

# ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

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20<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Dear Parents,

I trust that you and your children are keeping well and managing in the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves. I appreciate that school closures have presented difficulties for parents and children, however I have no doubt that we all want to prioritize our good health and indeed that of the most vulnerable in our community. I thank-you for the understanding, patience and the overwhelming level of support which parents providing.

While there is still a lack of clarity as to when schools in N.Ireland are likely to reopen, it would seem that it is not likely to be sooner than September and then in a staggered manner, with pupils' learning time being split between attending school and working remotely. Please find some updates below regarding home learning.

- As you are aware, teachers are providing lots of work, both in paper packs and online. While the work is differentiated, each parent should still consider what is reasonable for their circumstances and their child's needs. I reiterate that it is most important that pupils keep reading, as this is central to their learning. As well as reading, the other core parts of home learning are spelling / phonics, some independent writing and key number facts. We encourage where possible that the children complete as much as they can, however if parents are finding it hard to manage all the home learning, especially at certain times, please prioritize these core areas and then do whatever else is reasonable. If you can, try not to neglect the active learning and fun activities. You may well have your own ideas for children to learn with you at home through perhaps a nature walk, working in the garden or cooking. During these fun activity's children can for example, calculate, compare, estimate, measure, develop language and record. We enjoy hearing about all your great learning experiences. Just like in school you will find that children learn best when they are active and enjoy what they are doing.
- Please be reassured that teachers are working hard from home to ensure that your child is given the best chance to maintain and extend their learning during the school closure. While, like everyone we have had to adapt to working from home, please be assured that work on seesaw is uploaded and monitored regularly. You will find that in June, teachers will allocate more revision and active learning. Teachers will be beginning to work on reports and prepare for transition.
- Please remember that if you wish to contact your child's teacher, it should be done through seesaw. In keeping with our Code of Conduct, teachers will not communicate regarding pupils' learning across social media such as Facebook. If you have a more general query or a difficulty in accessing seesaw, then please email [info@stmarysntb.newtownbutler.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stmarysntb.newtownbutler.ni.sch.uk) and we will get back to you.
- We really enjoy the photos that you have forwarded. Please note that when posting any photos online, you should always consider whether you feel comfortable that they are appropriate to be shared with the teacher / class. As you know, in school we have a strong focus on positive reinforcement and praise. We can't currently mark achievements through assembly or by asking children to show their work to me or

other teachers. We are however celebrating the pupils' many achievements through public acknowledgement on the website. If you do not want work or photos displayed on the website, please let the class teacher know.

- Please note the following upcoming events:
  - Bishop Duffy to celebrate an end of year school Mass online on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May at 8pm [www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-josephs-church-park-street-monaghan](http://www.mcnmedia.tv/camera/st-josephs-church-park-street-monaghan)
  - Fr Kevin Malcolmson to celebrate Mass for P4 pupils and their families at 11am on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May. [www.galloonparish.com](http://www.galloonparish.com)
  - End of Year / Leavers Mass to be arranged.
  - A virtual celebration of our P7 pupils prior to their transition to post-primary is being planned and we hope that in the future we will also be able to invite the pupils to celebrate in school.
  - Arrangements are also being made for our new P1 pupils to have some virtual transition activities to help them prepare for joining us in September.
  - As it does not appear that we will be able to have our usual 'moving-up' day in school, virtual transition activities are also being planned by teachers for their incoming classes.
  - Annual reports will be issued; however, these will be in a different format to reflect the current situation and this year there will not be any standardized assessments to report on.
  - The link to a virtual Sports Day has been uploaded to our website.
  - The school community buried a time capsule in 2000, which is due to be resumed this year. In light of the historic events of 2020, we now plan to create a new time capsule. Pupils are invited to gather and either keep for now or if possible forward through Seesaw, photos, pictures, written work, notable items etc which could be included as memories of life in lockdown.

Please be reassured that teachers are planning for a return to school and considering ways in which we can aim to keep all members of our school and wider community safe.

Take care and God bless you and your families,

P Kelly

Principal

