Scoil Bhríde,

Nurney,

*Principal – Vinny Thorpe*

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August 16th 2021

**Scoil Bhríde Nurney IMPORTANT reopening Information for Parents**

**PLEASE READ IN FULL!!**

***PLEASE FOLLOW ALL PUBLIC HEALTH RULES TO KEEP INDIVIDUAL CLASSES AND OUR WHOLE SCHOOL OPEN!!!***

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

Hello there. We hope you are all keeping safe and well at this time. Scoil Bhríde Nurney is planning to re-open for all pupils on Tuesday August 31st 2021. School staff are really looking forward to welcoming children back and helping them re-engage with their learning in school.

For all the information you need on schools in the Republic of Ireland reopening please visit [www.gov.ie/backtoschool](http://www.gov.ie/backtoschool) We have also set up a useful information page on ‘teaching and learning alongside Covid-19’ on our school website which can be accessed at [www.nurneyns.com/covid-19](http://www.nurneyns.com/covid-19) Both links will lead you to all the relevant and up to date Department of Education documents relating to response plans for the safe and sustainable reopening of primary schools and primary school safety protocols and procedures around COVID-19.

Please be assured that Scoil Bhríde Nurney on reopening will be complying in full with all public health advice and guidelines as set out in the Dept. of Education documents mentioned above for both the safety of our pupils and our staff. If you have any queries in this regard, please email us at sbnurney@gmail.com where we will only be too happy to respond.

We have all faced a challenging time in these last few months, and the return to school will bring new challenges. School communities have experienced severe disruption as a result of COVID-19. School is a special place, and some of the best and most important parts of learning are being in a classroom with a teacher and other children. Pupils, parents, teachers, SNAs and schools have made enormous efforts to keep the fun of school and teaching and learning going. School staff know that parents have made great efforts to support their child’s continued education and have done their best. Teachers will be starting with where every pupil is at in their learning. Teachers are experts at this.

The start of this school year can be regarded as a transition for all – a transition from home to school, a reconnecting with friends, a learning about the routines and procedures, geography and layout of the school in light of public health requirements. It is important that we all support each other to experience a successful transition back to school, recognising that transition is a process over time rather than a once-off event.

We recognise that some children, some parents and some staff may be nervous and anxious about returning. We are living through exceptional times and this impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times. People have been naturally worried about the risk to their physical health and that of their loved ones and have been challenged to varying degrees by the public health measures that were put in place in Ireland to control the spread of the virus.

People have however an inbuilt capacity to adapt. This is what is at the heart of resilience. Most people are weathering this storm and will emerge stronger and with new skills. Most respond really well to information and practical advice on new ways of managing and staying active and connected. Some will, for a variety of reasons, struggle a little to adapt and will need greater levels of practical and social support to make the adjustments needed to stay well. A very small number may find the changes brought about by COVID-19 very challenging, and may need higher levels of practical and mental health supports.

However, in terms of wellbeing we know that most pupils, and indeed their families and school staff will be looking forward to going back, reconnecting with school, reconnecting with staff and friends and settling back into school work. This physical return to school offers a welcome opportunity for children to revive social connections, to re-bond with their friends, make new friends, and to spend time with adults who are significant to them. Many will feel excited, relieved and happy. Some may feel a little anxious and worried about getting back. That’s to be expected and it’s a normal response at this time. Most students will settle back in over time, as they reconnect with friends and get used to the school safety routines.

While everyone wants our school to operate as normally as possible again this year, it is of course recognised by all that again it will be a different environment due to COVID-19 and the whatever public health guidelines are in place. On a practical level our school has been working very hard to make sure that the school building and playground is safe for all of the pupils, teachers and parents. This will mean both new and old routines and rules to keep everyone safe. We will support you to learn these new routines and rules and become reacquainted with the old ones. We will all be working hard to support everyone and each other to settle back in, to feel safe and to be happy in our work, when school returns.

Physical distancing, less interaction between classes and class groups, staggered breaks and the re-use of school spaces will be a feature. However, reopening our schools is not just a matter of achieving a certain minimum physical distancing. It is also about getting students re-engaged fully with learning and socialising with their peers. Pupils will need the support of their families, teachers and school staff in readjusting to school life and physical learning environments again. Getting back to a school routine, getting enough sleep, eating healthily, taking physical exercise, taking some time to be creative and reconnecting with friends will help everyone to settle back in.

We imagine there will a broad range of responses when our school reopens, ranging from children and their parents being happy and relieved to get back to school to some children being fearful and nervous. School staff know that wellbeing is important and needed for learning to happen. For that reason, we are prioritising the things that we know will promote wellbeing at this time as we navigate together through this reopening process such as relaxation techniques and calming activities, such as mindfulness, drawing, physical activity, music, and relaxation/ breathing exercises. There will also be a focus on enabling our pupils to learn, on developing their learning readiness, and on promoting pupil confidence in and motivation for learning.

