



30 June 2020

Dear Parent/ Carer,

We last sent you a correspondence on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June where we explained that we were awaiting further guidance on School Reopening from the Department of Education NI.

The Department of Education NI have since sent guidance on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June entitled

**“Coronavirus (COVID 19)- Northern Ireland Reopening Schools Guidance New School Day”**

The document focuses on guiding schools to reopen and refers to...

“The journey back to normality for the education system will not be one where schools operate on a business as usual from day one...”

The Education Minister Mr. Peter Weir MLA has stated that Primary Seven Pupils shall begin the return to school, week commencing 24 August, if safe to do so. All other children should return to school by the normal starting school dates, as is the usual arrangements for each school.

We felt that it was important that you know and understand the key guidance that our school will be following from August onwards (unless Government/HSE/PHA Guidelines change.)

1. Social Distancing will be key to controlling the spread of COVID 19
2. Parents will be informed of drop off/ collection points at school with staggered school start/end times to avoid too many people at the school gates and to promote social distancing; hence helping to control the COVID 19 virus.
3. Each child should remain one metre apart in any classroom (If this means less children in any classroom due to classroom size- then the Bubble Strategy should be applied.)
4. The Bubble Strategy is where each class will be halved and brought into school for split teaching sessions. Each half of the class will be known as a protective “Bubble”.
5. Due to the fact that our classrooms are NOT large enough to hold a FULL class of children one metre apart then our classes WILL BE HALVED. This means that all BUBBLE A children will attend school for two full days (Monday/ Tuesday) and BUBBLE B children will attend school for two full days (Thursday and Friday). On Wednesdays the school will be deep cleaned and teachers will prepare for Blended Learning.
6. If your child is at school for two full days per week this means that teachers will prepare to teach them face to face on these days and also prepare for online learning at home; hence BLENDING school and home.
7. It is important to note that all members of the same immediate family will be placed in the same protective bubble session so that a family attends school on the same days of the week.

Health and Safety for all our pupils and staff is paramount as per government guidelines. Hygiene in school will be crucial. Children may have a temperature check on arrival at school. Children will wash their hands regularly. Each protective bubble group will play in the playground in their own timetabled sessions to avoid connection between bubbles. Schools will have appropriate signage, floor markings, posters etc to help guide pupils, staff and parents with social distancing and hygiene procedures.

We realise that this guidance, although in the best interests of our children, is a big change to the normal school routine. We felt that it was pertinent to share this with you before the end of this academic year so that you have a chance to prepare yourself and your child for "The New School Day." Please do note that if Government Guidance changes we will let you know as soon as possible. We would all prefer to be open as usual, but at this time, this is not possible. Please keep the school updated with accurate mobile phone numbers and email addresses as we will be in touch with you again in August to update you ahead of starting school. When we update you in August we will provide more detailed guidance for you and your child.

The fight against COVID 19 has had, and will continue for some time to have, profound implications for our schools and for society as a whole. We take this opportunity to thank you for your understanding and support throughout what has been such a difficult time for us all. We hope that you have a more relaxing Summer Holiday and look forward to communicating with you again in August.

Sincerely Yours,

**Strabane and District Principals' Group**

Donemana PS – Mrs G Hay

Gaelscoil Ui Dhochartaigh, Strabane- Mrs M NiDhochartaigh

St Catherine's PS, Strabane- Mrs B Wilders

St Columba's Clady - Mrs D McElmurray

St Eugene's Victoria Bridge – Miss L Gormley

St Mary's PS, Cloughcor- Mrs A Devine

St Mary's PS, Strabane – Mrs S O'Doherty

St Michael's PS, Dunamanagh- Mrs J Carlin

St Theresa's PS, Glebe- Mr G Brogan

Sion Mills PS – Mrs O Mc Nelis

Strabane PS.- Mrs C Thompson