

Elphin Community College

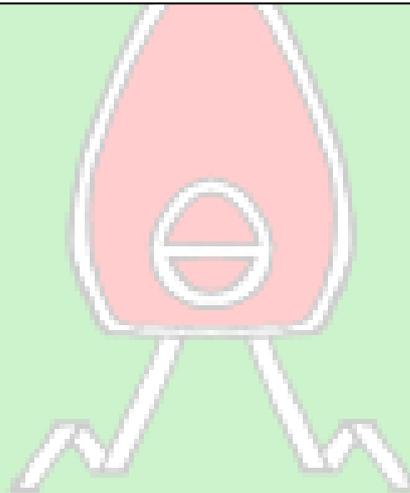
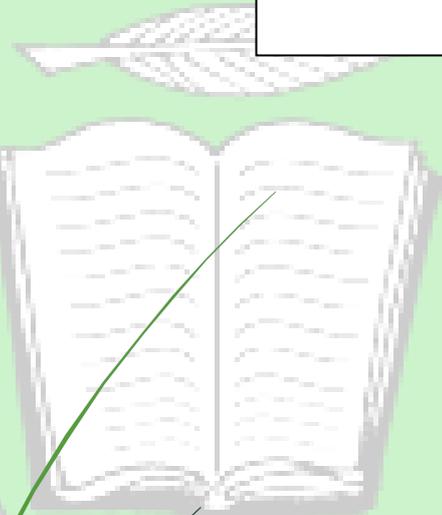
Information Booklet

On Our

Safe Return to School

August 2021

20/08/2021



**Elphin Community College**  
**Return to School 2021 Guidance Document**  
**Stakeholder Information Bulletin 21-08-2021**

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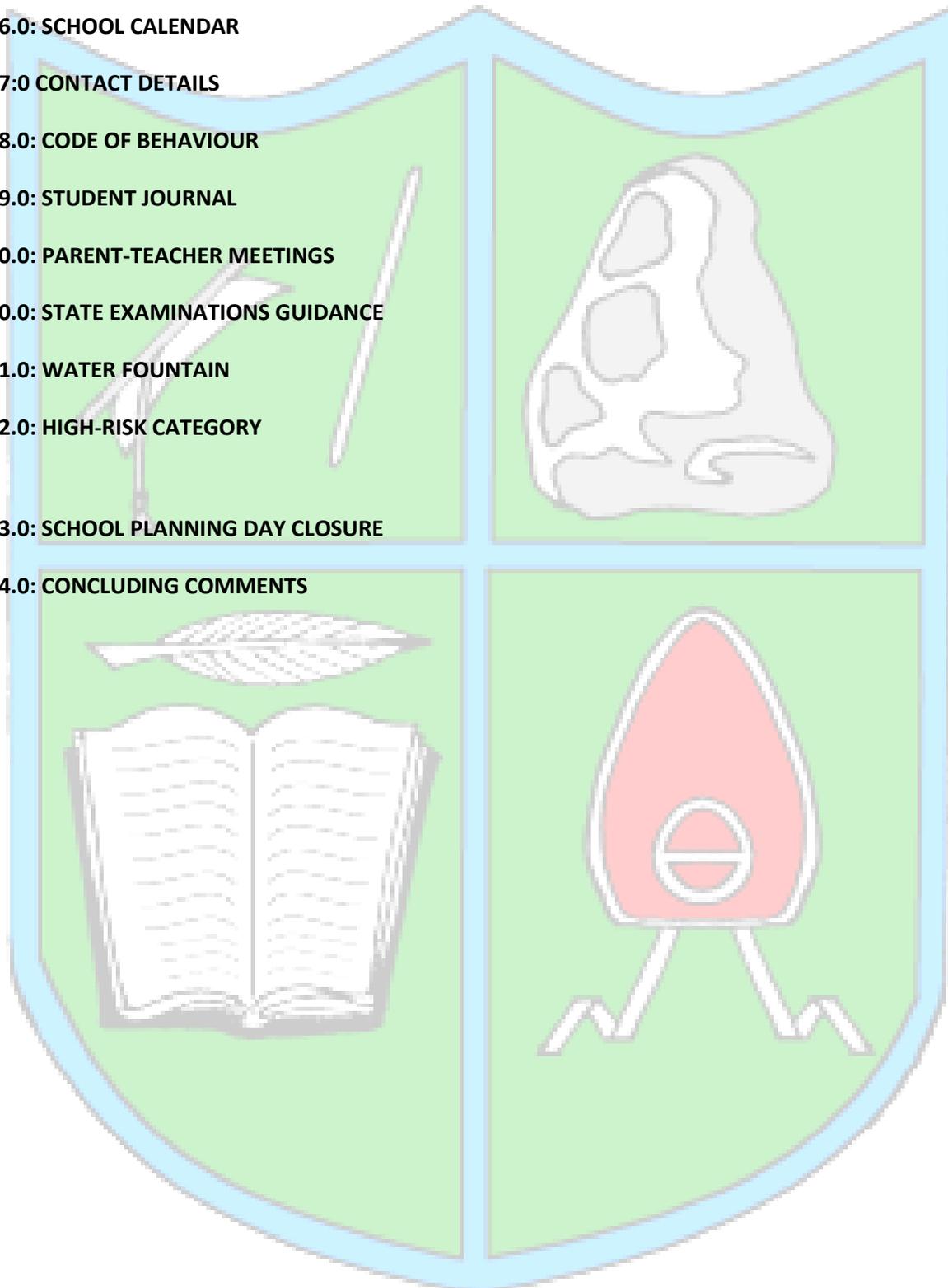
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## 1.0: Introduction

