 St Matthew’s Primary School 

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 Principal: Mrs AM Kealey BA Hons (ED) PQH NI

 **SCHOOL RESTART SEPT 2020**

19/08/2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are all very busy at school getting ready for reopening very soon. At St. Matthew’s our aim is to meet the needs of all our children and parents/carers as the transition from ‘lockdown’ to a new normal school day takes place.

I had already stated in my previous letter, plans for returning to school. These will still remain in place with a few changes made. Please read the following information carefully.

* P7 children will return to school on Monday 24th August from 9am-12:30 pm. They will attend that week from Mon 24th –Thurs 27th August. Please note there will be no dinners available from the school canteen that week.
* P1s will also attend this week, dates and times have been emailed separately.
* Children will arrive in school between 8:45 and 9am. **Children must not arrive in school before 8:45am.**
* There will be a staggered pick up time as follows-

 P2 & 3 2:30pm (Collection from outside school porch)

 P4 & 5 2:50pm

 P6 & 7 3pm

* There will initially be no breakfast club, fruit club or after school clubs from P1-7 (including ‘Stay and Play’ club)
* School bags will not come to school initially. This is to minimise transfer of CV 19 between home and school.
* If your child is having a packed lunch this needs to be sent to school in a disposable (if possible eco-friendly bag) or a wipeable lunchbox with their name clearly labelled on it. Please send in a labelled water bottle too.
* Children will be required to bring the following resources to school- packet of tissues, Pritt stick glue (P4-7) colouring pencils, colouring pens, pencils, rubbers etc. They should not bring pencil cases, we will have pencil cases for each child in school which will be clearly labelled and kept in school for each child (children are not permitted to share resources). All resources will be kept in school so as to minimise transfer of CV 19 transmission between home and school.
* If possible, please send a small bottle of hand sanitizer to school too with your child.
* It is recommended that children using the school taxi bus must wear a face mask when travelling to and from school.
* All money for school dinners should be sent **in an envelope** on a Monday morning. Please be advised we are unable to accept any cash into school not in an envelope (for hygiene reasons). Money envelopes can be purchased from the school office for £4.

 ***Visitors to School***

We want our class bubbles to remain protected and for that reason we will be adhering to strict guidelines on visitor and parental access to our school. Therefore, parents will not be permitted to come into the school building. Parents are only permitted to leave in critical items for children e.g. medication. Only emergency or absolutely essential face to face meetings will take place on site. These meetings must be requested by email or phone call, unless of course an emergency situation arises. Where face to face meetings do occur, social distancing measures will apply and face coverings must be worn by Parents/Carers inside the school. We hope that these measures will not be in place for long and we will be able to resume to a more informal approach very soon. However please do not hesitate to contact us if you need to speak to us, or have any worries or concerns. Teachers are not available for a telephone conversation during the school day but can take calls before 9am or after 3pm. We will always be here to provide you with our warm and helpful response. It is important that we keep all staff safe and indeed all visitors to our school.

 ***Collection of Pupils***

As you are all aware of and would totally agree that the main road at the bottom of our school lane is extremely dangerous. I therefore ask that parents collect children from their class teacher at the bottom of the lane and cross over the road safely with our school crossing patrol lady ‘Mrs. Feeny’. Please adhere to a social distance of 2 metres at the end of the school lane when collecting your children. If a child is not met by an adult at the end of the school lane they will be walked back up to the main school building again until an adult collects them. I would encourage as many families as possible to walk to and from school. I hope you understand that these new measures are in place to ensure the safety of all our children on a busy main road.

***Positive Behaviour Management***

We are very proud of our children here at St. Matthew’s, who always show respect for others and have impeccable behaviour. Our school Positive Behaviour Policy and Golden Rules remains in place. However, under the current circumstances there are number of other issues to be considered. Upon their return children are expected to:

* Follow all social distancing/class ‘bubble’ guidelines in school - within the

understanding of the child

* Adhere to regular hand washing and respiratory hygiene rules
* Follow new lunch/break time arrangements
* Remain in assigned seats in allocated class rooms
* Complete all work, set by the teacher, during the school day.

*However, if a pupil refuses to adhere to arrangements of social distancing and* ***deliberately*** *coughs or spit at pupils or staff, putting them at risk, their parents/guardians will be contacted regarding this, and they may be asked to be collected and taken home immediately.*

***Medical Needs***

Where children have medical needs, medication should be left at the school office, in a lunch box with the child’s details detailed on the lid. Relevant paper work must be completed. If support is required to administer medication, then staff will wear a mask and gloves to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

**School Cleaning**

There will be the regular cleaning of learning areas, throughout the duration of the school day and after school. All tables and exposed surfaces, including light switches, taps, handrails, door handles etc. are cleaned thoroughly using soap, water and then disinfectant daily. All staff will have access to gloves, tissues, disinfectant spray, cloths, wipes and a mask. After use, all toys, equipment, electronic devices will be cleaned. *Sharing of resources will be limited as much as possible.*

 Handwashing will become part of the daily timetable throughout the duration of our new school day. We would ask for children to wash their hands just before they leave their homes each day.  We will be encouraging children to cough/sneeze into a flexed elbow or tissue.  We will be promoting the campaign ‘Catch it, bin it, kill it.’  There will be posters displayed throughout the school on handwashing and personal hygiene.  Teachers will also be reminding children about this regularly in class.  Foundation stage children will receive a level of adult support.

