 St Patrick’s P.S.

 and Nursery

 Castlederg

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20/3/2020

Dear Parent/s

Now that the correct decision has been made to close schools this should reduce the worry that our parent/s and staff have felt about the health and welfare of our pupils. We don’t know the length of closure but our pupils may not return until after the summer.

There has been no other topic of discussion and it is important to remember that looking after each other and showing empathy and understanding is so important in the times we find ourselves in. However, these qualities have always been real and taught in our school and community.

On Friday and Monday, we will arrange for learning packs to be collected so that the children can start to reconnect with their learning. We will offer 2 solutions, physical packs and web based learning. We understand that our parents want and need a structure to provide normality for our children and this may be difficult in that many of us will have so much caring to do.

It is important to remember the work allocated to our pupils has been set by the teachers and explain to the children that they have a responsibility to complete their work.

I have suggested 2/3 hours’ activity (not work) daily so that the children will be occupied and relieve pressure on you as parents. Routine will be important so starting before 10am and completing all tasks by lunchtime will allow this structure if work and caring commitments allow.

For our teachers we have had to totally redesign our thinking and will try to provide activities that you or other family members can help with the children. We are asking you to effectively become their teacher. The key to being a good teacher is patience and accepting that children learn from making mistakes and getting things wrong and right of course. Praise and having fun are also very important.

Each teacher has produced an overview for the next two weeks to match the needs of your child. We accept that it may take us a few attempts to get this planning correct so please be patient.

We have also expanded the use of online learning systems Accelerated Reading from P4 to P7, Mathletics from P3 to P7 and we will begin to use Collins Connect for Reading Activities, Maths and Science activities. We will be rolling these out next week and into April. For reading activities I am asking all parent/s to go to the Library NI website and use the ebooks here for reading. We are also exploring the possibility of using google classroom as a virtual learning environment but this is very much a work in progress.

I hope to keep in regular contact with you and the pupils throughout these challenging times. If you need any help from teachers using any of the online platforms or questions about the work being set or any concern please email the school inbox at info@stpatricks.castlederg.ni.sch.uk and I will try and assist your inquiry.

I have also written a letter for our pupils which I have include below. Hoping you are all safe.

Your sincerely

Brian Mc Gurk Principal

**Dear Pupils, Nursery P1 to P3**

I am glad you are safe at home. I am sorry we had to close the school but all the teachers and helpers wanted to keep you safe. We are sending home activities for you to try at home. Do your best and try and be good. Be kind to your mum and all your family and try and help out at home. Remember to say a prayer every night especially for all those who are sick or who are caring for everyone.

Mr. Mc Gurk

Dear Pupils in P4 to P7,

I am sorry we had to close the school so quickly but we wanted to make sure that everybody was safe. The teachers are sending home activities for you to try so do your best. You all will be able to use Mathletics and Accelerated Reader now so you can set challenges for yourself and become a Millionaire Reader now – no excuses!

We are looking at a safe way that you can connect with your teacher and class using Google but Mr. Mc Gurk had to go back to school to learn how to do it!

You can download books to read at Libraries NI – you just need you Library card number – your mum or carer can help.

Don’t worry about sports, trips or even tests that we might have to miss, we can always make that time up. We can look forward to making our sacraments next year. Remember to be patient at home and to be kind to all your family.

One of the classes is being asked to read the story about when Jesus calmed the Storm when all the apostles were really frightened as the boat rocked in a storm. It is good to remember that Jesus is always there for us in difficult times. When you watch the news be inspired by the nurses, doctors and health care workers who look after all those who are sick. Maybe you will be inspired to become one!

Take care.

Mr. Mc Gurk