

12.05.20

Dear Parents and Guardians,



Recent announcements by the First Minister make it clear that our lockdown is continuing until at the very least, the near future. This news, I'm sure, causes you to have mixed feelings. It is reassuring that we, as a country aim to really bring the virus under control but disappointing of course that we still don't get to return to our lively school and wider community. Regardless of any sadness or disappointment at this continuation of current measures, I am focussed on the safety of pupils, staff and their respective families and take comfort that learning from home gives us the best way to achieve this, at this stage.

Our school Hub continues to offer to support to those children of key, essential workers and in some cases, others who for very specific individual reasons, are kept safe by their attendance. You will have seen, no doubt, some tweets and the like of the excellent work done in our NLC Hubs and whilst this is the case this is still a service which is offered for emergency cases only. I offer the St. Patrick's community my deepest thanks for allowing the Hub to operate with very low numbers by supporting your children at home wherever possible. I cannot stress enough that the safest place for your children is at home. I am grateful to all Hub volunteers, none more so than our own St. Patrick's staff who, by volunteering, are in no doubt that they put themselves and their families at increased risk. Our Hubs are an emergency offer and they should be the last and least preferable option and so we have chosen to keep our publicity/celebration of it fairly subdued, I'm very aware that some pupils may have little or no access to a garden or green space and so I have avoided making it any less palatable for them as they stay home. The continued success and safety of each Hub depends on, at present, low numbers. That being said, I am immensely proud of what I see in our Hub and I know the families using it have no other option and we're all proud of the essential work they do in these challenging times.

At the beginning of lockdown I said that our contact and method of communication with our families would need to evolve as the situation developed and I believe we are at that stage. Lots of you make great use of the blog and the facility to post comments which myself and staff are able to respond to but this has its limitations and it is a fairly 'open' forum. I'm also acutely aware that both our teachers and pupils thrive on contact and even small amounts of communication between them is hugely beneficial. For this reason we are looking to begin using 'Glow Teams' which will allow each class to have their own 'Team' group on Glow within which they can let their teachers see their work, if they wish and also to communicate with staff more directly. We will of course issue guidelines and offer support to ensure everyone who wishes to use this platform from home is able to. I would also ask for your continued patience as we, as a staff team, learn to use this effectively and from each of our individual homes (there may be some ICT tears as we do this and I'm so thankful to staff for taking on new challenges like this with a generous approach). Hopefully I can issue guidance to families over the next week or so for this. As with anything that we undertake to offer as a school, as well as the safety and privacy of our pupils and their families I also feel a huge responsibility to respect our staff privacy and the right to a home life as we all battle to manage our individual and collective health and wellbeing. At the time of writing this letter we have missed 23 days of school and as time passes we will evaluate the need to offer collection of jotters and stationery from a central location. I have been conscious of not putting families at risk by having large numbers gather in the one place at the early stages of this pandemic.

This week we will post a small message of support to our young First Communicants who this coming Saturday should have been celebrating a beautiful day as they received the Sacrament of the Eucharist and soon after we will post a little something for the whole school. I'm sure pupils will enjoy seeing their teacher's faces and I have demanded 'no filter' for such a delightful staff!

I feel incredibly lucky to be working with such pragmatic and decent parents who it is clear understand the nature of this pandemic and show trust in our school. Know that we will get your children back on track. Apologies for the lengthy letter but there was much to try and cover!

Stay safe and God Bless,

Martyn Dinsmor

Head Teacher

