



St Mary's Primary School
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Principal: Mr. D. O'Hagan

B.Ed., NPQH., M.Ed.

24 June 2020

Dear Parent/Carer

I recognise that many parents may be anxious for details about how pupils will return to school next term, following the release of guidance by DE, which has caused consternation and confusion amongst many.

Social distancing rules have been reduced for children in primary schools from 2 metres to 1 metre. The 2 metre rule still applies to all members of staff. This updated PHA guidance allows for more children to attend school but it does not allow for the return of full classes to school.

The safety of our children and staff is paramount, no matter what social distances are applied. With this in mind staff have planned a 3-week phasing in period for all our children from **Monday 24 August**. Children will attend school with reduced class sizes for two days per week and will participate in remote learning activities for the other three days. Classes will be divided into two groups alphabetically; using pupils' surnames. This is to allow siblings to attend on the same days. We are doing this early so parents can make tentative arrangements for childcare. The phased return is planned over a 3-week period but, please be aware, this may be the new normal approach to education in schools.

School management will explore all options available to us as we aim to get as many children back to school, as soon as possible, on a full time basis. This may include using additional space in our school or elsewhere and employing additional teaching staff on a temporary basis. For now, the following will be operational and will be reviewed as updated guidance is released. We hope to have some year groups back on a fulltime basis after the initial phasing in period.

- Children in **group A** will attend school each Monday and Tuesday, children in **group B** will attend each Thursday and Friday.
- Children in **P7 and P3** will commence school the week beginning **Monday 24 August**. Children attending our **Learning Support Classes and Autism Specific Class** will begin a staggered start from **Monday 24 August**.
- Children in **P5 and P2** will commence school the week beginning **Monday 31 August**. We are aware this is a Bank Holiday but we are keen to get the children into class as soon as possible.

- Children in **P6 and P4** will commence school the week beginning **Monday 7 September**. All children will be attending school from this week. P1 and nursery children will commence school once induction meetings are completed. These meetings are planned to take place during the week beginning Monday 24 August.

The group your child is assigned to will be communicated to you shortly.

I can confirm that significant measures will be in place to reduce the risk of infection of Covid-19. These measures are listed below;

- All P4 to P7 pupils should wear short sleeved shirts/blouses, P1 to P3 pupils should wear polo shirts. This is to aid the washing and the sanitising of hands. Children should not wear a tie to school.
- There will be no lining up in the playground. Pupils will enter their classrooms directly from **8.45am** using their outside classroom door. Registration closes at 9.10am. Late arrivals must still use their own classroom door. P4 children will use the main entrance. P3 children will use the downstairs entrance. Children attending the Learning Support Classes and ASC will use their normal doors. Parents are asked to respect social distancing rules and not congregate in the playground. Staff will be positioned to guide children to their entrances on their return in August and September.
- There will be staggered end times for each year group. This is to avoid congestion and large gatherings in the playground and car park. Year group finishing times are included at the end of this letter.
- Pupils must sanitise their hands on entry to school and wash their hands for 20 seconds once in class. Pupils not sanitising their hands will not be allowed into class and may need to return home.
- Pupils will be in year group 'protective bubbles' and will only interact with children and staff in their 'bubble'. This includes in the playground and canteen.
- Classrooms will be sanitised at the end of each day and a deep clean completed each Wednesday and Friday evening.
- Pupils must bring a bottle of water to school. Water stations will be unavailable.
- Pupils must not bring a bag to school. All pencils, pens, etc. will be provided in an individual plastic wallet for each child. **Pupils must not bring any items from home to school.**
- Arrangements for reading books and homework will be made once guidance is received.
- We have a limited supply of iPads and laptops which will be made available to lend to families who do not have suitable ICT access for our pupils. Information will be issued in September.
- School meals will be available for registered free school meal pupils. School meals may become available to other children once routines are established. In the meantime, please provide a packed lunch for your child. **Please remember St Mary's is a Nut Free school.**

- The collection of snack money in P1 and P2 is suspended until further notice. In the meantime, please send a healthy snack with your child for break time.
- Please do not send any birthday cakes, buns etc. to school. These cannot be distributed to the children.
- At the moment Breakfast Club will not open. This will be kept under review, as routines become established and guidance is received.
- There will be no extracurricular clubs or activities for now. This will be kept under review.
- Afterschool Club will be open from Monday 31 August. Arrangements for the collection of children will be issued to parents prior to opening.

I fully understand parental concerns about returning to school next term. In particular, if your child has medical needs or someone in the family home has a medical condition. Specific guidance regarding this is available on the Education and Health Department websites. If, for these reasons, you feel your child cannot return to school once open, please contact the school. We hope to be able to put in place some form of teaching support for these children.

This has been a difficult period for parents and we greatly appreciate all the time you have spent supporting your child on Seesaw, with the printed packs, liaising with teachers and completing the activities on our website. I hope that things will become much clearer and easier next term. We all want the children back to school, as soon as possible. Please reinforce the **'Catch it, Bin it! Kill it'** message with your child/children at home before we return in August. We are all looking forward to greeting the children back at school.

Yours sincerely

D. O'Hagan
Principal

School Finishing Times (subject to review)

Nursery - 1.15pm
P1-1.30pm
P2-1.45pm
P3-2.00pm
P4-2.15pm
P6-2.30pm
P5-2.45pm
P7-3.00pm