



29/06/2020

Dear Parents/Carers

I hope that you and your families continue to keep well during the very strange times we are living through. On behalf of the staff I want to thank you for your patience and cooperation over the past few months and for your engagement with ClassDojo and/or Google Classroom, which has enabled your child to continue with their learning. While we all recognise that remote learning is not the same as school, I believe that, as a community, we have all done our very best in the unprecedented situation we found ourselves in. I want to commend the staff on how quickly they came to terms with new technology and educational platforms and the huge effort they put into providing resources and support for home learning. The resources on ClassDojo and Google Classroom will continue to be accessible to parents over the summer months, although the teachers will not be monitoring the platforms. When we return in August the work will be archived and the class will be assigned to their new teacher.

As we come towards the end of term, I know that you want some idea of what the next school year will look like, so that you can plan for childcare and work commitments. **However, as you know, government guidance changes from week to week, so these proposed plans may have to change too.**

The Department of Education (DE) published guidance for schools on June 19. This document asks that we aim to give children 1m social distance and implement a 'protective bubble' strategy whereby children from different classes are kept apart. Adults are directed to maintain 2m social distance, although this seems to have now been reduced to 1m also. As you know many of our classrooms are small and most of our classes are large. Some classrooms will just about accommodate whole classes, given the social distance requirements. Other classrooms will not. However, if we use the canteen, the hall, the two additional multipurpose classrooms and the ICT suite to accommodate some children from the smaller classrooms I believe that we can bring all of the children back to school full time. **This will mean that some children in certain year groups will not be in the classroom with their assigned teacher.**

Recently a DUP MP stated on the BBC that additional funding was going to be made available to get as many children as possible back to school full time. I have been trying to get clarity on this all week but nothing concrete has been published to date. **If we are to accommodate all of the children, we will need to source additional desks and I would like to be able to have a teacher in each room. However, this will be dependent on additional funding from DE. If no additional funding becomes available, then teachers and assistants will have to move between rooms to ensure that all of the children get teaching time, but I believe that this is preferable to 'blended learning', whereby the children only attend school two days per week.**

Of course this will be dependent on low rates of Coronavirus transmission in the community. If the transmission rate increases, lockdown measures may have to be tightened again. On the other hand, if the situation continues to improve then social distancing recommendations for children may be removed completely. If that were to happen then children would all go to their assigned teacher. **All decisions will be made based on the most up-to-date scientific and medical advice.**

To allow all children back to school full time, we will have to implement some changes to our routines for the safety of pupils, parents and staff. These changes will be subject to regular review and may be added to or relaxed as the term progresses.

- No Breakfast Club, 123 Club or afterschool activities are currently planned as we are expected to maintain 'protective bubbles'.
- P3 children will finish at 2pm every day. This will be reviewed at Halloween.
- All children should wash their hands thoroughly just before they leave for school in the morning.
- Children can wear either their full school uniform or their PE uniform. It is recommended that they have a freshly washed uniform everyday.
- No schoolbags should be brought to school.
- All children from P2-P7 should bring the following stationery items to school so that children do not have to share resources. Please label these items with your child's name - HB pencils x 2, rubber, sharpener, Pritt stick, small ruler, small set of colouring pencils and whiteboard marker x 2. If you have difficulties getting any of these items, we will supply your child with the item, but wouldn't have enough for each child. If you have a clear plastic pencil case, please send the items in this but if you don't have one, we will supply a clear plastic wallet for each child.
- No school dinners will be available. The kitchen renovation has not been finished and the canteen will be used as a classroom. The EA School Meals Service will supply a packed lunch to children on Free School Meals **from Sept 1<sup>st</sup>**. All children will eat in their classrooms. Lunches should be sent to school in disposable packaging.
- Homework will be set through ClassDojo and/or Google Classroom. Worksheets may also be sent home.
- PE lessons will be curtailed, as the hall will be used as a classroom, and break and lunchtime will be even more staggered than usual.
- Parents who wish to speak to their child's teacher must arrange this through ClassDojo.
- Parents must not routinely enter the school building without a prior appointment.
- Children, other than those in P1 and P2, should be dropped off at the gate and go straight to their classrooms in the morning, to avoid large crowds congregating in the playground. If this causes anxiety for some children, we will be flexible.
- To ease congestion in the morning we ask for your cooperation with a staggered arrival. Children with surnames beginning with A to L should arrive between 8.45am and 9am. All other children should arrive between 9am and 9.15am.
- The playground is very congested at 2pm on Fridays so the following arrangements will, hopefully, help ease this. If your eldest child(ren) is in P1 or P2 please collect them between 1.40-1.50pm. If your eldest child(ren) is in P3 or P4 please collect **all** of your children between 1.50-2pm. If your eldest child is in KS2 please collect **all** of your child(ren) between 2- 2.10pm
- Children who have any symptoms associated with Covid 19 must stay at home, as advised by the Public Health Agency (PHA).
- Children who live with someone who has symptoms associated with Covid 19 must stay at home, as advised by the PHA.

**Provisional starting dates.**

Minister Weir has directed schools to reopen on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> Aug. The holiday list on the website will have to be changed in next term to reflect this earlier start date. The following proposed phased return will help us ensure a safe and smooth start to the year.

**Monday 24<sup>th</sup> Aug:** P3, P6 and P7 -all finishing at noon. Usual start and finish times for the rest of the week.

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> Aug:** P5 -in to 3pm. Usual start and finish times for the rest of the week.

**Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> Aug:** P2 and P4. Usual start and finish times for the rest of the week.

**Monday 31<sup>st</sup> Aug:** School closed for the bank holiday.

**Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> Sept:** P2-7 children all in school -usual start and finish times.

P1 children will have their own individual starting dates in Sept. These will be sent directly to P1 parents through ClassDojo.

**All children, including those entitled to Free School meals, must bring a healthy packed lunch during the week beginning Aug 24<sup>th</sup>, as no EA meals will be available that week.**

We all really hope that we can have all of the children back full time as detailed above. **But please remember that all of these arrangements are provisional and subject to additional resources from DE and advice from government and the PHA.** I will write to you again to confirm these details during the week beginning Aug 10<sup>th</sup>.

Many families borrowed textbooks over the past months so please put these away safely as we will need them in August. Your child should return them to their new class teacher on their first day back.

If you have changed address or telephone number, please email the school to let us know the correct contact details. [info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk) Please note the school office will be closed until Mon Aug 10<sup>th</sup>.

Finally, thank you all for the many messages of support and encouragement over this period. Thanks to everyone who has completed the Home Learning Survey. If you haven't completed it yet, please do so before the end of this week. Teachers have posted the individual year group links on their ClassDojo.

We truly appreciate the huge efforts that you have made to facilitate the continuation of the curriculum for your children. If any of you have been inspired to become teachers after this, we will provide excellent references! We hope that you can all take a very well deserved break over the summer and wish you a safe and enjoyable holiday.

Looking forward to seeing you all very soon.

Kind regards

S McTaggart  
Principal