 St Patrick’s P.S.

 and Nursery

 Castlederg



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**September/October 2020 Newsletter**

**Welcome Back**

Welcome back to all the pupils and staff for another school year. This is obviously a year like no other and this newsletter will be very different to previous years’ newsletters. The children have all settled back well now and are enjoying being back in lessons and back with their friends. The new Nursery pupils and P1 pupils have settled very well without the usual induction and contact with staff and parents. Well done to the big brothers and sisters who are bringing the younger pupils round to their class.

**Pupil Safety**

The Department of Education has produced very useful information for parents on keeping their child safe and school safe in the present pandemic. I will attach these to the school website and this would be your first point of reference in the event of any concerns or queries. With the recent surge in Covid- 19 cases within the area we will not be in a position to extend services or change arrangements at present. This is the wisest course of action as this ensures the safety of each class and hopefully will mean that the children can come to school and continue their education and allow parents to continue to work.

Picking up and collection appears to be working well. The main school gates open at 9am until 9.15am and collection is also from this point on a staggered basis. Parents should not enter the school grounds when picking up or collecting children. Parents remember to social distance from staff and fellow parents and other pupils. Children who attend late should enter the main school gate and wait to be received by a member of staff.

Please do not obstruct the main school gates or park in the bus bays at the front of school as this means the pupils have to get off the bus in the middle of the road. This is not safe and unfair on these children. Please avoid double parking as this blocks the main road and again puts the pupils at risk. Also be aware of local residents and avoid blocking entrances.

Older Pupils can be dropped off at the School Crossing Patrol Person at Taggart’s Shop or at WillowCrest and walk up to school themselves. Vera is also at the back gate at 9am which leads out into the close of Churchtown Park. Finally remember to cross the children if not using School Crossing Patrols.

We all have a responsibility to keep our pupils safe.

**Meals/Healthy eating**

Pupils may now pay for a school packed lunch. There are some popular things on the menu like hot pizza and chicken sub. I’ve included the menu on the school website if you wish to have a look. The price of a **school dinner** is presently £2.60. This money can be paid daily or weekly. If you are paying for dinners in advance it is helpful if you write the child’s name, class and amount enclosed and place in an envelope for the school meals staff.

**Please note that free school meals entitlement needs to be applied for annually. This is important as this improves our school funding so it is well worth applying if you are eligible.**

**It is vital that no child brings nuts or nut products to school as a number of our pupils are at risk from various allergies.**

The school operates a healthy eating policy so the children must bring a healthy break to school i.e. fruit, water for break time. Remember children should only bring water to school for break. Sweets, crisps cereal bars and fizzy drinks are not permitted at break time.We also encourage healthy lunch boxes so treats and sweets etc. should be kept to a minimum. We will include some ideas for children’s lunchboxes on the school website if you are running out of ideas.

**Digital Schools.**

The Education Authority hopes to have an online Payment Portal for payments up and running within the year. We will wait until this is rolled out to schools.

We will also request a parent email this year as we would hope to use a secure system to send out school messages via email in addition to our text messaging service. We will begin with Year 1 and build up the service. Nursery parents can contact Mrs. Shelley directly using the Nursery Mobile at 07707838992.

All our school newsletters and other documents can be found on our school website etc.

You can email office attendance enquires to dtraynor10@c2kni.net or you can contact a member of staff using info@stpatricks.castlederg.ni.sch.uk

**Homework/Google Classroom**

All of our children in P1 to P7 will receive their homework and words and spellings via Google Classroom. Many of our parents are now familiar with these platforms during lockdown. What is different is that the children have face to face contact with their teacher and pupils will be trained from P4 up in the use of Google Classroom and associated learning apps. Passwords will be recorded in their school diaries. Pupils in P1 to P3 will have Google Classroom set up for them in school and there are training videos for parents on the school website.

It is important that we change now to prepare in the event of class closures etc. We must also modernise as our pupils need to be at the forefront of the use of these technologies.

Homework is being delivered in a different way – the weekly homework will be posted in Google Classroom at the start of the working week. This will allow pupils and parents to complete homework at their own pace and allow parents to plan how they can oversee or help with homework over a complete week.

Pupils from P3 to P7 up will have access to Mathletics, Accelerated Reader, IXL online Learning English and Maths throughout the year. All pupils will also have access to Collins Big Cat Reading Scheme from Midterm. Pupils will be able to complete the recommended reading and work scheduled but parents will also be able to access other tasks and books to extend their child in Reading, English or Maths. There will also be topic work in different subjects which will added to Google Classroom.

We would recommend that each family has access to a device for school work purposes. We are using laptops, chrome books and laptops daily with our pupils. There is a lead in time for ordering devices so it is maybe something you might want to consider for Christmas. Pupils do not need an expensive device.

Families without access to internet or devices at home should let the teacher know and we will arrange for these pupils to have supervised access to their homework throughout the school week.

**Child Protection arrangements.**

**Mrs Mc Glade Vice-Principal is the designated teacher for child protection and can be contacted at school if you have any concerns or need advice.**

Child Protection Procedures, Anti-Bullying Information and a Complaints Procedure are included on our school website. We also have access to a school counsellor if any parent wishes their child to access this service.

Nursery Parents may also speak to Mrs Shelley in the Nursery if they have any concerns.

**Contacting the school office**

We would ask that each family ensure that any changes in address or phone numbers since your child attended P1 are notified to Mrs. Deirdre Traynor in the school office.

Parent/s also will need to indicate if their child has any new medical needs. Children who require inhalers for asthma must leave these in a sealed bag in school.

The school office is open from 9.00am to 3.00pm and is closed for lunch from 12.30pm – 1.30pm. Messages can also be left on the school answering machine and non-urgent queries can be emailed to Deirdre in the school office at the email address – dtraynor107@c2kni.net or at the school email above - these messages are checked daily.

**Newsletters**

Newsletters, school letters, school menus and online safety newsletters will continue to be posted online on the school website [**www.stpatrickspscastlederg.co.uk**](http://www.stpatrickspscastlederg.co.uk)from September 2020. So continue to check in to the school website to be kept up to date about school life and information.

A school holiday list is now included on our school website. The school is closed on the 28th, 29th, 30th October 2020 and the 2nd November 2020 for the Halloween Midterm.

Hoping everyone keeps safe.

Brian Mc Gurk

Principal