 St Matthew’s Primary School 

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

START OF TERM TWO UPDATE

Dear Parents

I hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas despite the Impact of the ongoing Pandemic and subsequent restrictions.

As we now make preparations to start second term, I want to outline our initial school RESTART plans, based on the 11th hour U-turn by our Education Minister and DE on how and when schools would return. Although this is so very frustrating for everyone, I also understand that COVID has forced us to consider an ever-changing set of circumstances, aimed at keeping everyone safe whilst acting in the best interests of all of our pupils and staff.

As announced by the Minister, school will reopen for all children for ‘face to face’ teaching on **Monday 11th January**. A small number of pupils whose parents are key workers, or vulnerable pupils, will be able to come to school for part of next week for **‘supervised learning’** only-no direct teaching will take place, as teaching staff will be fully engaged with online learning.

You will know from our holiday list that school was due to reopen to all pupils on Wednesday 6th January. However, the Department of Education have granted teaching staff the first day of term for planning and preparation for ‘remote learning’. Therefore, online learning for all pupils and the provision for vulnerable pupils and those of key workers will begin on **Thursday 7th January.**

***What does this mean for us?***

**Wednesday 6th January**: staff training day, including time to prepare remote learning

**Thursday 7th & Friday 8th January**: children complete remote learning tasks at home. School will accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

**Monday 11th January**: All children return to school for a normal school day (face to face teaching).

*Parents of children in receipt of FSM will receive a payment from EA for w/b 4th January.*

 ***Accommodating vulnerable children and the children of key workers***

* We do not expect that EA school dinners (and canteen break) will be available next week. Children should bring a break and packed lunch.
* Staff will be dividing time between supporting remote learning and supervising the learning of the children physically present. There will therefore be an emphasis on working independently for children coming to school on Thurs. 7th and Frid. 8th January.
* Children will wear their school uniform as normal.
* Teaching staff will be available between their contracted hours of 8:45am and 4:00pm, should you need any support. Work will be provided at intervals during the day from 9:00am onwards through the online learning platform used within school-SeeSaw. All work must be completed. Any emails, messages via Seesaw sent outside staff hours will be dealt with the following day.

**Schools have been asked to remain closed next week for a reason. Please only avail of this option if you have exhausted all other alternatives.**

In order for us to plan ahead for appropriate levels of supervision, please email me via **akealey695@c2kni.net** no later than 6:00pm on Monday 4th January, if your child needs to avail of childcare in school.

Please be assured I will keep you informed of any necessary updates. As before, the staff of St. Matthew’s will continue to support your children through these very difficult and challenging times.

I wish you and your families a Happy New Year and every blessing for 2021.

Kindest regards

Ann-Marie Kealey

Principal

**Definitions: vulnerable children and key workers**

Taken from DENI advice, 31 Dec 20

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross-departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan)

* A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
* A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
* A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
* A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
* A child who is ‘on-the-edge’ of receiving support from children’s social services.
* A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
* A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
* A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
* A child who has been placed for adoption.
* Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

**Key workers are defined as:**

* 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, youth workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
* 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.