To this however we need your help. Throughout this pandemic, we’ve all been in this together. Please remember that adults (parents and school staff) are important role models for children. Modelling calm responses and coping strategies will help students learn helpful ways of managing their fears and anxieties during this period of change. When schools reopen there will be changes for everyone. Pupils will be changing classes; some may be changing teachers and some will have changed schools. There will also be routines for the pupils and for us all to learn. Routines create a sense of psychological safety by providing predictability. Re-establishing routines or creating new ones will contribute to a safe and calm learning environment and give students a sense of security. We will revise and learn these new routines together, because we all have a role to play in keeping the whole school community safe. A significant cultural shift in the behaviour of pupils, you as parents, your families and staff are expected, with each playing their roles in keeping the virus out of our school by ensuring

* those who have symptoms or suspect they have the virus stay out of school
* by maintaining best practice in terms of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette in school
* by minimising social contacts and respecting physical distancing practices

As a school community we will rise to this challenge, and the key themes of the Public Health Advice necessary to keep us all safe will permeate throughout the school community, with everyone:

* Applying common sense
* Adopting a balanced approach
* Doing everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school
* Being Aware of what we can all do to protect ourselves and each other i.e
* how to recognise and report the symptoms of COVID-19
* the need to stay at home if we feel unwell
* Continuing to observe physical distancing, good hand hygiene and good respiratory etiquette.
* Following ALL public Health Guidelines

At the same time to support the wellbeing of our school community during this time of transition we will aim as a school to foster resilience in our pupils by

* promoting a sense of safety – so that people feel that they are safe, and that those around them are safe
* promoting a sense of calm – so that people feel relaxed, composed and grounded (regulated)
* promoting a sense of belonging and connectedness – so that people experience having meaningful relationships with others who understand and support them
* promoting a sense of self-efficacy and community-efficacy – so that people believe that they can manage and do what is needed, and so can their school community
* promoting a sense of hope – so that people believe that things will work out well

Supporting a successful transition back to what will be our new normal is best achieved when those within the school community feel safe, calm and hopeful, when they feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to their school community and feel that they can manage with the support of their community.

It will take time for staff and students to adjust to being back in the school environment and be ready and available to fully engage with teaching and learning. A sense of urgency about returning to the curriculum is natural but time spent on settling the students and getting the students ready for learning will yield positive outcomes in the longer term and will likely reduce stress. So, it is important that teachers and school staff do not rush into a focus on formal teaching and learning before first considering readiness, and focusing on wellbeing. This is called ‘**Slowing Down to Catch Up’**

**Pupils with Medical conditions**

We aware that some of our pupils have medical conditions. We are also aware that some of our pupils since we last saw them in June may have developed further medical conditions. To help us prepare we would like all families with a child who has developed any new medical condition to inform us by email at sbnurney@gmail.com by Friday August 27th at the latest. If deemed necessary we will then contact you prior to school reopening and discuss any requirements, information or concerns that you may have. All discussions will of course be guided by Department of Education guidelines and current public health advice.  We want you as parents to be fully confident and have peace of mind as your child returns to our school. Working together we will achieve this.

**New Staff Appointments**

We are delighted to welcome Ms. Emily Doyle, Ms. Emily Murphy and Ms. Catherine Lennon to our school staff. We wish them the very best of wishes in the school year ahead. We also send best wishes to Ms. Hamilton and her new family members. We also send our heartiest congratulations to Mr. John Stack who has been appointed a permanent member of staff. We wish to thank Ms. Noelle Healy for her 14 wonderful years of service to the school and wish her the very best in her new teaching appointment in her home county of Sligo. She will be sorely missed by us all.

The following is our updated staff list for the new school year beginning on Tuesday August 31st 2021:

* Junior Infants Teacher - Eilís Reilly
* Senior Infants Teacher - Emily Murphy
* First Class Teacher – Emily Doyle
* Second Class Teacher - Emer O'Mahony
* Third Class Teacher – Gillian Dunne
* Fourth Class Teacher - Alanna Marron
* Fifth Class Teacher – John Stack
* Sixth Class Teacher - Aoife Butler
* Shared Support Teacher - Lorraine Ivers/Jennifer Behan
* Resource Teacher – Anne Burke (shared with Ballyshannon NS)
* Shared Special Needs Assistant - Julie Harper
* Shared Special Needs Assistant - Holly Rennick/Catherine Lennon
* Secretary - Mary Murray
* Caretaker - Pat Broughall
* Cleaners - Christine and Melissa Stynes
* Deputy Principal and Shared Support Teacher - Catherine Owens
* Principal - Vinny Thorpe

The school will be in touch over the next two weeks with more updates to reopening our school for all pupils, including the arrival procedures for all new pupils.

*We wish you all good tidings and we look forward to once again sharing your child’s educational journey with you in the new school year. God Bless to you all and your families, stay safe and****PLEASE FOLLOW ALL PUBLIC HEALTH RULES TO KEEP INDIVIDUAL CLASSES AND OUR WHOLE SCHOOL OPEN.***

Vinny Thorpe

Principal