“Regular and thorough attention to hygiene is essential to deter spread of the virus. Children should wash their hands thoroughly on arrival at the education setting – this must be a repeatable discipline throughout the school day.

Hands should be washed thoroughly and regularly in the school at existing facilities using soap and water, and this can be with tepid / luke warm water. Hand sanitising material should also be made available at entrance points. It should be noted that hand sanitising is only a support mechanism for hand hygiene and does not negate the need to wash hands. Disposable paper towels / hand dryers are appropriate – not shared / ordinary towels. Younger children should be supervised/assisted when washing hands.” (DENI 20:9)

One child per class will be allowed access to the toilets at any time.  The children will be asked to sanitise their hands before entering the toilets and wash them afterwards.

Internal doors will remain open to ensure reduced touching of door handles and to allow for fresh air to flow/ventilation.  Windows will also be opened to allow for fresh air in classrooms.

**Contact details**

 It is vital that we have your most up to date telephone numbers and email address so you can be contacted immediately if your child is ill. Please contact the school office from to update contact details if necessary.

**If your child is showing Covid 19 symptoms**

We sincerely hope that none of our children or staff will develop the symptoms of Covid 19. However, if this does occur we will follow this procedure:

* The Principal will be informed immediately.
* Your child will be collected from the classroom and will be supervised in the Meeting Room
* You will be telephoned immediately to come to the school and take your child home.
* Your child will remain in the Meeting Room until you arrive to collect your child at the main entrance.
* In an emergency we will call for an ambulance by dialling 999.
* You will be instructed that you should have your child tested for Covid-19.
* If the results are negative the child can return to school providing they are well enough and have not had a fever for 48hrs
* If your child tests positive, he/she should not return to school until 10 days after symptoms subside.
* If the results come back that any child in school has tested positive for Covid 19 the school will follow the guidelines set out by the PHA and all children and staff who have been in contact with the child will be required to self-isolate.

“If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature/fever or anosmia (a loss or a change in your normal sense of smell, which can also affect your sense of taste) in an educational setting, they must be sent home and advised to follow the PHA guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection. Settings should keep a full record of such actions and request a parent / carer / guardian record their acknowledgement of this action.  A child awaiting collection should be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door. Appropriate adult supervision should be provided as required. Ideally, a window should be opened for ventilation. If it is not possible to isolate the child, move them to an area which is at least 2m away from other people. A risk assessment should be undertaken by the school to address this.   If the child needs to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible. The bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected before being used by anyone else.   PPE should be worn by staff caring for the child while they await collection if direct personal care is needed and a distance of 2m cannot be maintained (such as for a very young child or a child with complex needs).

If the child is seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk, call 999. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.” (DENI 20: 41)

**The Northern Ireland Curriculum**

Teachers will, “use the flexibility within the NI Curriculum and, in particular, the use of cross-curricular themes to structure lessons innovatively and thereby reduce the need for learners and staff to move between different areas of an establishment” (DENI 2020)

When pupils return to school, teachers will focus on a structured programme of ‘catch-up’ time to ensure key skills and core curriculum content is covered.  There will be a key emphasis on literacy, numeracy as well as personal development and mutual understanding.  However, all curriculum areas will be covered.  Careful classroom management will be taken into consideration for each lesson, to ensure the health and safety of all.

**Well Being**

We recognise that when children return to school that they will need time to adapt to school and discuss with the teacher and class mates what their experience was like during the period of school closure. With that in mind children will:

* Have conversations to identify and acknowledge both negatives and positives in recent experiences. We will open a dialogue where pupils and staff (separately or together) start to consider what has been good or bad about the change to educational arrangements.
* Have continued opportunities to talk about their experiences over the past number of months;
* Have opportunities for one-to-one conversations with trusted adults

 where they can feel supported;

* Experience some refocussed lessons on relevant topics, for example, mental wellbeing or staying safe;
* Enjoy a variety of enriching creative and developmental activities.

**Allergies**

Finally, we have a few children in school who have severe allergies. These children may suffer a potentially life-threatening reaction on exposure to nuts. In order to manage the risk of an allergic reaction we ask for your co-operation. **We request that children do not bring these foods or food** **containing nuts into school.**

***Supporting Children Returning to School***

Our return to school plan and precautions set out in it have been put in place to help stop the spread of the Covid-19 virus and to ensure that we all take responsibility for this. We hope that everyone follows the arrangements outlined, we can keep our school community safe and our school open.

We want to ensure that our children feel excited and relaxed about coming back to school. After such a prolonged period of closure, it is possible that some children may feel increased levels of anxiety, arising from having to leave their family home and return to school. It is important that we work together to alleviate any fears or worries. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns at all.

Thank you as always for your support and patience as we move towards the reopening of St. Matthew’s P.S. As the term progresses there may be adjustments and changes to this guidance. We will inform you of any changes. By working together, we will try to reduce the risk for pupils, parents

and the community. I thank you all in advance for your co-operation.

Best wishes, take care

Mrs. Ann-Marie Kealey

 Principal