Please note that all the following information is current and subject to change at any time on the advice of the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE)

Dear Parents/Guardians/Students/Staff,

We hope all is well with you and your family. As we approach the return to school, it is vitally important that we all approach our return to school with a collective, positive and consistent approach. A sense of calm, of safety, of hope, belonging and connectedness to our school community and above all, a collective sense of pragmatism and common sense will ensure an efficient return to class for all.

Clear guidance has been provided to all schools so that each school can work to ensure the safest possible return to school for all students, staff and the wider school community. Our Covid 19 Response Plans have been updated and are available on our school website [www.elphincollege.ie](http://www.elphincollege.ie)

We are following the same working procedures and protocols that were in place in May for students/staff/visitors. Preparation work is continuing, and we will continue to ensure we do everything that is possible to minimise the risk posed by COVID -19.

To date we can inform you of the following:

1. Classrooms are laid out following the physical distancing guidelines issued by the Government.
2. All classroom doors and windows will remain open at all times. New CO2 monitors are due to be in place by mid-September with some arriving this week to schools.
3. Hand sanitiser stations are in use in all classrooms and common areas. Students will sanitise their hands at the beginning and end of each lesson.
4. All bathrooms have water, soap and hand-drying facilities.
5. All staff will have completed a [infection control management training course](#) provided by the Department of Education and Skills.
6. New break and lunchtime routines will continue to ensure physical distancing can be maintained.

All of the documents will be available at [gov.ie/backtoschool](http://gov.ie/backtoschool)

All students will receive a full and detailed briefing on the measures they must follow to minimise the COVID 19 risk and receive their journals and timetables. It is imperative that students arrive on time for their induction and every morning thereafter. We now ask parents and students to get fully prepared for their return to school. Please prepare uniforms, copybooks, school bags and all other necessary stationary. Full school uniform must be worn each day except PE day where suitable PE clothing is to be worn.

## **2.0: Health and Safety Measures**

### ***2.1: Knowing the Symptoms of COVID-19***

In order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it is important to know and recognise the symptoms. Those symptoms are as follows:

- high temperature
- cough
- shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
- loss of smell, or taste or distortion of taste
- If your child/children complain of any of these symptoms, **we are insisting for the sake of the school community that you keep your child/children at home and call your GP without delay.**
- If a **student or staff member** has been abroad '[non-green list countries](#)' prior to returning to school, we are asking that they follow the most up to date guidance regarding their travel and possible self-isolation. Please email [info.elphin@gretb.ie](mailto:info.elphin@gretb.ie) if students will be absent regarding the return to school.
- Students will be encouraged and expected to follow health advice regarding hand sanitation, respiratory etiquette, etc. Requirements in this regard will be clearly communicated to all students from the beginning of the year.
- An Isolation Room will be available in the school should a member of the School Community become ill. It is vital that all Parents/Guardians have registered the correct contact details with the school. If in doubt, contact the school office immediately on 071-9635031 or [info.elphin@gretb.ie](mailto:info.elphin@gretb.ie)

- Hand sanitiser dispensers will be deployed in every teaching space, stairwell, and entry point of the school campus. All students will be required to use hand sanitiser when entering the campus in the morning and when entering every teaching space throughout the school day.
- Wash hand basins, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets.

