on the school website.

### **Will my daughter need lunch?**

On the orientation days students are finished at 1 o'clock. They will not need lunch, although they should bring a snack and a drink to have at break time.

### **Am I allowed to bring my daughter into school?**

This is most likely with new first year students who are nervous and new to the school. This is a new adventure for the girls and it can be daunting, especially if they are the eldest. However, we would encourage parents not to accompany their daughters to Fatima Hall. Parents will not be allowed into Fatima Hall on these days.

### **What will happen on the first day?**

Students will get to meet their year head and tutors.

Students in 1st, TY and 5th years will be placed in their new class groups.

All students will experience an induction this year, which will include specific instruction and training around required behaviours during this pandemic, and the new protocols that exist in the school.

### **Do I have to wear a face mask?**

Yes. Students will not be allowed to enter the building without a face mask.

### **What happens if I forget my face mask?**

The school will have an emergency supply of masks. Ask your year head or tutor.

### **What if I refuse to wear a face mask?**

If a student refuses to wear a mask, they will have to be collected from school and taken home.

## **School day**

### **Do I start and finish at the same times?**

The school start and finish times have not changed.

School starts at 8:50 every day - students must be in registration by 8:50, not 9:00.

On Monday / Thursday / Friday school ends at 3:15.

On Tuesday / Wednesday school ends at 3:55.

This is the same for all students.

### **Where do I enter the building?**

Each year group will have a specific entrance in the morning. They are the only year group using this entrance, and they are not allowed to enter the building using any other entrance. In their orientation each year group will be given this information.

### **Do I have a locker?**

At the start of the year students will not have a locker. We have had to make substantial operational changes in the school and to our timetable to safely facilitate all our students on their return to school. We would like to see these changes in practice before we use lockers / locker rooms. We understand that this is not ideal, and that it will require better organisational skills from our students. If students are moving from one class to another they will have to bring their bag with them. Students will have a hook where they will be able to hang their coat. This is one of the changes that will be reviewed in September.

### **Am I wearing my school uniform?**

Yes. Students will be wearing the full school uniform. The Department of Education in their guidelines make no reference for the need for uniforms not to be worn to school.

The school uniform is an important part of our identity and creates a sense of belonging and normality. However, on the days that students have PE they are permitted to wear their PE uniform for the entire day. I would remind students that the PE uniform includes a tracksuit, not leggings, and a school top/hoodie.

Uniform items can be purchased from Stan and Tonys in Wicklow town. Please remember to label your uniform, including your coat.

### **Do I have assembly?**

Students will not have assembly at the start of the school year. On this day students will proceed to the registration class as normal.

### **Where do I go for my registration period?**

Each class will have a base classroom. This is where your registration will take place. You will be given this information on your orientation day.

### **Am I changing classes like I normally do?**

No. In DCW we normally have teacher based classrooms. However, for this year we will have student based classrooms. Year groups will rotate between a set group of rooms during the day. This allows us to safely segregate year groups from each other.

### **Is the school day the same as last year?**

This will depend on the year group you are in.

Some students will follow our traditional timetable, while some students will follow a new timetable. Students will be given all this information during their orientation day.

We have had to introduce a two timetable system to safely operate two break and two lunch periods for our students and staff.

### **Do I have a 'pod'?**

Yes, and no.

Each year group will have their own part of the building and toilets. This allows us to rotate these students in a set group of classrooms and significantly reduces their interaction with other year groups.

Each class will have their own base class.

**What will the classroom look like?**

Each classroom will be set up to meet social distance guidelines – with students being 1 metre apart.

The teacher's desk will be at the top of the room.

There will be hand sanitizer in each classroom, and also spray bottles and tissue paper to clean the desk and chair when you are leaving and entering the classroom.

**Will I have art / science / home economics?**

Yes. There will be a full curriculum offered in DCW. However, there will be new protocols in place for these subjects. These will be explained by your teachers when you return.

**Will teachers be wearing a mask/visor?**

Yes. Teachers are required to wear face coverings.

**What if I need help from my teacher?**

It is recognised that it is not always possible for staff to maintain physical distance from students and it is not appropriate that they would always be expected to do so where this could have a detrimental impact on the student. However, where possible staff will maintain a minimum of 1 m distance and where possible 2m. They will also take measures to avoid close contact at face to face level such as remaining standing rather than sitting beside/crouching down.

**Where do I go for my break / lunch times?**

Each year group will have a specified area outside where they may spend their break / lunch time. Year groups will not be allowed to mix during break / lunch times. If it is raining, students will have to have their breaks in their assigned classrooms.

**Is there a canteen?**

Yes, there will be a canteen, however it will not be the same as normal.

In the tight space it will not be possible to maintain the year group separation we are introducing. There will be a delivery system in place where students can order and receive food. This will also mean a reduced menu. The students will get more information on this during their orientation.

There will be no hot water available to students at lunch time.

**Can I bring my own lunch?**

Yes, and we would encourage students to pack a healthy and nutritious lunch. Lunchboxes need to be washed every evening.

