

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am delighted to share with you our plans for August. Before I do so, I wish to place on record my gratitude to colleagues, young people, and parents/carers for the support expressed throughout the school closure period. I am acutely aware of the challenges of home learning and appreciate that everyone is looking forward to the summer break. I would also like to reiterate my view that times like this can strengthen and enhance our sense of community.

At the heart of this communication is a strong desire to do what is best for our young people, staff, and wider community.

Education is a topic of much debate at the moment, and rightly so. However, I am very keen that we do not overlook the fundamental reasons for a gradual return to school as of August. Regardless of strength of feeling or a shared desire to return to school as normal, no one can increase the size of the building or alter the appropriate NHS guidance simply through desire alone.

The relevant guidance is clear and includes the need to maintain social distancing of two metres. To provide a context from which this can be understood, we require three separate classrooms to accommodate one class group of thirty pupils.

Unfortunately, we do not have three teachers per class, nor do we have classroom capacity to accommodate three times as many class groups as normal on any given day. In reality, and despite much public debate and discussion, the issue in terms of satisfying public health advice is one of a constraint between the space available and the space required.

I recognise that the number of days spent in school will have a direct impact on family life and the viability of a potential return to employment, further education, or training for some of our parents/carers. Regrettably, it is not possible to create a model that will satisfy every family. However, it is possible to maximise our return against the constraints we are working within, and I am confident that we have done so.

Hereafter, you will find a breakdown of both our initial model and planned model as of August 31<sup>st</sup>. Please also consider the guidance referred to at the end of this letter for a range of practical advice around what will happen on-site in August.

## **Initial Phase      Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> August until Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August**

It is correct and appropriate to gradually move towards our medium to longer term model. This consistent approach across the authority is welcome and will ensure that Health and Safety remains at the fore of our re-opening plans.

For this thirteen-day period, some year groups are split to allow us to support pupil understanding of the health and safety measures in place, and to afford us time to focus on ensuring that young people can access and contribute to online learning effectively. Over the course of the first thirteen days, young people will average attendance of one day per week, with some enhancements for pupils in S4 to S6.

| <b>Day</b>                        | <b>Pupils in attendance</b>                                    |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> August | All S3 pupils  |
| Thursday 13 <sup>th</sup> August  | All S2 pupils, and half of our S4 cohort (group 1)             |
| Friday 14 <sup>th</sup> August    | All S1 pupils, half of S4 (group 2) and half of S5/6 (group 1) |
| Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> August    | All S1 pupils, and half of our S5/6 cohort (group 2)           |
| Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup> August   | All S5/6 pupils  |
| Wednesday 19 <sup>th</sup> August | All S3 pupils, and half of our S4 cohort (group 1)             |
| Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> August  | All S2 pupils, and half of our S4 cohort (group 2)             |
| Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> August    | Half of our S5/6 cohort (group 1)                              |
| Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> August    | Half of our S5/6 cohort (group 2) and all S1 pupils            |
| Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> August   | All S2 pupils, and half of our S5/6 cohort                     |
| Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> August | All S3 pupils  |
| Thursday 27 <sup>th</sup> August  | All S4 pupils  |
| Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> August    | All S5/6 pupils  |

We will email all pupils to let them know of the cohort they sit within for those year groups where a split is necessary for the first thirteen days. Young people should check their glow mail at the start of next week to find their grouping. We will also follow this up by post, and the letter should get to you at some point next week or just after the start of the summer holiday period.

## Planned Model Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August onwards

Provided that the initial gradual re-opening period demonstrates that it is safe to do so, we will then scale up to the following in-school delivery model.

|             | <b>Mondays</b>       | <b>Tuesdays</b> | <b>Wednesdays</b> | <b>Thursdays</b>     | <b>Fridays</b>  |
|-------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>S5/6</b> | All S5/6 pupils      | All S5/6 pupils |                   |                      | All S5/6 pupils |
| <b>S4</b>   | -                    |                 | All S4 pupils     | All S4 pupils        | All S4 pupils   |
| <b>S3</b>   | Half of S3 (group 2) |                 | All S3 pupils     | Half of S3 (Group 1) |                 |
| <b>S2</b>   | -                    | All S2 pupils   |                   | All S2 pupils        |                 |
| <b>S1</b>   | All S1 pupils        |                 |                   |                      | All S1 pupils   |

S3 will attend one day as an entire year group and one day each as half groups. S5/6 will finish at 12.25pm on a Friday to allow for staggered dismissal across year groups.

