



10 August 2020

Dear Parent / Carer

**Further Information re Return to School – August 2020**

We are looking forward to working together with you this year – and we will all be getting used to new ways of doing so in the days and weeks ahead! The Scottish Government have made clear that the return to school is not a return to normality and I am writing to provide you with more detail in relation to our plans this week and beyond.

As we confirmed last week, there will be a phased return so that we can focus on safely reintegrating our young people with new routines and procedures as well as their health and wellbeing.

Further to the information sent to you in last week's letters, please take some time to read over the information below which sets out the arrangements which have been made to allow a safe return to Portobello High School for our young people and staff. Arrangements will be kept under review as our young people return and we will keep you updated with any changes.

We are keen to get all our young people back to school as quickly but as safely as possible. This document gives an overview of the main issues and more information can be found in the links below and which will be updated regularly as information becomes available.

Finally, a big thanks for your support for the school and its staff at what is a challenging time for us all.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth McKay".

Ruth McKay

Head Teacher

## **Cleaning**

The school has undergone extensive cleaning in preparation for re-opening and all building systems, such as water supplies, have been subject to appropriate testing. Increased cleaning will continue using a combination of electrostatic cleaning and regular surface cleaning. Edinburgh Scientific Services has approved electrostatic cleaning (known as fogging) which provides a dry negative charged chemical that bonds around surfaces. The chemical used releases free oxygen radicals that attacks, for example, viral membrane. This has been carried out once already and will be carried out again every 30 days. This takes place when the building is unoccupied and gives lasting protection to surfaces.

## **Effective Infection Control**

Government advice is that school pupils do not need to wear face coverings (unless they have a medical reason to do so or specifically want to). If your young person has been advised to or chooses to wear a face covering in school, please ensure that these are of appropriate design and in line with usual school dress guidelines regarding football colours and so on. We are aware that some young people may find some face coverings intimidating and ask for your support in avoiding designs such as skulls and zombies which might add to this!

Pupils and staff are asked to observe regular hand hygiene protocols as the best way of minimising the risk of spreading infection. To assist with this hand sanitiser dispensers have been placed around the school and in all classrooms without sinks. Signage to encourage handwashing will be displayed and hand hygiene will be a routine at the start of all classes.

Classrooms will be organised so that the best use is made of the available space and all desks will face the front wherever possible. Doors and windows will be kept open during classes to maintain a good flow of fresh air.

## **Physical Distancing**

The government's advice for the 100% return of pupils to school is that young people do not require to observe physical distancing with each other, though this will be encouraged wherever possible. Young people will be asked to adhere to physical distancing with all adults by maintaining a 2m distance. Passing contact, such as in corridors, is low risk but a one way system will operate in parts of the building to reduce this as far as possible. For their own personal safety, staff must themselves ensure that they apply a 2m distance with other adults and pupils where possible. In specific instances where it is not possible to maintain a 2m distance, staff will use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Revised Fire Evacuation procedures will be in place to allow for more space between groups and the separation of younger and older pupils at our muster point.

## **Social Distancing**

Social distancing requires us to minimise the number of groups young people are in and to try and maintain separation between older and younger pupils. Key Adult groups have been reorganised into single year groups and will be grouped geographically within the building. Young people will be taught in consistent groups wherever possible – for example, S1 and S2 will be taught exclusively in their practical class or their non-practical class. While this is harder to achieve once young people begin to choose different courses after S3, we have made adjustments wherever possible. There will be no assemblies or large gatherings.

Entrance to the building in the morning will be organised by year groups as follows:

S1 and S6 – enter by main door

S2 – enter by door at end of lower ground English corridor

S3 – enter by door at end of lower ground Maths corridor

S4 and S5 – enter by pupil entrance off Park Avenue

A one-way system will be in operation in parts of the building and appropriate signage is in place to ensure that the system is easy to follow. After break and lunch, young people will re-enter the building via the door designated for access to their next class to keep internal traffic to a minimum. At the end of the school day, the nearest available exit should be used and S4-6 will leave five minutes early to avoid overcrowding.

Arrangements will be put in place to restrict the number of people coming in and out of the building. Most meetings will be conducted online and parents are required to make a prior appointment before attending school for any reason.

### **Returning from Overseas**

All families returning from overseas must follow the government guidance about quarantine for countries not covered by 'travel corridors'.

### **What to bring to school**

Young people should bring their school bag as normal with their own pencils and other equipment ready for the day ahead. As we are not able to share equipment between young people, support in this is appreciated. Please do not bring anything which is not needed for school.

### **What to wear**

Normal school uniform should be worn. This consists of a white shirt, school tie, black shoes and black trousers. Please avoid tracksuit bottoms, denim and leggings. Young people joining us in S1 will be issued with their ties on Wednesday - we are grateful to our Parent Council for funding these. To ensure school security, all young people must wear their tie at all times – the use of face coverings makes this all the more important. Given the limited access to the building at intervals and lunchtimes, a suitable outdoor jacket is advised. As usual, any families who are finding difficulty in meeting the costs of school clothing can contact their PSL in confidence to request support.

### **SQA Arrangements**

Following this year's SQA results all young people who are entitled to an appeal will be notified that this is the case. As this is a significant number, we are grateful for your patience as our staff work through the process.

At the time of writing, we await the publication of further advice to schools on assessment arrangements for the coming year.

### **Practical Classes**

Guidance is due to be issued for schools regarding practical classes such as Food and Textiles Technology, Craft and Design, Music, Drama, Science and Physical Education. We will issue further updates when available but anticipate restrictions on some instrumental music and singing and indoor PE.

### **Extra-Curricular Activities**

Most extra-curricular activities will not be running for the time being and there will be no building lets until further notice.

### **School Catering**

A grab and go lunch will be offered and pre-ordering will take place in Key Adult each day. Payment will be exclusively by ParentPay to avoid cash handling. Young people who receive Free School Meals will have their account credited automatically as usual. There will be four different collection points around the school, one for each House and collection times will be staggered to allow S1-3 and S4-6 to collect their lunches separately. Internal dining space will be very limited.

Until further notice, there will be no food service before school or at morning interval – parents are asked to provide a snack if desired.

Information about how to sign up for Parent Pay will be sent home separately.

## Illness

Any young person feeling unwell with symptoms of the virus will be asked to alert their teacher then be supported away from others until parents can collect them.

At this time, it is particularly important that if your young person feels unwell or displays any of the following symptoms (high temperature or fever, new / persistent cough or loss /change in sense of smell or taste) that you do not send them to school.

If any member of your household is contacted by the NHS Tracing Team and advised to self-isolate, then this will apply to your whole household and you must not send your young person to school.

Follow the latest advice which can be found at

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/coronavirus>

## Communication

We will continue to provide families with regular updates of important information via Groupcall, our website, TEAMS and email. It is very important that you confirm any changes to your contact details with us as soon as possible. If you have a problem or concern, please get in touch with your young person's Pupil Support Leader in the first instance. If you have a more general enquiry, or you do not know who to get in touch with please email our school office on [admin@portobello.edin.sch.uk](mailto:admin@portobello.edin.sch.uk) It really helps us if you can include your young person's name and class in all correspondence.

The school also uses Twitter to share a range of information. If you are on Twitter, please follow us @PortobelloHigh

Whether you are a new parent at Portobello or not, please consider joining our Parent Council's Facebook page which is Portobello High School – Parent Council . They can also be contacted via [portyhighparents@gmail.com](mailto:portyhighparents@gmail.com)

The City of Edinburgh Information for Returning to School in August (including FAQs for Parents) is here and is also on our website.

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/schools-learning/returning-school-august-2020/1>



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