



SAINT MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT

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Dear Parents,

Firstly, I would like to begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year and I hope and trust that your families continue to keep safe and well during this period of great uncertainty. I apologise for contacting you during the school holidays and at a weekend but as you will appreciate 2020 was a very challenging year for everyone and unfortunately this looks likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

As you no doubt aware, the Education Minister, Mr Peter Weir, recently announced revised plans for the reopening of schools. This is continually evolving situation and I write to update you on how they will currently impact upon us in Saint Mary's.

The Minister stated that the normal reopening of schools is not sustainable in light of the deteriorating nature of the pandemic and the accompanying risks to public health. Pupils in Primary School settings will therefore be taught remotely in the first week of January 2021. This means that on Monday 4th January, the first day of the new term, will be for staff preparation day and pupils are requested to engage in remote learning from Tuesday 5th January until Friday 8th January.

Staff will be preparing learning packs of scheduled work for all classes on Monday 4th January and these will be available for collection, from the school, on Tuesday 5th January from 9am-12pm. More details on the how this will be organised will be issued on Monday 4th January. The associated work and worksheets will also be added to our school website on Tuesday 5th January from 9.00am. Teachers will put up a timetable for daily activities each day on the school website at 9.00am and be available to mark completed work, if required, and answer any queries from 9.00am- 3.00pm on these days. There will be various means to contact your child's teacher and each teacher will give details on how to do this in their class newsletter issued along with the scheduled work.

The Minister has also stated that Schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers for supervised learning. ***"A child of a key worker is a child for whom both parents (or a parent in a single parent family) is a key worker, with no other safe alternative"***. (A full list of Key Workers and Vulnerable pupils is appended to the end of this letter.) In light of this instruction, the school will be open for the supervision of children of Vulnerable and Key workers criteria on Tuesday 5th January until Friday 8 January. If you require your child to be supervised in school, please

contact me via email at pgilchrist570@c2kni.net by 12.00pm on Monday 4 January to enable us to make the arrangements necessary to facilitate your request. Please include the following information:

- Names of Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
- Name and class(es) of child(ren)
- Vulnerable category or Key Worker designation for both parents/single parent (from the list provided)
- Days of the week above that you will need supervision for your child

It is important to note that pupils attending school under these arrangements are being 'supervised' and will not receive face to face teaching. However, they will be able to access the work that their peers will be completing remotely.

This is an ever changing and fluid situation. I will endeavour to keep you up-to-date, as much as I can should any situation change or be prolonged. Please keep checking our website for latest news and updates.

I fully appreciate the difficulties remote learning poses for all families and pupils. It remains a less than favourable situation for staff alike but we hope we can continue to work collaboratively to make the best of this situation and hope that we can welcome all back to school very soon, when it is safe and secure to do so.

As ever, please do not hesitate to get in contact with myself at pgilchrist570@c2kni.net should you have any questions or queries on any matter relating to this or remote learning.

Yours sincerely

Mr Paul Gilchrist
Principal

Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan>)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is 'on-the-edge' of receiving support from children's social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (Jan 21)

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response