In terms of coverage, this works out as two school days per week for all young people, with the enhancement of an additional day for those within the Senior Phase (S4-S6).

|             | <b>Percentage of days in school</b> | <b>Coverage of courses (e.g. including RE and PSE, S5/6 would have contact with seven subjects)</b> | <b>Percentage of contact in each subject (S3 to S6) or curricular area (S1 and S2)</b> |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>S5/6</b> | 60% (3 days)                        | 100%  | 50%  |
| <b>S4</b>   | 60% (3 days)                        | 100%  | 50% - 75% (Maths and English)  |
| <b>S3</b>   | 40% (2 days)                        | 100%*   | 50%  |
| <b>S2</b>   | 40% (2 days)                        | 78%*  | 100% (by curricular area)  |
| <b>S1</b>   | 40% (2 days)                        | 78%*  | 100% (by curricular area)  |

\* Allowing for some rotation in PSE, PE and RE

In S1 and S2, all young people will experience learning in each curricular area. Limitations in respect of the viability of using some of our classrooms (e.g. limited capacity in HE and Technical) mean that there is a reduction to an average of eleven subjects in S1 and S2 rather than fourteen.

Pupils in the Senior Phase will benefit from 50% direct class contact time in all subject areas.

While much of the national discussion has focussed on days spent in school, little reference is made to contact time by subject area. Our model returns contact time in each subject (S5/6 to S3) or curricular area (S1 to S2) at 50% or above in all cases.

### Class Groups

Young people in S3 to S6 will remain within the class groups that they are currently part of, but the class will be split into two different cohorts. We will utilise the Small Gym, Library, Assembly Hall and Drama Studio to allow for some sections where capacity cannot come in under twelve pupils.

Young people in S1 and S2 will be divided into groups of ten to ensure that we can maintain appropriate social distancing and timetable all sections. The email we send to pupils will clarify which group of ten each pupil sits within. We will also send a letter home to this effect.

## **Scalability**

We are confident that our proposed model takes us to capacity when two-metre social distancing is applied. In the event that public health advice around social distancing were to change, we believe we could scale provision to three or four days per pupil across all years, but it would depend upon the specifics of any potential change and on an analysis of viability by year group.

Should the advice support such a change, we would revert to our previously planned thirty-three period model and advise families and young people of a revised attendance pattern as soon as possible.

We also have scope to alternate the Thursday and Friday provision between S1 and S2 should our model need to be in place beyond September. This would allow for a fair balance across year groups in terms of periods of teaching time. We will review S1 and S2 provision in terms of switching Thursdays and Fridays in early October.

## **Sibling Groups**

Thank you for completing our form on sibling groups. The form will remain open until Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June and can be accessed here:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=oyzTzM4Wj0KVQTctawUZKUFJuHhZwLNJgb9x-Yqg7g9UMjRTS0w1SjVDOEVMN0FMVfFUDFIMklzVy4u>

Our model is based on year group coverage rather than house group coverage, which means it is not always the case that siblings are due to attend together. We will analyse returns in the coming days and communicate our plans to accommodate siblings in those situations where it is not possible to stay at home while a brother or sister is in school.

## **Transport**

I understand that transport is an area of concern for many families. By way of reassurance, the Transport department are aware of our model and need and are actively devising plans to support our young people to access school transport. As soon as the viability or otherwise of transport plans is known, I will send communication out via the school app, Twitter, website and Facebook.

## **Further practical advice**

I am conscious of the length of this letter but recognise that you may have more questions in relation to some of the practical aspects of re-opening. Linda McAulay-Griffiths (Head of Education) sent out communication last night which covered a range of matters and can be accessed here:

<https://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/news/article/statement-from-linda-mcaulay-griffiths-head-of-education-to-parents-and-carers>

In addition, we released a guidance document to support re-opening which address several practical and school specific issues that may be of interest. I would recommend that you consider the guidance therein. You can access the document by clicking on this link:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/ea/public/stjosephsacademy/uploads/sites/2043/2020/06/18215251/SJA-Renewal-Plan.pdf>

I trust that you will find this information helpful and wish all members of our school community a well-deserved rest over the summer period. As always, I am contactable on the email address shown at the top of this correspondence. All further communication referenced herein will be addressed prior to the end of term. We very much look forward to welcoming our young people back to St. Joseph's in August.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in red ink, appearing to read 'J. Kane', written in a cursive style.

Mr Kane

Head Teacher