St Michael’s PS

Dunnamanagh

17th March 2020

Dear Parents,

I have taken this letter from one that was agreed by Strabane Principals at a meeting on 16th March, Monday night:

Given the current situation and the letter received from Mr. Weir (Minister for Education) on 16th March; the letter clearly states…

“The Department will continue to follow the expert medical and scientific advice from the Chief Medical Officer, Public Health Agency and the UK Government Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

Schools will continue to stay open until such time as this scientific advice changes.”

“It appears likely that at some point in the future I will have to close schools….. This is not a step to be taken lightly and without due consideration to the significant consequences.” P. Weir Minster for Education NI

As there are only two further staff training day available to us in St.Michael’s PS, we are now bringing these days forward to Wednesday 18thMarch and Thursday 19thMarch. That means children can officially remain at home on these two days but staff will be working.

The Governors of this school therefore will have to open the school to pupils as directed by Mr Weir, from Friday 20thMarch onwards, however we feel that it is totally understandable if parents choose not to send their child(ren) to school in favour of self-isolation. Pupils will be given an absence mark which reflects this course of action by parents in these unprecedented circumstances. We fully understand, support and appreciate your position in this matter. As the Department of Education sends out further updates on the COVID-19 situation we will also let you know.

Staff in St. Michael’s Primary School are working hard to prepare for the school closures that we are being told are inevitable and staff will be working on Wednesday and Thursday to prepare Learning Packs for work at home for one month. Parents may collect these packs from school staff at a time to be arranged. A text message will be sent to confirm this arrangement.

All staff are continuing to work to minimise the spread of any infection by teaching and helping children to wash their hands effectively and maintaining the highest standard of hygiene in all areas of the school. We have had hand sanitizers installed in our school also. As advice is regularly updated, we are monitoring the situation and will ensure we follow all directions from the Public Health Agency (PHA) www.publichealth.hscni.net

If your son/daughter develops cold/flu like symptoms we ask that you please keep him/her at home, contact your GP and inform school. You must also inform us immediately if your child is being tested for Coronavirus. As a parent, you must decide what is in the best interests of your child. To date there are no diagnoses of COVID 19 in our school family or beyond in the local community but this situation could change.

In order to further minimise risk within school, we are continuing to limit contact with the general population and to that end all school trips/outings have been cancelled. All after school clubs have also had to be postponed for the time being. We will also limit visitors into school, except in exceptional circumstances, and this will include postponing meetings with parents and organisations who assist with assemblies, sports etc until further notice. We continue to keep this under review and will advise you of any changes at the earliest possible opportunity.

I am sure that all parents/carers will understand that we take these measures in order to ensure that we can protect, to the best of our ability, the pupils / staff in our school environment whilst acting under Guidance from the Department of Education and Public Health Agency (PHA).

We will also give advice on some online activities which your child can access from home via our School Website (www.stmichaelspsdunnamanagh.com) in the event of closure. Further details may follow to add clarity to Home Learning in the event of a school closure announcement.

As this situation is ever changing, if we receive any further communication or advice from the PHA, Department of Education, CCMS or Education Authority over the next few days we will keep you informed.

Thank you for your ongoing support. God bless you all as we journey through this challenging time together.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Carlin

Principal