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Dear Parent/s,

I hope this letter finds you all well.

The incidence of Covid-19 remains very high within schools and it is confusing for parents when all other restrictions seems to be lifting.

It is very important that as a school community we continue to be careful if the children have any symptoms or are close contacts. By being cautious we have managed to protect the pupil's education and we haven't had to close classrooms this term to date even though at times we have been very stretched.

Thankfully with the encouraged use of Lateral Flow Tests – parents can test pupils quickly and allow them to attend school with a negative result. I appreciate parents taking the extra precaution, if there is Covid within a household and if the pupils are unable to isolate effectively, by keeping their child at home until such time as it is safe to return to school.

I still would advise parent/s to contact me at school by email if they are not sure of when pupils can return safely. At present pupils with Covid can return to school if they return 2 negative Lateral Flow Tests on day 5 and day 6. However, as I write this guidance may in fact be changed again.

I will take the extra precaution now of letting parents know if there are 2/3 cases of Covid -19 within a room so that pupils can be tested using a Lateral Flow Test.

Parent/s of pupils who are isolating and are well enough can request learning to be posted on Google Classroom and for younger pupils work packs.

Fr. Paul released the dates for Confirmation and First Holy Communion last Sunday. Confirmation takes place on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and all being well the pupils will be confirmed by Bishop Mc Keown. First Holy Communion will take place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2022. We will know closer to the time arrangements subject to any remaining restrictions. It is important that the pupils who are preparing for the Sacraments attend mass at the weekends now with restrictions being lifted.

As this week is the celebration of Catholic Schools Week the P4 pupils and P7 pupils will attend Mass on Friday morning with the rest of the pupils joining online. I know that many of you share our pride in the school community at St. Patrick's PS Castlederg and it is important to celebrate our schools and speak highly of our pupils and their many achievements. Our pupils reflect all that is good about society.

I would be hopeful that with the easing of restrictions presently, that after the midterm break we would be able to relax bubble systems and have a return to mixing for the pupils within the playgrounds and a return to sports, clubs and shared assemblies, spelling bees etc. This will greatly help our pupils who have almost forgotten what a normal school day should be like.

Congratulations to the children who raised £500 for our local St. Vincent De Paul by taking part in Christmas Jumper Day. Many of the children brought in their own pocket money and the money was donated to the St. Vincent De Paul just before Christmas.

I am hoping that this letter will find you by email and I 'll also post a copy on the school website.

A reminder also to make sure applications for P1 and Nursery are received by Friday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022 by 12.00pm online. I have added a page to the school website to help parents applying which includes the nursery and school prospectus.

In the meantime, we can look forward to our mid-term break from the 17<sup>th</sup> February to 21<sup>st</sup> February inclusive in the hope of Springtime and a return to a more normal school experience. As ever if there are any difficulties please feel free to contact me at school.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Mc Gurk Principal