



lwetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Longfoirt agus na hIarmhí
Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board



Dear Parent/Guardian,

As the welfare, health and safety of our students is of paramount importance, Ballymahon Vocational School has taken considerable steps to ensure that a full and safe return to school is achieved in the coming weeks. I am contacting you to inform you of measures taken so far and I will follow up with regular updates to keep you and your family informed of emerging requirements, changes etc.

This note outlines the steps that are being undertaken by Ballymahon Vocational School and LWETB to lead the safe reopening of our school while minimising risks associated with COVID-19.

As you may be aware a number of documents were issued in recent weeks to support the reopening of schools. These include

- ***Circular Letter 0046 – 2020 – COVID-19 Operational Supports for the full return to school.***
- ***COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary Schools.***
- ***DES – Reopening Our Schools – The Roadmap for the Full Return to School***
- ***HSE COVID-19 Interim Recommendations for the reopening of schools and educational facilities.***

Ballymahon Vocational School and supported by LWETB are committed to implementing all the measures contained in the documents as laid out by DES, public health advice and LWETB COVID-19 Task Team.

Preparation for reopening LWETB schools.

Date for commencement of new school year:

As per normal practice, each school sets return dates for the upcoming academic year. However due to level of preparation required due to the COVID-19 pandemic the dates for 2020/2021 have changed to facilitate training for students and the phased reintroduction to the school. As a result, our reopening dates are as follows:

Friday, August 28 th :	Student Mentor training
Monday, August 31 st :	1 st year Covid-19 training
Tuesday, September 1 st :	1 st Year induction
Wednesday, September 2 nd :	6 th Years return
Thursday, September 3 rd :	3 rd Years return
Friday, September 4 th :	5 th Years return
Monday, September 7 th :	Leaving Certificate results day
Tuesday, September 8 th :	2 nd Years return
Wednesday, September 9 th :	TY students return

Documentation required before staff can return to schools

To ensure compliance with public health guidelines and to ensure that schools can operate as safely as possible, a *Pre-return to Workplace Form* and *Induction Programme* are required to be completed 3 days in advance of any staff returning to



Lwetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Longfoirt agus na hIarmhí
Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board



schools. This training has already been developed and finalised and will be rolled out in the coming days.

Students:

To ensure compliance with public health guidelines and to ensure that schools can operate as safely as possible, a student friendly *Induction programme* has been developed for all students coming into the school. This will be completed online prior to returning to school. For first years, this will take place within the school on Monday, August 31st. To facilitate this, we will be staggering the arrival and departure time for groups of students.

Timetables:

In order to reduce contact and movement within the school, we are changing our timetable to include one hour long periods. This will mean students will have 6 periods a day rather than 9 which they would have had last year. On Fridays, they will have 4 periods. This will still equate to the same amount of tuition time per week.

Our Break and Lunchtimes will be staggered to cater for students within the building. The lunch break will be reduced to thirty minutes to ensure adequate supervision is available. Students will not be permitted to leave the school grounds for lunch unless they have a letter stating that they are returning home for their lunch.

Lead Worker Representative (LWR):

To ensure compliance with public health guidelines and to ensure that schools can operate as safely as possible, each school will have dedicated people on staff with responsibility to ensure that all COVID-19 guidelines are followed and implemented. Each Lead Work Representative will receive specialised training before taking up this important role.

COVID-19 Training

All staff in Ballymahon Vocational School will have attended specialised training on COVID-19 before school commences. This training will ensure that staff are equipped to deal with any issues that may emerge as a result of the pandemic.

Visitors to our school:

Ballymahon Vocational School have always been delighted to welcome parents/guardians to our school. However due to COVID-19, a strict protocol is now required to ensure exposure to the virus is minimised. All visits to the school must be by **appointment only** and this must be sanctioned by the principal. When you visit a Sign-in and Sign-out systems will be in place. Where a student is to be collected from school, parents must wait outside the school gate. A note must accompany the student on the morning of the day that they will be leaving early.

School Building:

Ballymahon Vocational School is currently identifying areas that might require alteration/reconfiguration to enable the implementation of the Roadmap, public health advices and each schools' own COVID-19 Response Plan. This will include some construction work to facilitate a new one-way system within the school. All students will be assigned a base classroom and desk. There will be some movement to specialised classrooms and where students have opted for specific levels. This again is to reduce movement within the school.



Lwetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Longfoirt agus na hIarmhí
Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board



Outdoor sheltered areas are being installed to cater for students during lunchtime. Lunchtime will be reduced to 30 minutes meaning that the school day will conclude at 3.45 Monday – Thursday.

Personal Protective Equipment/Hand Sanitisers

Additional funding is being made available to all schools to support the provision of PPE equipment. Ballymahon Vocational School is currently purchasing these items and they will be in place when schools are open to students. Students will have to provide their own **mandatory face masks**. These must be plain facemasks with no design or images on it.

Students arriving at school

Students who walk, cycle or are dropped to school may not enter the grounds until 8.45am and we ask parents not to enter the school grounds during the drop off. This should happen outside the front of the school.

Code of Behaviour

We are updating the code of behaviour to include measures relating to Covid-19. We will be issuing this to parents as soon as it is complete.

Students must supply their own equipment for use in classes. The sharing of equipment will not be permitted.

Subjects

We are awaiting some additional guidance on some specific subject areas and we will update you as soon as we have the information.

Finally, Ballymahon Vocational School hopes that you and your family stay safe and well during these strange and unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Higgins
Principal