### **3.0: Coming To and From School**

As per Government regulations, all students travelling on school transport will be required to **wear a facemask, sit next to sibling(s)** or remain seated next to the same individual for the remainder of the term.

#### **3.1: Morning**

- Buses will park at their allocated point in the mornings. On arrival to the school students will be required to remain on the bus until students in front of them have safely exited the bus.
- Students arriving by bus should immediately enter the school. Students who walk, cycle or are dropped to school may not enter the grounds until 8.45am and we ask parents not to enter the school grounds during the drop off.
- Upon arrival, students must go directly to their base classroom and sit at their own assigned seat. Students must seek permission to attend the toilets at all times during the school day including upon arrival.

#### **3.2 Walking or Cycling**

All schools are encouraging students to walk or cycle to school if they can do so. Parents/guardians are required to observe and respect all social distancing protocols in relation to any contact with the school. This includes maintaining a two-metre distance to other families when dropping off or collecting their children from the school and any contact with the school.

#### **3.3: Arriving at School**

When students arrive at school, they should proceed directly to their designated areas/classroom which will be explained to them on their return to school, Students should not congregate in groups close to one another. Assigned entrances and exits have been given to all year groups and will be explained again on return to school.

Students will be asked to adhere to queue management protocols in the mornings when entering the school building. Physical distancing signage will be used to indicate 2m distancing in corridors.

### 3.4: School Transport advice from Bus Éireann

The following advice has been issued by Bus Éireann:

- A student is not to use school transport if they are displaying symptoms
- Students are to maintain physical distancing while waiting for transport
- Students are asked to sit in pre-assigned seating and next to a sibling or child from their class group (this should be the same child at all times)
- Students are requested to use hand sanitiser onboard the bus
- Students should observe respiratory etiquette at all times while waiting for and while they are on board the bus.
- To disembark the bus one by one in an orderly fashion
- With the exception of those children who for medical or special educational needs reasons are not in a position to wear a face mask or face covering, all other students travelling on the post-primary scheme are required to wear face coverings while waiting for the bus and once onboard transport.

To minimise the congregation of students when disembarking from buses in the mornings. We will agree on a protocol with Bus Eireann that will reduce large numbers of students queuing at the front gate of the school at any one time. This will require the cooperation of students as there may be delays as they disembark buses in the morning.

All of these measures will be explained in detail to all students upon return to school.

### 4.0: Visiting the School / Appointments

- Elphin Community College has always been delighted to welcome parents/guardians to our school. However due to COVID-19, a strict protocol is now required to ensure exposure to the virus is minimised. Access to the school is by appointment only and by the permission of the Principal. Please contact the school office should you wish to make an appointment. Students will not be called out of class during the school day to

facilitate appointments, etc. A note must be provided, which can be shown to the secretary/principal/deputy principal and the student may leave during the nearest break time in this event. All pick-ups and drop-offs must occur outside the school gate.

- All invited visitors to the school will be asked to wear face coverings and complete contact tracing recording sheets at the main office.

### **5.0: Face Covers/Mask**

- Face Masks are to be worn by all students and teachers where a physical distance of 2m cannot be maintained. In this regard, students will be required to wear masks in all circumstances where a distance of 2m cannot be maintained.
- Students must wear a plain face mask (no designs or images) when on school premises. Access will not be granted to the school in instances where a student does not have a face mask. Masks should be used as per guidelines and washed after use. Sanitising materials will be provided in all classrooms to allow students to wipe their own desks and chairs at the start of each lesson. In practical classrooms, equipment must be cleaned after each use.

### **6.0: Locker Management**

Lockers will currently not be provided to students. This will be reviewed as necessary according to Public Health guidance.

