St Michael’s PS, Dunnamanagh

30th September 2020

Dear Parents,

Firstly, thank you to you all for helping us to implement so efficiently our COVID19 measures. The children are excellent in their observance of necessary measures and their behaviour in relation to COVID 19 restrictions in school. So thank you and well done to all our pupils.

The Board of Governors, as parents themselves, have discussed the length of our school day for primary one and two pupils and decided that from after Hallowe’en, (that is, Monday 2nd November) pupils in primary 1 and 2 will finish school at 2.00pm. This means that parents will be able to collect their children from this class at this new time.

However, the Governors recognise that many of our infant pupils travel by school bus, which comes at 3.00pm. Therefore, the school will run an after-school club each day for those primary 1 and 2 pupils wishing to stay to 3.00pm. This club will be open to all pupils in primary 1 and 2, not only those who travel by bus. The club will be supervised by two classroom assistants, Mrs M Devine and Mrs L Buchanan. Parents will have the option to collect their children at 2.00pm, if they choose.

By this means, Governors are facilitating the earlier collection of pupils at 2.00pm, whilst providing lighter fun/play activities through the club for those pupils who choose to stay on. The club will focus on activities such as story-time, building pupil social skills and indoor and outdoor play.

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Teachers are preparing to discuss Individual Education Plans (IEPs) with the parents of those children who have additional needs. We would have liked to have conducted these as face-to-face meetings, but latest DE Guidance does not recommend this. Therefore, teachers will be arranging times to speak with these parents via telephone in early October. It also seems unlikely that we will be able to have face-to-face parents’ meeting towards the end of this term, as we would have intended. These meetings will probably be via telephone. If, however, you have any concerns and need to speak to a class teacher, please do not hesitate to contact us and arrange a suitable time outside of class teaching hours.

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A piece of good news – we would love all our pupils to dress up for Hallowe’en as ‘normal’ on Friday 23rd October. We just ask that all scary accessories – witches’ brooms, pitchforks, swords etc… are left at home! We recommend the children wear a t-shirt and jogging bottoms under their costume so that they can take off their costume if they become too warm/ uncomfortable.

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I will be commencing an after-school club on Monday 9th November (3.15-4.15pm) for current Primary 6 pupils, who are intending to sit the Transfer tests in autumn 2021. I have no information about these tests at present, but believe commencing work at this early stage can only help with preparation. Current Primary 7 pupils who may wish to avail of this opportunity for catch up/ reinforcement of work are welcome to attend. I will emphasis however, that pupils attending must be aware that this club will be a focussed learning session, and will have accompanying follow-up work. If you wish for your child to attend, please ring the school to confirm your permission and that your child will be collected promptly afterwards at the school at 4.15pm.

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There is a change of date for school closure for Christmas holidays. The school will close on **Monday 21st December at 3.00pm** and not on Tuesday 22nd December at 12noon, as stated in previous correspondence. I apologise for this mix-up in dates.

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Work on our additional classrooms commenced off-site on 31st August. Work will be commencing on-site on 12th October. The majority of work is outside of the current school building, to the rear of the school and will be cordoned off from the normal day-to-day running of the school. Health and Safety and Child Protection are a priority for the Board of Governors, as well as the EA project Manager and Contractor. Measures will be in place to ensure that Health and Safety, Child Protection and COVID19 procedures are strictly followed during the work.

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As you already know via text message, we have password protected many areas of our school website for Safeguarding/ Child Protection purposes.

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**Very importantly**, I have included some information (COVID 19 Guidance), which I hope will help when having to make difficult decisions about when your child should be kept at home.

Also in relation to uniforms, DE Guidance states that:

*‘While Coronavirus can land on fabrics and remain for some time, school are not a high risk environment and while all children and where possible young people should be encouraged to wear clean uniform or fresh clothes each day, this is not essential and schools should be mindful of their school community and avoid additional pressure/ expense on parents.’*

I ask for your co-operation in this matter by ensuring that your children change their uniform as frequently as possible during the course of the school week. I also ask that from now on, as the weather gets colder, that children wear jogging/ tracksuit bottoms to school on PE days, rather than shorts.

Thank you for your continued support in these difficult times and take care,

*J Carlin (Mrs)*

*Principal*

St Michael’s PS, Dunnamanagh

COVID 19 GUIDANCE

1. If your child has a high temperature or a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change of sense of smell or taste, your child needs to stay home, self-isolate and you need to request a coronavirus test as soon as possible through the PHA Test, Trace and Protect service [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)
2. If anyone you live with has a high temperature or a new, continuous cough, you all need to stay at home and self-isolate. They need to request a coronavirus test as soon as possible through the PHA Test, Trace and Protect service [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)
3. Pupils can return to school when they have completed the necessary period of isolation as advised by the Test, Trace and Protect service.
4. Additionally, where a pupil displays gastrointestinal symptoms, such as vomiting or diarrhoea, they should not attend school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least 2 days. (This is in keeping with normal non-Covid PHA guidance).

Information from Section 8 of the Department of Education’s New School Day Guidance

(updated 24th Sept ’20)

(p63 and p64):

Point 14. The guidance is as follows:

* Testing is only recommended if a person has any of the symptoms of COVID-19:
	+ a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature), or;
	+ a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual), or;
	+ anosmia - the loss or a change in your normal sense of smell (it can also affect your sense of taste):
* if you have symptoms of coronavirus or, have no symptoms and a positive test, you will need to stay at home for at least 10 days;
* if you live with someone who has symptoms or a positive test, you will need to stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms;
* however, if you develop symptoms during this 14-day period, you will need to self-check in accordance with Test and Trace guidance and stay at home for 10 days from the day your symptoms started (regardless of what day you are on in the original 14-day period);
* 10 days after your symptoms started, if you do not have a high temperature, you do not need to continue to self-isolate. If you still have a high temperature, keep self-isolating until your temperature returns to normal. You do not need to self-isolate if you just have a cough after 10 days, as a cough can last for several weeks after the infection has gone;
* if you have symptoms and live with someone who is 70 or over, has a long-term condition, is pregnant or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else they can stay for the 14-day isolation period;
* it is likely that people living within a household will infect each other or be infected already. Staying at home for 14 days will greatly reduce the overall amount of infection the household could pass on to others in the community.

Further details can be found at PHA website: [www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net) COVID-19: Information for the public.