21st August 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

RE: Re-opening of Killeenduff National School

We hope you and your families are keeping well.

As you are aware, our school has now been closed since 12th March due to the COVID-19 situation. We are now hoping to re-open our school safely, in line with current NPHET and DES guidance and recommendations.

Re-opening the school safely will require the co-operation of all members of our School Community – BOM, School Leadership, Staff, Parents and Pupils. We will all be called on to play our part in ensuring that re-opening of the school is done in a safe manner which prevents the spread of the virus and allows the vital work of Teaching and Learning to proceed with as little disruption as possible.

We have drawn up our DES COVID-19 Response Plan and our Logistics Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of our school. These plans give details of

• Physical preparation, signage, hand sanitiser stations,

• Advice, procedures and training for the safe return to working in the school for all school staff and pupils

• General and specific advice on how all pupils, staff, parents and visitors will prevent the spread of the virus

The DES COVID-19 Response Plan, Logistics Plan and Policy Statement will be sent to parents/guardians via email and we have also published the plans on the school website www.killeenduffns.ie

**We realise there is a lot of information here – however it is imperative that you familiarise yourself with this information and the COVID-19 Response Plan, Logistics Plan and Policy Statement. There will be a letter attached to the COVID-19 Policy Statement and Plan when it is emailed to you. Parents/guardians are asked to sign and return the letter attached to it acknowledging that you have both received and read the documentation and agree to adhere to the school’s COVID 19 Response plan prior to your child returning to school.**

**There will be a separate form to be signed and returned to the school also with a number of permissions needed to be updated in your child’s file. If you have any queries or concerns in relation to this, you can contact me via email to discuss – killeenduff.ns@hotmail.com and I will endeavour to respond as soon as possible. If you require a hard copy of these the letter/form to be posted out to you, please let me know via the school email.**

We are satisfied that we have control measures in place to ensure that this will be a safe re-opening. It will take some time for all of us to get used to these new circumstances as we become familiar with the new routines and procedures designed to keep everyone safe and to prevent the spread of the virus. There will, undoubtedly, be some unforeseen challenges and we will deal with these as they arise. We ask that mutual respect, patience, consideration and care continue to be our guiding principles with communication and interaction for the benefit of all in our school community, and most especially our pupils.

As per Department guidelines, pupils in 3rd -6th class are expected to maintain a physical distance where possible. It is recognised that younger children are unlikely to maintain a physical distance indoors so there is no requirement for children from Junior Infants to Second Class to maintain a physical distance within their class bubble. However, children will be seated at their own tables in each room.

**Physical Distancing will be achieved in two ways:-**

***- Increasing Separation****:* This will be achieved by re-configuring the classrooms to maximise physical distancing. Each class will be referred to as a bubble and we will ensure that there is as little contact as possible between children in different bubbles.

*-* ***Decreasing Interaction:*** This will be achieved by decreasing the potential for children from different bubbles to interact. There will be separate entrance/exit gates and routes for class bubbles to enter and exit the school and to access their classrooms. Bubbles will be assigned specific play areas for each bubble,

We will endeavour to make these routines enjoyable activities for the children, emphasising safety at all times.

While all children will be welcome back to school, we would remind parents/guardians that, where children are displaying colds, coughs or flu like symptoms, they should not be sent to school. Children who display such symptoms in school will be brought to the isolation room (which will be the SET room) and parents/guardians asked to collect them from the school. They will be accompanied by a staff member who will wait with them until they are collected by their parents/guardians.

Government policy continues to advise against non-essential travel overseas for everyone. Children/Staff who have travelled from countries not on the Green List should not attend school during the 14-day self-isolation period.

Further information on COVID-19 symptoms in children is available at: - <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/if-your-child-has-symptoms.html>

Teachers will make children aware of the proper hygiene procedures regarding hand washing and etiquette related to sneezing, coughing or spitting. We would be grateful if you could also emphasise safe and acceptable behaviour in this regard to your children at home as part of the preparation for returning to school.

Our aim remains to re-open the school in an orderly safe manner, while reassuring the children and making them feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their friends in the new school environment. This will be achieved by all of us working towards this common goal, using safety, common sense, vigilance, and respect as our guiding principles.

Summary of our Plan for pupils and parents/guardians:

We would ask all parents/guardians to familiarise themselves with the following routines. Please be patient as we endeavour to embed these necessary precautionary and protective practices at the beginning of the school year.

It is imperative that:

**o Children or staff who are displaying cold, cough or flu signs do not attend school.**

**o Entry beyond the school gate is reserved for pupils and staff only.** Parents/guardians are asked to communicate with staff initially via phone call or email.

o Water and soap are available in all of the classrooms and bathrooms.

Hand hygiene will be promoted and encouraged and parents/guardians are asked to support the school in reinforcing this message.

**Frequency of hand hygiene:**

Pupils will perform hand hygiene

-On arrival at school

-Before eating or drinking

-After using the toilet

-After playing outdoors

-When their hands are physically dirty

-When they cough or sneeze

o Visitors to the school are by prior arrangement with the Principal or Deputy Principal.

o If adults cannot maintain a 2m distance from each other a face covering/mask must be worn – parents/guardians are asked to maintain a social distance outside the gate as they drop and collect their children.

o We ask parents/guardians please do not try to have meetings with members of staff in the playground at drop-off and collection times – meetings between parents/guardians and teachers can take place by prior arrangement via telephone or email. The office landline is 096- 49228 and email is killeenduff.ns@hotmail.com.

o All parents adhere to the following drop-off and collection plan – “stop, drop and go”. Parents are asked to park and walk their child to the entrance gate for their class, social distance and wear a face covering. Parents should not remain standing outside the school after this time.

* Children will need to have another supply of pencil, pens, colours and stationery at home as their pencil cases will remain in school.

There will be more information on the details outlined above in our School Covid 19 Response Plan and Logistics Plan which will be emailed to all parents/guardians and is available on the school website.

We are really looking forward to welcoming our children back to school and will be doing all that we can to ensure that the return to school is a safe and enjoyable experience for the children. While the school building will be relatively off limits to parents and visitors, we will be ensuring that we maintain good communication with parents via email, the website, Facebook, newsletters, school texts and phone where applicable.

As a staff, we are very aware that the children have been away from school since March 12th. We appreciate the time and effort that went into Home Learning, and we recognise the challenges that Home Learning presented for all families. Each child will be in a different place in relation to his/her learning, and we wish to assure you that staff will take that into consideration when planning for Teaching and Learning during the 2020/2021 school year.

The Department of Education and Skills has published Curriculum guidelines for us, and we ask you to trust our experience and professional expertise as we work with all the children during the return to school.

In the event that further guidelines are provided by the Department we will be in contact with you again.

Our COVID-19 Response Plan is a live document and subject to the latest DES and NPHET guidance.

The following websites provide further information on COVID-19 and on government advice and recommendations regarding the re-opening of schools:

• <https://www.education.ie/en/covid-19/>

• <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

•<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/a128d-back-to-school/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool/>

We are really looking forward to welcoming your child to/back to Killeenduff N.S. on Tuesday, September 1st @ 9:20am.

Kind regards,

Marie Weir Joanne Campion

Chairperson of BoM Principal