St Michael’s PS, Dunnamanagh

20th March 2020

Dear Parents / Carers,

**Supporting Children of Key Workers in Special Schools**

On Thursday 19th March, the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland, Mr Peter Weir MLA, made a statement outlining how schools will close to pupils from the end of the school day, today Friday 20th March. However, they will open to staff on Monday 23rd March to support identified Key Workers and sustain children’s distance learning. We want to ensure that we support the children of key workers in a similar way across our schools. However, we need to balance this with the ultimate aim of reducing the spread of the virus by trying to keep the number of children in schools to a minimum, in line with public health guidance.

It is important that we are aware of how many children of key workers will be attending school next week. With this in mind, **if you are an identified key worker**, with no other child minding provision, please make contact with the school as soon as possible to inform us. This can be by e-mailing to the school info address: **info@smps.dunnamanagh.ni.sch.uk**

Before contacting school, please pay particular attention to the following points. Schools will not be able to operate a ‘normal’ school day. Many of our schools are already operating with a significant reduction in staffing and this will probably continue to get worse over time.

**Points to consider**

• A list of key workers, issued by the Department of Education is listed overleaf.

• If possible, alternative childcare arrangements should be sought before deciding to send your child to school. For example, with other family members, friends etc. Please try and use school as a last resort. This is to try and limit the number of children and adults together in a small space in line with recent social distancing guidance. Our school’s normal opening and closing time will apply, at this stage.

• Children attending will be required to wear their school uniform. Please be advised that our school will be performing childcare duties, rather than teaching, as not all teachers are currently available. However, learning packs have been provided for all children.

* Please note, the FAQs from government state: “Many parents working in these critical sectors may be able to ensure their child is kept at home. Every child who can be safely cared for at home should be.”

We would ask that you pay attention to the points outlined above before deciding to send your child to school. Obviously, it goes without saying, if your only option is to send your child to school, we will look after them in order to support you in your important role.

*J Carlin (Mrs)*

*Principal*

**LIST OF KEY WORKERS AS OUTLINED ON DOCUMENTATION ISSUED TO SCHOOLS ON 19TH MARCH 2020**

Please work with us to ensure that schools operate with a limited number of children

• 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 nursery 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, services and waste disposal

• 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)

• Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.