**Our Ref:** LMCA/MMcK

**Date:** 05/08/20

Dear Parent/Carer

Following the recent communication from the Head of Education, I wish now to alert you to specific arrangements in regard to your child’s return to Stewarton Academy. The whole staff team absolutely share the sentiment of being delighted to welcome your young people back to school.

**Date of Return of Pupils**

We are undertaking a soft-start as per the communication issued from dates 12-14th August. The following year groups will attend on the following schedule for full days with school transport running as normal :-

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date  | Pupils to attend  |
| Weds 12th August | S1, S5 & S6 (08:45 – 14:45) |
| Thurs 13th August | S2, S3 & S4 (08:45 – 15:35) |
| Friday 14th August | S1, S5 & S6 (08:45 – 14:45) |

Given this planned partial attendance of pupils, we would ask that any families for whom this causes significant difficulty, to please telephone the school and we will try to support this, bearing in mind that emergency critical childcare ceases on Thursday 6th August for Early Childhood Centres and Friday 7th August for school-aged children. **All pupils in East Ayrshire should therefore be attending full-time by Monday 17th August**, other than young people with ongoing health issues, quarantining or self-isolating.

**Wellbeing and Learning**

Your child’s wellbeing will always be our prime concern and staff are ready to welcome your child back to school in a welcoming way that links to our ongoing work on relationships across all of our schools.

**Transport and Arrival of Pupils**

School transport will run as normal and pupils should access their assigned transport in the usual way. Where pupils are dropped off at school by car, it would be hugely helpful if you could drop them at the top of the street leading into school and allow them to walk the remaining short distance to prevent the school entrance becoming overcrowded. We respectfully ask that pupils are not dropped directly at the school entrance to prevent this busy area becoming overcrowded and remind you that **private resident carparks on approach to the school should not be used in any circumstances** to drop children off or as a turning point for vehicles. It is essential that we support the health and wellbeing of our local community and adhering to this will be a crucial aspect of doing so.

Clearly these measures will not be the case for young people with additional support needs who require to be dropped off in school proximity and we ask that, in this case, parents/carers take care in the car park, which will be busy with staff cars and school buses. Your child does not require a face covering for school transport, but is absolutely welcome to wear a covering should they prefer to do so. Sanitation of hands will be expected on bus entry (for public and school transport) and staff working as escorts in taxis will be wearing a face covering. We have a safe, lockable facility for bike storage and pupils are encouraged to walk or cycle to school where it is safe to do so.

Upon arrival at school, our young people will be directed to specific entrances by staff and will be asked to use the entrance nearest the subject they are attending at the beginning of the school day and after breaks. These entrances will be clearly signposted and we will have staff on hand to direct pupils next week. Inside the building, pupils will follow a one-way system where possible and this will be marked out clearly with arrows on the floor. We will share this information with pupils when they return next week and staff will be on hand to support them and ensure that the processes are being followed. We strongly advise that pupils are not dropped off at school prior to 8:30am as supervision will not be available before this time and pupils will not be permitted access to the school building.

In accordance with government guidelines, parents will not be able to enter the school, and arrangements will be made with you directly should an emergency occur and you are required to come to collect your child.

**New S1 Pupils**

It’s a huge day for our S1 pupils and parents and we cannot wait to welcome you to Stewarton Academy. On arrival at school, S6 pupils will be situated near the school entrance to greet S1 pupils and guide them towards a designated outdoor area. S1 pupils should look out for S6 pupils holding up signs for them, but please assure them that we will spot them easily as it just them and our S5/6 pupils in school together on their first two days. S6 guides will be on hand to direct and usher S1 pupils around the school throughout the day and for a necessary period of time until they are familiar with the layout of the school.

**Ongoing Measures to Protect your Child/Children and Your Family**

Like all schools, we have been working over the summer break and since the government announcement of full school return to mitigate risk wherever possible for staff and pupils ahead of their return next week. By Tuesday 11th August, we will publish our whole-school risk assessment alongside our individual (practical) subject risk assessments on the school website for parents.

