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| Capture  ***Principal: Miss R Robinson***  ***Tel: 028 38851778***  ***Fax: 028 38852568***  *B Ed (Hons) M Ed PQH* | **St Mary’s Primary School**  **84 Maghery Road**  **Maghery**  **Dungannon**  **Co Tyrone**  **BT71 6PA** |

6th January 2021

Dear Parents,

I hope this finds you and your families safe and well.

Staff have been working hard over these past few days planning and preparing work for this week in what are continuously changing circumstances. This work will today, be uploaded on to SeeSaw and Google Classroom for this week. Again teachers can be contacted via these sources during the school day and will respond as soon as they can.

As a school we are receiving continual up-dates from the NI Executive with regards to schools and pre-school settings. Unfortunately, as am sure you will all agree, these up-dates are being provided at very late notice which put schools, parents and children in an extremely difficult position to plan ahead for the days and weeks to come.

I acknowledge the challenges this places on all of us at this time. However, I wish to reaffirm that the staff of St Mary’s are working assiduously to ensure your child receives the best possible education at a time whereby we have all been forced to change due to a rise of infection which is worrying for us all.

The guidance to date for schools on 31st December is as follows:

The Minister said: *“The Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Education Authority and the Public Health Agency have worked closely throughout the pandemic to maintain the education of children, to reduce the risk of outbreaks and to respond when these occur. This work has continued in recent weeks and the proposed way forward has been informed by the evidence and the advice provided. The common aim has been to keep schools safe, prioritise children’s education and ensure any impact on overall transmission is as low as possible, while accepting that schools reopening as normal is not sustainable.*

*“While previous arrangements have been informed by the advice of the Department of Health, unfortunately the deteriorating nature of the epidemic and the risks to public health has necessitated more substantial changes”*

The Department has defined key workers as follows:

* 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 including youth workers;
* 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

The school, like last year will remain open for children who are applicable to attend school within the guidance criteria. However, in order to protect our kids, adults, our staff, and keep the infection rate at a minimum, I ask of you to please only avail of this service if you have no other means to support the supervised learning and care of your child/children. As we have been told time and time again, the safest place for us all is at home.

Should you need to send your child to school on a particular week or day, please inform the school by phone/voicemail on the Thursday of the week previous. This is mainly to allow for supervision rotas to be established, for the cook to order food for school meals, and for Robert the bus driver to be informed.

We thank you for working with alongside us in Term 1 with SeeSaw and Google Classroom. There were a few teething problems along the way, for staff as much as parents might I add, as it was something we all had to pick up and learn in a short space of time. So it was extremely generous of you to bear with us. Over this next number of weeks these will be our main sources of communication and learning. These are invaluable tools as they allow us to upload many sources of media which support learning, limit paper usage and the need for a printer. All children have been shown by the class teacher how to use these online tools.

If you are still having difficulties with these sources, please contact staff by google classroom or seesaw, or leave a message via school phone/voicemail and we will respond as soon as possible.

Although the transfer has been cancelled, we still await the position of PPTC in regards to their next move for those children who were to sit the test on the 30th January.

Stay safe

Miss R Robinson