

"To be the best we can be every day, in every way!"

ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Dear Parent/Guardian,

These have been the most challenging and unprecedented days in our lives and in our schools across the world. I would like to start by saying that every decision we take and every change we must make in the days and weeks ahead with regard to reopening our school, will be made solely on the statutory guidance that is and that will be made by Department of Education, the Education Authority and by CCMS. To date, well over one thousand pages of information and advice have been sent to principals regarding reopening schools.

The safety, health and wellbeing of every child and member of staff will always be at the forefront of every decision taken; please also remember, that every school is different in its accommodation, staffing and class composition.

It is unfortunate that under current Department of Education guidance restrictions of one metre social distancing between pupils, and two metre distancing between adults and adults and children in school, the limited physical capacity of our classrooms combined with pupil numbers in classes means we are not in a position to accommodate full classes at present. We have removed all unnecessary furniture, toys and resources that cannot be shared or easily sanitized after use each day in efforts to maximise the space available in each room.

However, we have presented a plan to CCMS indicating that if funding can be obtained from Department of Education to cover the cost of additional teachers to allow for larger classes to be split into 2 sets then in this instance, we can accommodate all children in the school by reallocating use of other rooms namely our Computer suite, Playroom, Nurture Room and the school hall. This is only possible if DE commit 100% to funding the additional teaching staff

required along with myself to cover the smaller numbers in each location as is currently allowed.

I have delayed in declaring how we will reopen until now, and without commitment from Department of Education to funding additional staff as above, then the only alternative will be the blended teaching and learning model of 2 days in school and 3 days home learning for pupils in classes that cannot be accommodated fully in one room.

Week beginning Monday 17th August

School will reopen for STAFF ONLY

Week beginning Monday 24th August school will reopen for

all P7 pupils (in 2 sets in 2 rooms)

all P3 pupils (in 1 class) and

all P4 pupils in 1 class (due to class size).

Primary 2, 5 and 6 will each be split into 2 sets

Set 1 attending Mon/Tues and Set 2 attending Thurs/Fri.

Wednesdays will be a staff day to allow for teachers to prepare for the on-line work for pupils following the Blended Model and for Home Learning each week to be prepared and responded to online.

New Primary 1 pupils will be allocated a morning from 9:30am – 11:30am in small groups of 5 across the week beginning Monday 24th August to allow for induction and meeting teachers and assistants.

This will be posted home to each parent next week along with the routine for the first two weeks in September.

Starting times under COVID19 Restrictions.

Under normal times, Morning Club was open for children from 8:45am – 9:00am and we would have had between 50 – 70 children in the Hall by 8:45am each day.

Unfortunately, due to social distancing regulations we cannot provide a Morning Club until restrictions are eased as it would not be safe for anyone.

This is something we sincerely apologise for as it means parents relying on this provision must make alternative arrangements until regulations change. Regrettably, the same will be the case for the 2:00pm – 3:00pm Club.

Arrival Times for start of school day:-

It is solely due to the building and its age, that we basically have 2 doors in Main Building but thankfully, we have individual access to each of the Modular classrooms outside.

Under current guidance, however, we must re-establish and stagger arrival times for each group/set/bubble to ensure social distancing for everyone, especially between adults at the gates of the school. To this end, staff in each 'bubble' will go to the gate to collect children in their care each morning; we respectfully ask that all parents/carers dropping children off at school remain at the school gates.

We have been directed (as every school has) to restrict adult access to the main building and the outside classrooms to staff only in order to protect each 'bubble' and minimise any direct or indirect transfer of the virus in as far as this is possible. Parents/carers are asked to phone into the office and speak to the secretary to arrange passing on of messages or to organise return phone calls from teachers when they are available to do so.

Meetings **will** be arranged on request and **by appointment** only to ensure they can be accommodated safely and following regulation guidelines that will protect the safety of all adults and pupils.

It is our sole intention to open our school and keep it open and when we all play our part, we will ensure this will be the case.

P1: Mrs Mc Fall – 9:00am

P1: Mrs Quinn – 9:15am

P2: Miss McGahey – 9:30am

P3: Mrs Nugent – 9:40am

P4: Master Hanna – 9:30am

P1 – P3 classes will use top pedestrian gate and follow staff along path into Main Entrance.

P4 – P7 will use lower pedestrian gate and follow staff along the path towards the bottom of the front yard.

P5: Mrs Kenwell – 9:00am

P6: Mrs Bradley – 9:15am

P7: Mrs Kinsella – 9:30am

This arrangement needs cooperation from all parents about not entering school premises in the morning and respecting arrival times for your child. The same cooperation is required for

Home Times:-

Primary 1 parent will be given details in the letter posted home next week.

