 St Patrick’s P.S.

 and Nursery

 Castlederg

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June 2020.

Dear Parent/s and boys and girls.

The last time I wrote to all of you we were facing difficult and uncertain times. As we move into the summer break, life is slowly opening up again. Your children will be excited to be able to meet with families and play outside with your friends. Many of them will hope to re-join clubs and football teams again in July.

The children will also be looking forward to returning to school in September and meeting up with their classmates. There has been a lot of discussion on school reopening and we have only received guidance from the DENI this week.

Returning to school will be a period of transition for the first term. My advice to parents is to begin to set up support networks with other family or friends and prepare for a phased re-entry to school. The difficulties we face are that some classrooms are under sized and the school operates at full capacity, with no additional teaching areas or additional teachers. We will need to look at these issues before we can determine how the children can attend **safely** within the new 1m guidance. It may be possible that children may attend for some days of the week and continue with home learning for a period. I will finalise these arrangements and communicate them to you in writing in early August.

The big advantage next term is that each child will spend some time with their teacher each week and work to be completed at home will be taught and we will be able to solve difficulties in school which should reduce pressure on parents.

I would like to praise parents who have supported their children with home schooling and who have engaged with the teachers collecting work packs, using the home school learning resources on the website and accessing and using google classroom.

When we return, we will focus on Maths and English and very quickly the children will make up any gaps in their learning. Our P1 pupils will be phased in but as many have attended our nursery this should be very straightforward for our pupils. Nursery pupils, particularly pupils new to our nursery will have to be phased in in a more gradual basis. The staff will not be able to be as supportive as normal due to social distance requirements, but we will solve these difficulties as we go along.

Information will be posted on our website for our new P1 pupils and our new nursery pupils next week and this will be how you can find up to date information about starting the schools in the new term. You will also be able to email the teachers if you have any particular concerns.

S and K shop in Castlederg has taken over the school uniform sales from Barry’s shop. The school uniform is generic and you can purchase most items in a range of shops, but it is advised to buy the school jumpers with the crest. The pricing will remain the same. Further details will be available on the school website and S and K Facebook page.

Many P6 parents will be relieved that the children will not have to sit an entrance exam for the Omagh Grammar Schools. I would predict that admission criteria will be applied by these schools for entry next year but again I will write to parents when I receive further information.

Regarding the current P7 pupils, we look forward to welcoming you back for a proper leavers Mass and celebration in the week beginning 24th August 2020. In the meantime, complete the transition booklet that Mr. Doherty has provided on the P7 google classroom and look forward to your new school year and all the excitement this will bring.

School reports can be collected on Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th June from the school assembly hall and any schoolbooks can also be returned then if possible. I have asked the teachers to write a report focusing on learning in English and Maths up until March and to include general comments. Year 7 pupils will receive a full report with the year 6 scores included if appropriate. Nursery pupils moving to P1 will receive a report, while those pupils returning to Nursery will have an opportunity to meet with Mrs. Shelley on restart.

In consultation with teachers I have decided to close Google Classrooms so that the children can enjoy their summer break free from the stress of online schoolwork.

There may be opportunities for P6 pupils for online learning provided by the DE, and there is also a possibility of a 2-week summer scheme for year 5 and 6 learners but I will contact P5 and P6 parents directly to see if there is sufficient interest in these projects.

My thanks to Fr. Paul for all his prayers and his special school masses which have been greatly appreciated.

To our P4 and P7 pupils we are hopeful that we can also join you in celebrating your First Holy Communion and Confirmation as soon as we are able. We understand how important these days are to families and this is a priority for Fr. Paul, myself and teachers.

Finally, best wishes to you all, take a break pupils and parents alike over the holidays and I and all the staff look forward to welcoming you all back for the new term.

Yours sincerely

Mr. B Mc Gurk Principal