### **7.0: Way to Pay**

GRETB schools no longer can accept cash. All parents will be actively encouraged to use the Way 2 Pay online payment platform to facilitate payments and collection of monies. If you need assistance in this regard, please contact the office 071 9635031 or [info.elphin@gretb.ie](mailto:info.elphin@gretb.ie)

### **8.0: Uniform**

The school uniform must be worn at all times with the exception of PE day where students will wear in their PE gear and wear it for that day only. Regular washing of the uniform is essential. As windows will be open in classrooms to allow for recommended air circulation, classrooms will be cooler. Students may choose to wear appropriate clothing underneath their uniform.

Please note that any additional hoodies/jumpers may not be worn over/under the school jumper. Under Armour or other thermal-wear should be worn under the jumper instead.

### **9.0: Personal Hygiene**

- Students will be encouraged and expected to follow health advice regarding hand sanitation, respiratory etiquette, etc. Requirements in this regard will be clearly communicated to all students from the beginning of the year.
- Hand sanitiser dispensers will be deployed in every teaching space, assembly areas and entry points of the school campus. All students will be required to use hand sanitiser when entering the campus in the morning and when entering every teaching space throughout the school day.
- Wash hand basins, liquid soap and hand drying facilities are provided in all toilets.
- It would be advisable for all students where possible to shower on your return from school to support the minimisation of risk to your family unit.

### **10.0 Cleaning Routines**

Student classrooms will have appropriate cleaning products provided to enable students to wipe down their desk, chair and surface on entry and before leaving the room. (A specific protocol will be developed in this regard).

#### **10.1: Standard Operating Procedure for Cleaning Student Desk**

##### ***10.1.1: Rationale***

Section 7 'Hygiene and Cleaning in School' of the main DES document 'COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable re-opening of Post Primary Schools' states:

'If students are moving between classrooms, consideration may be given to appropriate cleaning products being provided to enable them to wipe down their desk, chair and surface before leaving the room'.

##### ***10.1.2: Materials Required***

The following method is recommended:

- Each classroom is given a sanitising station comprising:
  - Suitable clearly labelled disinfectant spray

- Suitable paper wipes
- Both are held in a clear area/station in the classroom
- NOTE: Paper wipes + spray is generally more economical than using disinfectant wet wipes and also better in terms of disposal etc
- Each classroom has a dedicated disposal bag for the used paper wipes
- The bin liner/bag and allow students to deposit the used paper wipes easily

### 10.1.3: Procedure

- One student/teacher distributes one paper wipe to each student in the room - including themselves.
- The class teacher will spray individual desks with viricidal spray and invite students to wipe the same with cleaning paper roll. The teacher applies a viricidal spray to the centre of each desk and the top of each chair where it is usually handled.
- Each student wipes their desk and chair.
- Each student will place their wipe in a bin in the classroom.
- All students then sanitise their hands on leaving the classroom.
- NOTE:
  - Prior to implementing this procedure, it is advisable to ascertain if there are any students who are unwilling or anxious to participate due to being in any high-risk category etc.
  - It is a requirement that all students adhere to these protocols as this is part of our collective responsibility to maintain a COVID free and safe environment for all.
  - Additional cleaning materials and equipment will be available in every teaching space. Any student found to be interfering with or misusing these safety products and equipment will be subject to immediate sanction.



	communal surfaces or they will need to clean the surface after the personal item is removed.		
13	Have you advised staff and students to avoid sharing items such as cups, bottles, cutlery, pens	Yes	
14	Have you put in place a written cleaning schedule to be made available to cleaning staff including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Items and areas to be cleaned</li> <li>• Frequency of cleaning</li> <li>• Cleaning materials to be used</li> <li>• Equipment to be used and method of operation</li> </ul>	Yes	
15	If disinfection of contaminated surfaces is required, is a system in place to do this following cleaning?	Yes	
16	If cleaning staff have been instructed to wear gloves when cleaning are they aware of the need to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, both before and after wearing gloves?	Yes	
17	Have you a system in place for the disposal of cleaning cloths and used wipes in a rubbish bag? Current HSE guidance recommends waste such as cleaning waste, tissues etc. from a person suspected of having COVID-19 should be double bagged and stored in a secure area for 72 hours before being presented for general waste collection.	Yes	
18	Have you ensured there is a system in place to make sure reusable cleaning equipment including mop heads and non-disposable cloths are clean before re-use?	Yes	
19	Have you ensured there is a system in place to ensure that equipment such as buckets are emptied and cleaned with a fresh solution of disinfectant before re-use?	Yes	

### 11.0 Physical Distancing

1. **Students and staff** will adhere to all traffic flow signs by adhering our one-way system.
2. Every effort has been made to ensure 1m Physical distancing between students in classroom layouts (in line with the Department of Education Roadmap (July 2020).