P2: 1:40pm

P3: 2:00pm

P4: 2:15pm

P5: 2:30pm

P6: 2:45pm

P7: 3:00pm

Pupils from each class/’bubble’ will be brought out to you at the time given. Please ensure you are on time to avoid congestion of traffic outside the school; please do not hold conversations at the school gates as we need to avoid adults and groups mixing as much as possible to protect us all.

Once again, please phone the school to speak to staff if you have any issues or concerns and we will return your call as soon as we are able to do so.

We will keep these arrangements under constant review when in place and as we all, children, parents and staff become used to following them; as soon as changes can be made to reduce time intervals, we will inform you immediately.

We appreciate fully the implications for family groups regarding different start and finish times. This is something we will be mindful about if they are implemented as above and we will seek to address at the earliest opportunity.

Lunches and dinners.

- Under current guidance, children should not bring anything into school with them from home with the exceptions of their lunch, which we request is placed in a clear plastic food bag and not in a lunch box or lunch bag. **PLEASE**, keep all toys, footballs, dolls at home for your child to play with when there. They should eat their own lunch and break and not share with peers.
- Pupils will not bring anything home from school with them either.

- Under current guidance, all groups of pupils (either classes or in sets) will be regarded as a separate 'bubble' and should not be allowed to mix with children from any other 'bubble' or group.

The points above highlight clearly that we will not be able to have 8 different dinner sittings to provide free or paid dinners to pupils in their separate 'bubble' so all pupils will be asked to have lunch.

The Education Authority has responsibility for school dinners, and it is unclear what they intend doing at this point.

I hope EA will continue to make the payments for Free Dinner directly to parents to facilitate lunch from home as they currently are doing. All lunches will be eaten in the classroom 'bubble' and not in the Hall as before until regulations change.

Should there be any directive from EA and School Meals Provision, we will notify you immediately as to what this may be.

Children who are sick or who become sick in school:

DE Guidance states that we should 'isolate' any child who becomes unwell or who is showing symptoms of Coronavirus.

St Patrick's PS has designated the current Staff Room as a safe and comfortable location for any child who is unwell and they will be supervised and taken care of by a member of staff at all times until a parent/carer can come to collect them.

It is very important that we work together on this as we need any child who is ill to go home as soon as possible. Please ensure we have a working mobile contact number for each child.

There is not a day goes by that someone must go home ill - it will happen, but we will make your child as comfortable as we can until you arrive. Please phone into the school when you are outside in the car and remain there, and we will take your child out to you.

Please ensure if your child has been ill/sick the previous night or that morning, that you do not bring them to school but seek alternative child- minding arrangements.

We cannot take the chance of 'waiting to see how they get on.'

We are fully aware of the concerns regarding children's welfare and learning 'gap' created due to lockdown. It will be our priority initially, to make school a welcoming and safe place where children want to be and feel cared for.

We will address as a priority, how they feel and think about the world they are in now and seek to reassure them that we can make school a 'safe' place in every way possible; teaching and establishing a good hand hygiene routine across all classes/'bubbles' in the school will be on-going; 20 second rule and how to properly wash their hands will reinforce the excellent routines you will have established at home already.

Good respiratory hygiene will also be a priority and an on-going focus in every group across the school; "Catch it! Bin it! Kill it" will be the mantra along side the use of tissues to cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing and in the absence of a tissue, use of the crook of the arm to safely cough into.

Above all, we recognise that one metre distancing between children physically will challenge them all but we will calmly, quietly and gently keep consistently reminding them of the need to maintain it.

At this stage, regulations do not recommend children wearing face masks/coverings in school simply because they will not adhere to their correct use - even adults find this VERY challenging indeed.

I hope this letter, despite its length, communicates our commitment to getting our school reopened safely for ALL PUPILS. If, and when, regulations change regarding schools, you will be informed immediately whatever changes that may bring about for organisation.

Until then, please, do not hesitate to contact with suggestions or any concerns you may have and I will endeavour to respond with the best knowledge and information available to me at this time.

If we are forced to proceed with the 'Blended Learning Model' of 2 days attendance and then home learning for children, then I will inform you of who will be in Set 1 and Set 2 for Primary 2, Primary 4, Primary 5 and Primary 6. I will work alongside Mrs Kinsella for Transfer in Primary 7.

My sincerest apologies for the detail and length of this communication but I appreciate you need some detail of reopening plans at this time even though nothing is clearly set until I hear from Department of Education regarding funding for additional staff.

Take care, keep safe and well,

With very best wishes,

Anne McGuinness (Principal)