**Can I exit through any door?**

No. Students will be given an entry and exit door. Students must use this door at all times. They cannot exit through another year groups exit point.

**Will my classroom be cleaned every day?**

Yes. Every classroom will be cleaned every day. Good hygiene is essential in our battle to suppress the virus.

## **Feeling unwell**

### **Should I come to school if I am feeling unwell?**

No.

If you are exhibiting any Covid-19 symptoms, please contact your GP immediately and follow the guidelines provided by the HSE.

Please contact the school promptly in the morning to inform us of any significant illness.

### **I don't feel well during the day - what should I do?**

If a student is unwell they should speak to a teacher or their year head. In the current climate, we would ask students to do this quickly and quietly.

### **What will happen if I feel unwell?**

Your year head, or the Deputy Principal or Principal will contact your parents/guardians.

You will be taken to a designated isolation area to wait for their arrival.

On arrival, parents will make their presence known to the administration office.

All HSE guidelines will be followed and we will communicate with the parents of all students providing the relevant advice.

Arrangements will be made for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.

### **What do I do if someone in my house has Covid-19 symptoms or if they have come into contact with someone who has suspected Covid-19?**

To ensure the continued running of school we would ask parents to exercise caution in situations like this and not to send your daughter to school.

**At all times the school will be guided in health matters by the Department of Education and the HSE.**

## **Distance Learning**

### **Is distance / blended learning in place for September?**

No. It is our intention to have all students present in class on Friday September 4th and for the rest of the year.

### **If due to a Covid-19 outbreak or through government decision school is closed will there be distance learning?**

Yes. All students have a school email and have access to our digital school platform Schoolwise.

### **What is Schoolwise?**

Schoolwise is a virtual learning environment to support teachers and schools in planning as well as facilitating collaboration and communication with teachers and students. Schoolwise also allows teachers to post materials, resources, notes, homework and educational links that students can access at all times.

### **Can a parent have access to Schoolwise?**

At the moment there is no parent login to Schoolwise. However, parents can of course ask their daughter to open and show them the platform. We are working on the possibility for parents to receive an email every week outlining the work that the student got for the week. We would hope to have more information on this feature in September.

### **Will there be a new timetable?**

No we would not envisage a new timetable for students. We would expect students to follow their normal timetable at home.

### **Will there be online classes?**

Yes. Students will have online classes using Google Meet. Teachers will give students the link to access this class. We use Google Meet as it is safer for the students, and it ties in with the other G Suite products available to the students for free.

### **If I have a problem with Schoolwise / distance learning who do I contact?**

If it is a content question, or a question about a subject you should contact the subject teacher.

If you are having an IT issue or an issue with engagement you need to contact your year head and Mr Martin.

### **Will students be getting training on how to do distance learning?**

Yes. At the beginning of the new school year all students will be receiving CPD on the use of Schoolwise and on issues in relation to distance learning.

### **Will Parents be getting training/information on how to do distance learning?**

Yes. There will be online meetings / information sessions for parents in September.

## Miscellaneous

### **Will there be extra-curricular activities?**

We hope so. These are extraordinary times, and we are under huge pressure to ensure your daughter's education. This means that we have to begin the new school year focusing on the safe operations of the school curriculum. However, we feel that extra-curricular activities are a huge part of the school experience for our students. We would hope to offer these activities to the girls during the year.

### **Will there be school trips?**

Yes. Students will be able to go on trips where social distance guidelines can be maintained. This will only take place where the risk to the safety of our students and staff can be minimised.

### **Will there be evening study?**

Hopefully. We would hope that evening study will take place as usual. It may take a number of weeks before it is up and running.

### **Will there be inter-schools sports competitions?**

We don't know. This will be up to the governing bodies. However, as it currently stands it is hard to see these taking place this year.

### **Will parent-teacher meetings take place?**

There is currently no guidance in relation to parent-teacher meetings. But, as previously stated, it is hard to see these taking place this year as they have in previous years.

### **Will there be calculated grades for Leaving Certificate students?**

No. However, we cannot predict the future.

### **Will there be CBA's for 2nd and 3rd year students**

Yes. But they will be reduced and may need to be different, depending on the subject. Further guidance on this will come over the coming weeks.

## Contact

### **Who do I contact in school?**

This depends on the situation. If it is a general question in regard to school then the first port of call is the administration office 0404 68111 / [info@dcw.ie](mailto:info@dcw.ie)

If you have a question in relation to a subject, or are concerned about your daughter in relation to a specific subject then you contact the subject teacher. This can be done by contacting the admin office.

If you have a concern about your daughter, issues like bullying, anxiety, stress you should contact their year head.

For more serious issues, you may need to contact Mr Martin, the Deputy Principal or Ms Mynes, the Principal.

### **Can I make an appointment?**

Yes. All appointments will have to be made through the general office, we have limited space in reception and we ask that in the new school year anyone who has rang the office and arranged an appointment to follow the Covid-19 guidelines. All visitors to the school will have to sign the COVID-19 log for contact tracing purposes.

### **Can I drop something into the office?**

No. Parents are not permitted to enter the school. This includes bringing messages, equipment or food to students.