

Monday, 3rd August, 2020

re: Our return to school, "next normal" framework for the new academic year starting on the 1st September, 2020

Dear Heritage International School Community,

I am writing to you to share with you the new measures that are going to be in place from the 1st September in school so we can return safely and fully to start the new academic year as a community. **Please read through this carefully and discuss it as a family.** If you haven't already, take a look at the positional paper we shared with everyone in our community on the 3rd July, as well as the letter sent to parents on the 16th July, following the Ministry of Education's (MECC) announcement that schools had 7 options to consider about their return in September. It is here on our website: <https://www.heritage.md/en/coronavirus-updates>

**The measures we are sharing as our operational matrix for a full safe return under the MECC option 1, allow us to return to physical school on the 1st September** and we are now operating on Level 3, down from Level 4 of our crisis management plan. We don't know when we will be back to Level 0 and "back to normal school" as it was before the 10th March, but at least we can return to school physically, in a safe way, because of the measures we are taking and the school environment and resources we have under the MECC guidance. At the heart of our return is the principle of a safe working environment and learning environment for study for staff and students. It is a comprehensive, globally benchmarked and informed matrix. We adhere to the 3 WHO principles of how to approach Covid19:

- 1) Hygiene – frequent washing hands etc.
- 2) Respiratory – face masks etc.
- 3) Physical distancing

We will have a very effective system of measures ensuring anyone with symptoms is not allowed into the building and in self- isolation, receiving education or delivering teaching this way until it is officially medically confirmed as negative. We will be training and preparing staff, parents and students throughout August about the next normal and how we will be as a school for the next few months at least. Having someone with symptoms arriving at school and being told to go into isolation doesn't close the entire school any more than this would happen on buses or supermarkets or the airport.

As with every stage of this crisis, we continue to monitor and develop what is happening, adapting and responding. This is an unprecedented global pandemic and since the MECC gave the direction for schools to plan their return strategies we have followed this accordingly. We are also considering the impact of student mental health and wellbeing in this crisis and what being out of school physically for so long means. This is not good for our children either as there is no clear end to the crisis nor a clear scientific or political consensus on it as well.



The DLP always remains as our Plan B and we have seen its effectiveness from March to May. All summer, our example of the DLP has been showcased globally as an outstanding model of practice in this crisis to schools and ministries around the World. But the preparations now, for 1st Sept, are for a safe, full physical return under the direction of MECC, for schools and I agree entirely with their approach here. This is our school strategy: <http://www.heritage.md/en/news/interview-back-to-school-2020/>

We will be holding a parent/family webinar on the 18th August, at 4pm, and also sharing our short videos from our teachers showing our children how the measures operate in school before students arrive on the 1st September. So, we are all familiar with how we operate the school safely under the key principles of hygiene, distance and respiratory measures. We will also be celebrating the new academic year on the 1st September, shaped by the new measures but still ensuring our new students and returning students look to the new academic year and future with hope. Further details will follow.

There will be questions, comments and points raised from this return matrix and please don't hesitate to email the director's address so we can respond as soon as possible.

Thank you, as ever, for your support of our school and I know as a whole school community, we can make our physical, safe, full return a success for our children from the 1st September.

Best wishes,

Rob Ford  
Director, Heritage International School