

7th January 2021

Dear Parents,

This week has been a hive of activity in readying our school for yet another period of remote learning. Our priority is to make this period of remote learning as successful as possible for everyone, and all pupils must engage in this period of home learning on a daily basis if at all possible. Please contact the teacher via email or Seesaw/Google Classroom if you need some flexibility around these arrangements and we will aim to support parents as much as we can during this challenging time.

Yesterday the Executive confirmed that school closures will now be extended until the half term break, seeing the return to school on Monday 22nd February 2021.

Teachers will also be engaging with pupils throughout each day, Monday – Friday through these online platforms. Thank you so much for all the messages of support and encouragement on how positive an experience this has been so far this week.

As I have said before and as our policies state, we want to be as flexible as possible and support parents as much as we can. Children ideally should be engaging every day in some learning, however with one or both parents working from home, your capacity to follow a daily school timetable is significantly impacted. Please don't put yourself under significant stress within your families.

Our greatest learning from the first closure was on how well the children adapted and returned to school life and learning in September, and that was after a period of over 5 months absence from school. On their return in February, we can and we will recover any lost learning. Please proceed through the next couple of weeks holding onto that.

Educational Learning Packs

During this period of remote learning, we will continue to communicate through the main Seesaw/Google Classroom online platforms as well as some hard copy material. An 'Educational Learning Pack' for each pupil will therefore be available to collect on **Monday 11th January 2021 between 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m.**

To adhere with advice on social distancing guidelines we are asking that **only one person** (no families please) comes into school on Monday to collect the pack(s). The packs will be placed on the pupil's desks in the different classrooms and they must be signed for (there will be a pen in each classroom but we advise you to bring your own for obvious reasons).

Please wear a face covering and sanitise your hands before entering the school building via the Main Front Door. Leave the school building after collecting your pack(s) via the normal exit door that your child would normally use to assist us with social distancing guidance.

Keyworker provision – Period Monday 11th – Friday 15th January 2021

Details regarding the arrangements re. 'supervised learning' of Key Worker/Vulnerable pupils etc. are clarified by DE below:

A child of a key worker is a child for whom a parent is a key worker, with no other safe alternative other than to send them to school. If as a Key Worker you are 'working from home' it would not be expected that you would have to send your child(ren) into school.

The term "vulnerable" encompasses those children who are in need of protection, or in need, as defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995. Children and young people in need may include those:

- Receiving support from Health & Social Services including family support, child protection and looked after children services;
- On the Child Protection Register;
- With statements of special education needs;
- Accessing Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS);
- Accessing Education Nurture Units;
- With emerging and diagnosed mental health needs;
- Who are homeless;
- Who are young carers;
- Subject to paramilitary threat.

Over the last number of days, I have had many more requests for pupils to attend school than during the previous lockdown. Schools have been asked to remain closed for the next five weeks for a serious reason, so I would ask that you please only avail of this option if you have exhausted all other alternatives.

You don't need me to tell you that we are in a much worse position with regards positive cases of Covid-19 than we were with our last school closure in March 2020 and we also have a new variant within Northern Ireland. As Principal, I want to ensure that we are doing everything to support our school community, pupils, parents, staff and all families, in not just their learning, but also in their health and well-being.

I urge again that parents only use this provision as a last resort, when no other option is available. For the children's safety and reduction of transmission in our community, I don't feel it is a safe option to have high numbers of pupils indoors in school each week.

Attendance at school will be 9.00 -3.00 p.m. Monday- Thursday, and 9.00 – 2.00 p.m. on a Friday to allow for a deep clean of the building. The children will be in 'Key Stage Bubbles' and supervised by a rota of classroom assistants with a Teacher on Duty in each Key Stage also in attendance. Whilst some class teachers will be in attendance each day, it will be the classroom assistants who will be supervising keyworker pupils as the teachers will be engaged in the remote learning commitment for their own classes.

Parents must ensure that the children wear school uniform and are to bring their own pencil cases and the resources if required from home. There will be no school dinners and all children attending school must bring a packed lunch and snack.

If you have no other option available and require such supervision in school, each 'Key Worker' family must fill in and submit the weekly 'Microsoft Form' by clicking the link below, which has also been emailed to you as well as communicated via the online platforms:

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=-yeCOETeDkaBkAVAK4mNqG-eLuQX1pFLkLckbGfvPH9URTM5T00wVUNFRktMVFZWM0sySkILT0JZVy4u>

This form will be issued weekly on Thursdays (07.01.21 – this week) and MUST be completed before 12 noon the next day, Friday (08.01.21 – this week) to allow time for all the necessary arrangements to be made.

NO LATE ENTRIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

We will confirm your child's place by 4.00 p.m. on Friday afternoons at the latest.

I need to ensure that I have adequate staffing available so please do not send your child to school unless you have a confirmed place, and if circumstances change and you withdraw your child, please let us know as soon as possible

If your child is attending school would you please reiterate messages of social distancing and the importance of our enhanced hygiene procedures.

On behalf of all the staff I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and encouragement. It means a great deal and keeps us all going through these challenging times.

I hope the weeks ahead bring continued safety and well-being to all our families.



T.R. McMaster
Principal