



Dear Parent or Carer,

### **Arrangements for the Start of Term**

We are pleased to confirm that all young people will be returning to school next week from Wednesday 12 August on a phased basis. As you can imagine, our number one priority is wellbeing and safety – further information for parents on the health and safety arrangements which will be in place will be issued as soon as possible.

We are looking forward to seeing all our young people and especially to welcoming our new S1 pupils! As you will be aware, the return to school will not be a return to the normality we all knew before lockdown. We have put many new arrangements in place to allow the school to operate as safely as possible. It will take some time for us to explain these to young people and for us all to get used to them. We will provide further information for parents on the detail of these arrangements over the next few days.

To allow a safe and orderly start to the session, we will be operating a phased return with two year groups in school each day from Wednesday 12 August to Friday 14 August. All year groups will be together in school from Monday 17 August.

Year groups will be in school next week on the following days:

Wednesday 12 August – **S1** (from 8.30 – 10.45 – see below) and **S3** (from 11.00)

Abercorn S1	8:30am
Brunstane S1	9:15am
Crichton S1	10am
Duddingston S1	10:45am

Thursday 13 August – **S2** (at 8.30) and **S4** (at 9am)

Friday 14 August – **S5** (at 8.30) and **S6** (at 9am)

As you will be aware, our new S1 pupils did not have the opportunity to take part in their three day visit in June. Large gatherings such as assemblies are not possible for the time being so, to allow us to welcome S1 in a safe and orderly way, we will stagger their arrival times by House Group for the first day only as set out above. To facilitate this, S3 pupils will arrive at the later time of 11.00.

## Getting to School

We want everyone to arrive safely and would ask for your support with the following arrangements.

- Young people are encouraged to walk or cycle. Bike storage is available – please ensure a lock is provided for all cycles (rigid D-locks are strongly recommended).
- Where young people use a service bus to travel to and from school, they are reminded of the need to wear a face covering and maintain physical distance.
- We anticipate that increased numbers of parents will wish to drive their young people to school. If this is your intention, please find a suitable nearby place to drop off and pick up.
- Parents are reminded that the school car park must not be used for drop off and pick up other than for young people with disabilities. While we appreciate parents may find this inconvenient, dropping off young people in the car park where other vehicles are moving is dangerous and can result in a further hazard when traffic backs up onto the main road.

## Interval and Lunchtime Arrangements

Our school catering service will be operating on a pre-order, pre-pay Grab and Go basis at lunchtime, with collection points at different locations around the building to avoid over-crowding. All S1 pupils will be given a free packed lunch on their first day.

In order to avoid cash handling and minimise queuing, payment will be by ParentPay only and further information will be shared next week regarding how to set this up.

In the short term, it will not be possible to offer a food service before school or at morning interval. Parents are asked to provide a snack for morning break, if desired.

There will be very limited seating inside the school building for dining and our internal social spaces will not be in use. Young people will be asked to spend breaktime outdoors in the fresh air for the time being.

Parents may provide packed lunches or make arrangements for young people to go home at lunchtime.

Any young people choosing to go to local shops and food outlets are reminded of the government requirement to wear a face covering and we would be very grateful if parents could reinforce this message.

## Wellbeing

We are very aware that lockdown has been a difficult time for many families and that there will be understandable anxiety about returning to school for many. A survey will be issued shortly to allow you to alert us to any significant health and wellbeing concerns ahead of young people arriving next week.

Our staff will be ready to reassure and support young people next week and in the days ahead. Portobello is a strong school community and I am confident that will help us all as we take our first steps towards a 'new normal' together.

Ahead of the return to school, please take time to have a look at the excellent resources at the link below, which have been designed by our colleagues at headquarters to help parents support their young people ahead of the return to school.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/backtoschool>

**...and finally!**

Please keep an eye out for further important information which will come out over the next few days. Staff in school and at council headquarters are working very hard to implement guidance as it comes out. You will appreciate that timescales have been tight and we are working in a dynamic situation, so your support and understanding is much appreciated.

Whether they are returning to us or joining #TeamPorty for the first time, please be assured that we are really looking forward to welcoming your young people next week!

Kind regards,



Ruth McKay

Head Teacher



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