3. Queuing systems have been implemented in specific areas throughout the campus. Students are asked to comply with queuing systems that have been put in place. These will be communicated in detail to students on their return.
4. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been provided to all staff. Teachers will guide the students on these specific SOPs.

### **12.0: Students Personal PPE equipment**

- In addition to our PPE stocks, it is advisable for students to carry their own personal hand sanitiser and anti-viral cleaning wipes which are available in most shops and pharmacists. Students are advised to bring a spare mask in a ziplock bag also.

### **13.0: Standardised Operating Procedures for Classroom Management**

A standard operating procedure is a written instruction describing how a routine task is to be carried out; when, where and by whom.

#### **14.1: Classroom**

- Leave all doors and windows open to ventilate the rooms sufficiently.
- Ensure all attendance rolls taken are accurate.
- The teacher and SNA will endeavour to keep a minimum of 2 metre from students.
- Teachers will encourage students to share their completed assignments on Microsoft Teams to minimise viral spread.
- At the end of class, the teacher will invite students to leave row by row in a controlled manner.
- All class seating plans must be uploaded to VS Ware to support contact tracing.
- All students and staff must have all their own supplies; there will be no sharing/borrowing of books, copies, pens, etc. within the classroom.

### **15.0: School Calendar**

Calendar 2021/2022 has been disseminated to all members of the school community.

### **16.0 Contact Details**

Please ensure that we have up to date contact details on file for you. We have also asked parents to ensure that we have up to date contact details (**home address, phone numbers, email address and emergency contact numbers**). Now more than ever, this is of paramount importance.

### **17.0: Code of Behaviour**

All parents and students must sign the Code of Behaviour (COB). These are exceptional times, and on occasion, they require extraordinary measures. Our COB will be amended to reflect the changes outlined above and/or other public health advice issued in the coming weeks and months. Students must remain on the school premises for the duration of the school day, unless students provide a letter to state that they are returning to their own home for the duration of the lunch break. Any breach of the health and safety systems will be dealt with in a robust manner to protect all stakeholders, and the communities the school serves.

### **18.0: Student Journal**

The Student Journal has proven to be an invaluable communication tool between home and school. The Journal is intended as an aid to students to support them in their studies. Pages are also set aside for communication between parents and teachers.

### **19.0: Parent-Teacher Meetings**

Further advice is due from the Department of Education and Skills in relation to Parent-Teacher Meetings. We will update parents once we receive this guidance.

### **20.0: State Examinations Guidance**

The most up to date information regarding curriculum changes can be found on [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie).

### **21.0: Water Fountains**

**Students and staff** will have no access to water fountains due to hygiene restrictions

### **22.0: High-Risk Category**

Any parent who has concerns for their son/daughter and feel they may fall into a high-risk category and believe that a return to school may be challenging, please contact me at [071 9635031](tel:0719635031) or [info.elphin@gretb.ie](mailto:info.elphin@gretb.ie) so we can start to plan for supporting their safe return to school.

### **23.0: School Planning Day Closure**

Once the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) have updated their modified subject specifications (syllabus or programme of learning), The school will be required to close for one day to support a professional development event for our staff to upskill on these updates.

### **24.0: Concluding Comments**

We **expect revisions and updates** to this document. Further details regarding the return to school will be communicated to parents via text message, the school website and social media. Every effort has been made to provide all the necessary requirements as laid out by the Department of Education and Skills, but **individual responsibility** is the key to continuing our new school culture and its long-term success.

As school staff, we are very excited about welcoming back our excellent students to school. We look forward to meeting our new students and please rest assured we will continue to do all we can to support our students, families and staff as we return to the new school year.

Yours in Education,



Ms. Siobhàn Cullen

Principal

Elphin Community College