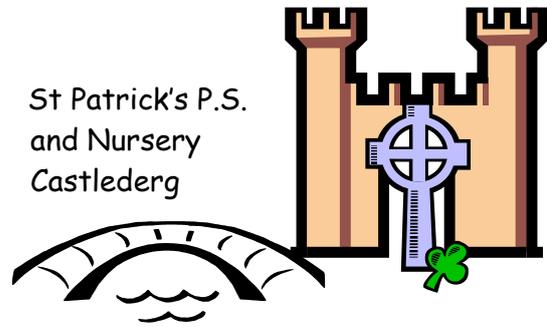


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September 2021 Newsletter

Welcome Back

Welcome back to all the pupils and staff for another school year. This is the third school year that we are dealing with the Covid – 19 pandemic. The number of cases in the area is still persistently high and our first priority is the safety of the school community. The children are all settling back well now and are enjoying being back in school. The new Nursery pupils and P1 pupils are beginning to settle into their classrooms and if there are any difficulties please contact the class teacher or myself.

Pupil Safety

The Department of Education has produced up to date information for parents on keeping their child safe and school safe in the present pandemic. I have attached a close contact flow chart to the school website and this would be your first point of reference in the event of any concerns or queries.

Children should not attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid- 19 – a high temperature, a continuous cough or a loss of the sense of taste or smell. We will maintain the use of class bubbles which worked so well last year and minimised the disruption to the pupils learning last year. Regulations around close contacts have changed. Pupils can attend school if they have received a negative PCR test or if they have received a previous positive PCR previously within the last 90 days. Otherwise pupils who are close contacts will need to isolate as before. Before returning pupils parents must seek permission from myself to ensure that that the pupils are safe.

Like last year P3 pupils will continue to be collected at 2.15pm as a further mitigation. I will review this at Halloween and hopefully P3 pupils can stay until 3.00pm from the next term.

Pupils will continue to be provided with personal stationery for their school classwork.

We had experimented with allowing play within year bands for outdoor play but with some positive cases reported within the school community we will revert to play within classes. With the recent surge in Covid- 19 cases within the area I need to be careful before we extend school services such as breakfast clubs and afterschool clubs. I am proposing to restart Breakfast Club from 8.30am to 9.00am from the 20th September but there will be strict rules and booking procedures so that a safe bubble can be maintained to keep pupils safe. This is the wisest course of action as this ensures the safety of each class and hopefully

will mean that the children can come to school and continue their education and allow parents to continue to work.

Picking up and collection appears to be working well. The pedestrian gates open at 9am until 9.15am and collection is from 2pm to 2.15pm and from 3.00pm to 3.15pm this point on a staggered basis. Parents should not enter the school grounds when picking up or collecting children. Parents remember to social distance from staff and fellow parents and other pupils. Children who attend late should enter the main school gate and wait to be received by a member of staff at the front door.

Please do not obstruct the main school gates or park in the bus bays at the front of school as this means the pupils have to get off the bus in the middle of the road. This is not safe and unfair on these children. Please avoid double parking as this blocks the main road and again puts the pupils at risk. Also be aware of local residents and avoid blocking entrances.

Older Pupils can be dropped off at the School Crossing Patrol Person at Taggart's Shop or at WillowCrest and walk up to school themselves. Vera is also at the back gate at 9am which leads out into the close of Churchtown Park. Finally remember to escort the children across the road if not using School Crossing Patrols.

We all have a responsibility to keep our pupils safe.

Meals/Healthy eating

Pupils may now pay for a school packed lunch. Dinner pupils are now permitted to have their school dinner in the school dinner hall. I've included the menu on the school website if you wish to have a look. The price of a **school dinner** is presently £2.60. This money can be paid daily or weekly. If you are paying for dinners in advance it is helpful if you write the child's name, class and amount enclosed and place in an envelope for the school meals staff.

Please note that free school meals entitlement needs to be applied for annually. This is important as this improves our school funding so it is well worth applying if you are eligible.

It is vital that no child brings nuts or nut products to school as a number of our pupils are at risk from various allergies.

The school operates a healthy eating policy so the children must bring a healthy break to school i.e. fruit, water for break time. Remember children should only bring water to school for break. Sweets, crisps cereal bars and fizzy drinks are not permitted at break time. We also encourage healthy lunch boxes so treats and sweets etc. should be kept to a minimum. We have added some guidance for children's lunchboxes on the school website if you are running out of ideas.

Digital Schools.

We will also request a parent email this year as we would hope to use a secure system to send out school messages via email in addition to our text messaging service. Nursery parents can contact Mrs. Shelley outside of class time directly using the Nursery Mobile at 07707838992.

All our school newsletters and other documents can be found on our school website etc. You can email office attendance enquires to dtraynor10@c2kni.net or you can contact a member of staff using info@stpatricks.castledearg.ni.sch.uk

Homework/Google Classroom

All of our children in P1 to P7 will receive their homework via Google Classroom. Many of our parents are now familiar with these platforms during the previous years. Reading books will now be permitted to be sent home with words to learn. Pupils are very comfortable using Google Classroom and the different apps like Mathletics, Accelerated Reader, IXL and Collins Reading. Pupils will be given passwords on flashcards. There are training videos for parents on the school website.

It is important that we use Google Classroom in the event of class closures etc.

Homework is being delivered in a different way from next week – the weekly homework will be posted in Google Classroom at the start of the working week. This will allow pupils and parents to complete homework at their own pace and allow parents to plan how they can oversee or help with homework over a complete week. Homework will need to be submitted by a **Thursday evening to allow the teacher time to assess this.**

Pupils will be able to complete the recommended reading and work scheduled but parents will also be able to access other tasks and books to extend their child in Reading, English or Maths. There will also be topic work in different subjects which will added to Google Classroom.

We would recommend that each family has access to a device for school work purposes. We are using laptops, chrome books and laptops daily with our pupils. Families without access to internet or devices at home should let the teacher know and we will arrange for these pupils to have access to a school device.

Child Protection arrangements.

Mrs Mc Glade Vice-Principal is the designated teacher for child protection and can be contacted at school if you have any concerns or need advice.

Child Protection Procedures, Anti-Bullying Information and a Complaints Procedure are included on our school website. We also have access to a school counsellor if any parent wishes their child to access this service.

Nursery Parents may also speak to Mrs Shelley in the Nursery if they have any concerns.

Contacting the school office

We would ask that each family ensure that any changes in address or phone numbers since your child attended P1 are notified to Mrs. Deirdre Traynor in the school office.

Parent/s also will need to indicate if their child has any new medical needs. Children who require inhalers for asthma must leave these in a sealed bag in school and complete a school medical form.

The school office is open from 9.15am to 3.15pm and is closed for lunch from 12.30pm – 1.30pm. Messages can also be left on the school answering machine and non-urgent queries can be emailed to Deirdre in the school office at the email address – dtraynor107@c2kni.net or at the school email above - these messages are checked daily.

Newsletters

Newsletters, school letters, school menus and online safety newsletters will continue to be posted online on the school website www.stpatrickspscastledearg.co.uk from September 2021. So continue to check in to the school website to be kept up to date about school life and information.

The pupils can take part in a **Red and White/Tyrone Jersey Day** this Friday 10th September 2021 to celebrate Tyrone taking part in the men's All-Ireland Final on Saturday.

A school holiday list is now included on our school website. The school is closed on the Wednesday 27th Thursday 28th and Friday 29th October and Monday 1st November 2021 for the Halloween Midterm.

Hoping everyone keeps safe.

Brian Mc Gurk
Principal