



24th Aug, 2020

Dear Heritage School Community,

Re: The new academic year ahead & returning safely to physical school from the 1st Sept.

I hope, in the extraordinary circumstances we find ourselves in for much of 2020, you are having a break, rest and enjoying the time with your families and loved ones as we all respect the measures needed to tackle Covid19 and the rate of cases in our society. We are very conscious of how the lockdown has been partially unlocked and the changes in our daily social interactions that have been urgently needed. Preparing to return to school for September and a new academic year is something the team at Heritage have been working on since March and we have regularly shared our position as we get updates or the situation has changed. These are on our website: <https://www.heritage.md/en/coronavirus-updates/>

We are also fully aware of the current crisis nationally and globally as this year has progressed and we have worked closely with important organisations like the WHO, UNICEF, MECC, our global networks and partnerships of international schools who are already returned to school as well as organisations in Moldova who have been operating for some time under the new measures. Heritage operated one of the most successful Distance Learning Plans globally and has continued to speak at many international and national online education conferences sharing this story. In our original Crisis Management Matrix in March, it was never our intention to be at Level 4 because we believed our World Class school campus and learning environment, with its large space inside and outside, would allow us to continue to operate physically. Keeping everyone physically safe is also intrinsically linked to a focus on everyone's wellbeing and mental health and the large study of young people from the World Economic Forum last week illustrated why we should be considering a safe return to physical school. Therefore we welcomed the (MECC) Ministry of Education's range of options to allow schools to decide what is best for them to operate to return on 1st September. All of the options, other than full DLP, are a hybrid and carry very similar risks, and guaranteeing no risk is not possible but to mitigate against it using the WHO/UNICEF global approach of using a mask, frequent washing of hands and keeping a physical distance. Where schools have successfully physically returned around the World, children and young people have been key in modelling the safe measures in wider society to prevent the spread of Covid19.

Heritage will operate under option 1 from the 1st September with the first week as a phased induction week so we can train all students and get them prepared for the new measures. We will review this constantly and we have a hybrid option that allows families who choose to stay home and isolate, daily synchronous lesson access online. Our successful DLP, that allowed daily, meaningful synchronous lessons, always remains our operational Plan B. It wasn't until late on Friday 21st August that we had the final regulations from the Ministry of Education for all schools that we can then modify our return-next normal plan. Our staff have been in school, isolated in bubbles, being trained and preparing to start the new academic year since the 17th August.

The School Environment: The school now has designated entrances for different grades of students - see the plan with this letter. Parents/families/family support will not be allowed through



the main school entrances at the start and end of the school day. Students will have a daily temperature check, disinfectant to wash hands, disinfectant mats for shoes and will follow the physical distance learning set out in the corridors and classrooms. The school would ask and highly recommend that all students wear face masks and they change them during the day. We will have training sessions in the first week on all of these new measures. The ministry says it is not mandatory and the WHO states for students over 12 years of age. **We would prefer all students to wear masks and certainly all staff will and these will be worn properly.**

The school will have disinfectant stations, physical distancing signage and health information clearly visible and displayed everywhere. **Students, staff and visitors need 100% compliance with the measures or they will not have access to the campus.** For now, the school will not provide a breakfast service and students should bring a snack. Water coolers will be operable but with instructions and disinfectant. We ask students to bring the basic materials for school and home room teachers will hold webinars with you to through these measures. Students need their own stationery & notebooks and we will be avoiding using paper worksheets as much as possible. We encourage the use of students using their own devices. With the warm weather we also recommend students to have a hat, sunscreen and smart, dark shorts are permissible. We would also ask you, if possible, not to use public transport and buses for school.

Any symptoms within the family or with the student then your child needs to be at home for 14 days isolation before coming back to school with a negative test result. This will apply for all staff as well. The Ministry has also ruled that if a child in a class has symptoms then the whole class has to go into this isolation. It is incumbent on all of us to be responsible and to ensure we all follow the measures needed, especially outside of school hours in activities and social behaviour that doesn't increase risk. This goes for all our staff as well and we are reinforcing these measures in our training in August.

1st September - Starting the New Academic Year: We want to welcome back all our community & celebrate the start of the new academic year but we cannot hold the same event as last year. This will take place in front of the school and parents will be asked to stay behind the fence and to physically distance themselves to watch and wear facemasks. We will ask different grades to arrive at a set time and to be welcomed back to school on the 1st Sept where they will have an hour to see the new measures and spend time going through what is expected of them. We will send this schedule out to you this week once it has been finalised.

Induction Week - 1st Sept-4th Sept - the schedule shows that we are going to have this first week as getting the students used to being back in school, being trained and familiar with the new measures and to spot any potential issues. The school will be operating in isolated grade bubbles as far as possible with restricted movement around the school for staff and students.

Week Two - This first full week will still operate hybrid measures such as online assemblies, meetings and lessons for those at home. Activities like PE and singing will change to reflect the measures, the library will not be open to loan books, but we will be using our large outdoor spaces more to make sure students get lots of movement, light and fresh air. This will be for the foreseeable future. Clubs will be looked at for Week three but again will not be the same as before. The canteen will be opened this week but will operate in a very strict way to ensure the safe



measures are followed. We have seen good models in other schools internationally and within organisations in Moldova operating successfully with zero transmission of symptoms because measures are respected and followed consistently.

Parents & Visitors to the school - there will be set times available daily and it will be around the side of the main building into the administration corridor. No wandering freely in the school at all. All parents and visitors will be temperature checked, hands disinfected and masks to be worn properly. Where possible, all meetings will be online and parent conferences.

There is nothing to compare in recent history to what all societies are facing up to as this year continues with a credible vaccine not in sight and still a consensus dispute politically and even scientifically around the globe about specific measures to take and impact. This is a daunting task for any school community and I have done nothing but speak with school leaders and decision makers everywhere since the end of February as we have all found our way through this crisis. There is no manual, only good leadership and judgement. This is definitely not a time for ego. As a parent and an educator, for me, the safety, wellbeing and hope for the future of our children is absolutely crucial here. I cannot thank our school community enough for the continued support, challenge and advice as we go through this and prepare for our school to physically return on the 1st September. I work with a remarkable team of dedicated staff at Heritage and throughout this crisis we have seen people being able to find solutions and in their own homes, they continued to provide high quality, engaging and innovative World Class education. We have been very proud this summer to share this story nationally and internationally as we help all education communities find the right answers for their individual communities. We certainly have plenty of hopeful engaging learning and educational opportunities in global learning and daily classroom learning planned for 2020-21.

Thank you for your continued support and engagement as we all work together to get this right. We need our families to work with children to get them into these new measures as much as our staff to ensure we have a safe physical return to school to start a new academic year on the 1st. Education needs to provide this hope for the future for our children.

Kind regards,
Rob Ford
Director

Attachment links:

1. Entrance plan
2. 1st Sept times for grades to arrive
3. Student Induction week schedule