One of the biggest challenges we face is guarding against crowding during breaks and lunch and, to counteract this, we will be making some adjustments to the school day. The start and finish times of the school day will not be impacted in any way and we will share details with pupils and parents of amended arrangements for break and lunch when planning and consultation have been completed.

We will be encouraging and supporting regular and effective hand-hygiene routines on entry/exit from the school building, before and after eating and throughout the school day. Pupils are free to bring their own hand sanitiser to school should you wish and are actively encouraged to bring tissues to school with them to capture coughs and sneezes and safely dispose. In line with national guidance, pupils and staff are not required to wear face coverings or masks in the school building, but are absolutely entitled to should they wish.

**Uniform and School Bags**

As mentioned in previous correspondence, we absolutely encourage the wearing of school uniform for our pupils. However, we completely understand that acquiring and purchasing items of the uniform may have been challenging for some of our families over the lockdown period. Please do what you can in terms of having your children in as close to full uniform as you can without it bringing any sense of stress or anxiety to you or your family. It will help us to hit the ground running in creating as normal and purposeful a learning environment as possible for our young people, but is far less important than their wellbeing and having them in front of us. Full details of our uniform are available on the school website.

Pupils are permitted and expected to bring school bags with them to store and transport their learning materials. This will be particularly important to minimise sharing of resources. We expect pupils to bring an appropriate change of clothes (see school website) when they have PE and to change out of these and back into uniform following their PE lesson to maintain the highest possible hygiene and safety levels.

**Catering**

In the Head of Education’s letter, information has been shared on catering arrangements across the council and you can find more information at on the [East Ayrshire Council Website](https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/EducationAndLearning/Schools-Catering/SchoolLunchMenus.aspx).

In Stewarton Academy, we intend to operate a pre-order and meal delivery service to pupils. The pupils will eat their pre-packed lunch in designated classrooms and will be able to go outside in the school grounds afterwards until the end of lunchtime. Other than for use of toilets and hand hygiene routines, pupils will not be permitted to be anywhere else within the school building during breaks and lunch to mitigate the risk of crowding. We are strongly advising that pupils remain in school for lunch as we are not responsible for safety measures in local shops, businesses or amenities. If pupils do decide to leave the school campus, they will be expected to adhere to physical distancing and face covering requirements. S1 pupils will not be permitted to leave the school campus at all unless they are going home for lunch.

The pre-order system will be linked to ParentPay and the pupil’s school login details. Please ensure that you have signed up for and activated your ParentPay account as a matter of priority. We will share S1 login details with pupils on the first day they attend and ensure that they know how to access the system. Further details will follow on school catering arrangements when planning is concluded.

Pupils can continue to bring a packed lunch and we ask parents to work with us in actively encouraging young people to remain on the school site for lunch, as we are unable to supervise any provision made outside of school.

**COVID-19 Management**

* Please do not send your child to school or ECC if they, or any of your household, have symptoms of COVID-19, please alert us to this immediately should this occur.
* Please arrange to pick your child up from school immediately if you are contacted to advise that they are symptomatic, and follow subsequent medical advice. Schools have to ensure that any child/young person who is symptomatic is taken home as soon as possible.

**Some Practicalities….**

In summary, we absolutely appreciate that this will be a return to school involving a huge mixture of both anxiety, but also indeed joy as young people see their friends and staff again. As a final helpful list to parents, can you please support us by:

* Reinforcing hygiene measures and social distancing with your child(ren).
* Having your child bring tissues to school to capture any coughs or sneezes.
* Ensuring your child does not bring unnecessary items to school.
* Working with your school in a positive way, even if things are difficult, we all want to help.
* Reinforcing positive relationships between children and our staff.
* Using our meal pre-order system and giving your child a break-time snack and breakfast.
* Not dropping children off directly at school gates (where possible), this will help us prioritise this space for young people with additional support needs who require this access.
* Understanding that we are not permitted to allow visitors to school buildings, other than in emergency or other exceptional circumstances.

I will end by thanking you all so much again for your support of your child’s learning, for your support and encouragement of the school staff over the last few months and for hanging in with us. We simply cannot wait to welcome our young people back to school.

Kindest regards

Ryan Miller

Head Teacher