



# SAINT MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT

Principal: Mr P Gilchrist

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6<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Dear Parents,

It is very hard to understand and comprehend that we are back to the same position we found ourselves last March 2020. I am sure like ourselves in school, there are a lot of mixed emotions going on within your households right now. Whatever transpires over the next few weeks we know we are blessed with the most wonderful children and very supportive parents who I believe, know that we will always have the best interests of the St Mary's community at the heart of everything we do. Let's continue to stay strong, stay together and stay positive.

This morning the Education Minister instructed schools to close for the foreseeable future to minimise the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19. It is essential, therefore, that we comply with this instruction and children from Nursery to Primary 7 will be engaging in remote learning rather than face to face teaching in school, until the 12<sup>th</sup> February (half term holiday) and children are not scheduled to be back in school again for face-to-face teaching until 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021.

Yesterday we distributed packs for this week only. Further packs for next week will be available for collection from the school hall on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January from 9am-12pm. If you are unable to attend the school on Monday, please get in touch with me on email [pgilchrist570@c2kni.net](mailto:pgilchrist570@c2kni.net) to arrange alternative pick-up arrangements. This pack will again be for a one-week period. Thereafter we will be making packs for a two-week duration and again these will be collected from the school hall on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> January.

You can send your work and get in touch with the teacher using the teacher's email account. Details are on each teacher's daily notes. We will be exploring Microsoft Teams from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January as an alternative form of communication. It is not replacing the email account but we will be evaluating the uptake and effectiveness throughout the next 2 weeks. Details on how to download and access teams, as well as individual pupil c2k account details, is available in the Home Learning section of the school website. Any issues downloading or accessing Teams, please get in touch with me and I will try to rectify as best I can.

The Education Minister's recent guidelines also stated that schools will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers for supervised learning (a full list of key workers and vulnerable children is appended to the end of this letter). **We are**

**here to support our vulnerable children and children of frontline health workers and key workers who are doing an amazing and selfless job for us all.** We will only be able to offer places for childcare based on our capacity. To inform that decision, we need to be able to manage who can access the care, otherwise the original reason for closure of our schools and nurseries becomes meaningless. In practice, this means we may also need to consider offering places to a smaller group, where the need is most urgent.

To support us and help us inevitably to support those most in need and yet still safeguard appropriately, we request that, if you request this provision, you contact me with the information required in the application form attached. Before doing so, please consider the current guidance and please be aware that guidance may alter if we receive more specific updates from the Education Minister.

Before contacting us, **please pay particular attention to the following points. We will not be able to operate a 'normal' school day. There will be no teaching.** Care for children will be provided during their normal school day. Children attending will be required to wear their uniform. Please be advised that we will be performing childcare duties and there will be supervised learning rather than teaching as our teachers must be available to prepare online/remote learning and will be liaising with children who are working at home.

**Points to consider:**

If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child. **This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with social distancing guidance.**

I would stress again that home is the safest place for your child. The Minister of Education has called for key worker parents only to use schools as a last resort to provide care for their children as they carry out their essential duties. If there is a parent/guardian/elder sibling at home, your child should be kept at home. I would ask you, that where at all possible, you do this, as I am trying to ensure the safety of our whole school family and community in very difficult circumstances.

**Please note:**

- If your child says they are feeling unwell, we will contact you immediately as we will need to send your child home.
- If your child is medically vulnerable DO NOT send them to school.
- If you are self-isolating, DO NOT send your child to school.
- If you can make alternative arrangements to look after your children through a partner/relative/other means, PLEASE DO NOT send your child to school.

Obviously, it goes without saying, if your only option is to request our care, we will look after your child in order to support you in your important role.

Please email me (pgilchrist570@c2kni.net) by 1pm on Fridays on a weekly basis to request which days in the following week your children will be attending so I can

arrange our staff rota. Once key information has been gathered and decisions made, only families with an offer of a place should attend in that week, and they should only do so when directed to by us. It could potentially be impossible to accept the number of families who may apply for such provision, given the extensive nature of the Minister's keyworker list.

These are challenging times and we greatly value the work that everyone is doing to limit the long-term impact of this potentially devastating virus. This situation is continually developing, and we will endeavour to keep you informed of any future changes as promptly as possible. Together we are stronger.

We keep you all in our thoughts and prayers and as ever, thank you for your support.

Take great care of yourself and take care of others.

Yours sincerely,

Mr P Gilchrist  
Principal

## Appendix

### Definition of a Key Worker (Department of Education, January 2021)

- 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

### Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Department of Education, 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.



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## APPLICATION FOR CHILDCARE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN OF KEY WORKERS

Please email your response to [pgilchrist570@c2kni.net](mailto:pgilchrist570@c2kni.net) by 1:00 pm Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January, with the following information included:

**Children's Names:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### KEY WORKER ROLE(S)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Keyworker Role: \_\_\_\_\_

If possible, please note any particular considerations the school should be aware of if we are in a position where we need to manage who can access this offer of childcare support.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide us with at least two up-to-date contact details, particularly if grandparents can no longer be listed as one of the priority contacts during this period.**

Contact Details:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_