

10 August 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians

Thank you very much for all your messages of support and especially for your patience. I am very conscious of the fact that family arrangements depend heavily on the arrangements for schools opening. In my letter of July, I outlined the framework for our return, and promised that I would inform you of the exact date of return for each class as early as possible in August. Our aim is to return to full time attendance for all students as soon as this is possible. As requested by the Minister of Education, we have focused on years 12 and 14 in the first two weeks, and other students will return one year group at a time from 1 September. Students will be coming back to new arrangements covering every aspect of school life, and we feel that it is essential that each year group has time to settle in and ensure that they fully understand how we will keep ourselves and each other safe.

The Minister intends to issue a further statement later this week covering other aspects of the return to school, and I will be contacting you again about our implementation of the new guidance. There is much that we still don't know about eg transport, school meals etc.

I set out here the dates on which each year group will return, and what each year group will be doing each day so that everyone can be fully prepared.

The following information about dates of attendance is complex. The version you see here covers every year group and every school day by date from 24th August to 7th September. The second version, which I am sending in a separate attachment, covers the same information, but by year group. I hope that this first version gives you an overview, and the second makes it easier to look up when a student in a particular year group is to attend. All information will also be on our Shimna website.

Week Beginning 24 August – years 12 and 14 only

Monday 24 August

Year 14 students of the following subjects will attend for a full day of class in that subject: Sport Studies; Software Systems Development; Performing Arts; Biology; History.

Year 12 will attend all day for class in English, English literature and LLW.

Tuesday 25 August

Year 14 students of the following subjects will attend for a full day of class in that subject: art; English; physics; travel and tourism.

Year 12 will attend all day for class in maths.

Wednesday 26 August

Year 14 students of the following subjects will attend for a full day of class in that subject: geography; philosophy and ethics.

Year 12 will attend all day for class in science.

Thursday 27 August

Year 14 students of the following subjects will attend for a full day of class in that subject: chemistry; business studies.

Year 12 will attend for class all day in languages and UBELT.

Friday 28 August

Year 14 students of the following subjects will attend for a full day of class in that subject: digital technology; health and social care; Irish; maths; politics.

Year 12 will attend for class all day in science and horticulture.

Week Beginning Tuesday 1 September

Tuesday 1 September – **year 11 ONLY** attend for induction

Wednesday 2 September – **year 10 ONLY** attend for induction

Thursday 3 September – **year 9 ONLY** attend for induction

Friday 4 September – **year 8 ONLY** attend for induction. The year 8s will have the school to themselves during their induction day, so that they will feel very confident about making their way round the building before all the other students return.

Year 14 – remote learning as arranged the previous week, with appointments for UCAS registration with A Rooney.

Year 13 – to be arranged

Year 12 attend Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday as follows:

Tuesday 1 Sept – all students attend a full day class in one of the following:

DigitalTech(JMagee);

History(JRodgers);

MIA(NDoranLahey);

Phil&Eth(RMcGill);

PE(JDoyle/BDagen)

Wednesday 2 Sept – all students attend a full day class in one of the following:

Art(MSkelcher/LWalsh)

Music(OFitzpatrick)

Prince's Trust(NLindsay)

Phil&Eth(JMcCloskey)

Technology(CMayers)

BusStds(PLenny)

Thursday 3 Sept – all students attend a full day class in one of the following:

BusStds(JMagee)

Drama(CMilligan/RMaguire)

Digital Technology(SSamuel)

Food&Nut(RMurphy)

Geography(SMawhirt)

History(PMcCLean)

Friday 4 Sept – remote learning for all students except year 8 who are in school for their induction day.

Week Beginning Monday 7 September

All students return full time to a full timetable with COVID safe arrangements in place. During induction all students will have been well prepared in advance for the new routines which will all follow. We will also send home a guide for parents/guardians so that you can support us in ensuring that everyone understands how to keep themselves and others safe, and that we minimise the risk of a further lockdown.

During induction, each student will also be prepared for the possible full or partial closure we will all be working to avoid, just in case it happens. Students will know how to access schoolwork online, and how to request hard copies of work if they do not have access to a computer. They will also know how to contact their form teacher and subject teachers for help. I would stress that the intention of the Minister is that all students will be able to attend school full time.

We will be delighted to see all our students back, and plan to make a very positive start to the year. I know I can rely on your support in ensuring students fully realise the importance of abiding by the COVID-19 safety arrangements we have put in place in order to avoid if possible any further interruption to students' education.

Other Matters

Uniform – our uniform is easily washed and students will be able to continue to wear full uniform, including Shimna PE kit. We will be relying on opening windows and doors more often to ensure excellent ventilation, so students should invest in thermal underwear for colder days. Any additional outer layers should be Shimna ones. On our Shimna website, you will find information from our uniform suppliers.

Water

Students should bring their own water bottle and never, ever share. Our water fountains include a contactless way to refill, but we will not be able to use the water jets.

Classroom Equipment

It will be absolutely essential that every student comes with all the equipment they need for school as sharing or borrowing will not be possible. Please make sure that your daughter/son has: pens; pencils; colours; ruler; rubber; sharpener; maths equipment etc in their own pencil case and that they know not to share. The art department has arrangements in place to provide each student with their own art materials. It will also be essential that a student has all her/his own books for the day. Extra support with bag packing will be much appreciated.

Communication

The most difficult thing of all to face is the fact that we won't be able to welcome parents/guardians into the school, and face-to-face meetings will not be possible. We remain available as ever, and if you need to contact any staff member in the school, please use the email address info@shimna.newcastle.ni.sch.uk and your message will be sent to the person you need. I particularly want to reassure parents/guardians of new year 8 students that we will always be happy to hear from you. We do have a Shimna Facebook page, but important information will always be sent out through SchoolComms by Roberta McKee in our main office. Our Shimna website includes lots of information about the school, and we have set up a special button where you can find information specifically about this year's arrangements.

Thank you as always for your support,

Kevin Lambe
Principal