



BIRCHES PRIMARY SCHOOL

Newsletter

April, May and June 2020

Dear Parents,

On behalf of all the staff and governors at Birches Primary School, I hope that you and your family are well and keeping safe. It is a very difficult time for everyone at the moment and I would like to thank all of our families for the work they are doing at home with their children and also our parents who are Key Workers for the amazing work which they are doing for all of us.

These are very unusual and unprecedented times which can be very unsettling for the children as they are now out of a familiar routine and they will be missing their friends, family and even their teachers!

Just remember that at the moment:

- Our children might be very worried. They do see and hear a lot, even when we think they don't.
- Their routines and structures have been disrupted and they will miss playing with their friends and visiting family.
- Not all of the children will want to continue with their learning and will see it more like an extended holiday! They may react to all this by changing their behaviours and showing behaviours you have never seen from them before. This might be difficult for you and your family but it is natural and to be expected.

We completely understand the difficulties you are experiencing from a parental perspective especially if you are carrying on with your job and/or working from home, or dealing with sick children or family members. As staff, we are all trying to do this too. Under these circumstances, home learning may well add to this anxiety and stress – for them and for you.

If you would like to talk about any concerns you have, please do not hesitate to contact myself or your child's class teacher and we will be happy to talk to you. Please remember that we are working in partnership and are here to help.

There is also some very good advice and information available online and I have put in links to different resources which you may find useful:

- A resource from **UNHCR**. A story book for children and is also translated into a number of different languages. It's a lovely book to download for younger children.
<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/4/5e8ecdba4/childrens-storybook-released-help-children-young-people-cope-covid-19.html>
- A link for **Wayne Denner's** website that provides information on all things online which can be shared with parents.
<https://www.waynedenner.com/>
- The **NSPCC** are also offering tips for online safety and in particular social media. (NetAware)
<http://email.nspcc.org.uk/q/11mHuvu4ckaZethXsrxhybd/wv>
- The **NSPCC** also have useful information regarding Cornoavirus
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-suppport-children-families-parents/>

Home Learning - Seesaw

The majority of our families have now been in contact with their child's class teacher by email and many have become familiar with using Seesaw as a means of providing online learning activities and communication between your child and their teacher. If you have not been in touch with the teaching staff, their email addresses are listed below.

Keeping in touch

Email:

If you need to contact myself or your child's class teacher, please send them an email.

Mrs Watson	-	Principal	pwatson676@c2kni.net
Mrs Morrow	-	P1	cmorrow528@c2kni.net
Mrs Greer	-	P2	jgreer521@c2kni.net
Mrs Boyd	-	P3	jboyd601@c2kni.net
Mrs Dunlop	-	P4	cdunlop764@c2kni.net
Mrs England	-	P2 (Mon/Tues)	rengland244@c2kni.net
	-	P3 (Wed)	
	-	P4 (Thurs/Fri)	
Mrs Patterson	-	P5	rpatterson275@c2kni.net
Mrs Galway	-	P6	agalway951@c2kni.net
Mrs McLelland	-	P7	cmclelland124@c2kni.net

Website www.birchesps.com

Letters, photographs and information from myself and teachers are available on our school website.

Text Messaging Service

If you have not been receiving text messages from our school, please make sure I have an up to date mobile number for you. Send your number to pwatson676@c2kni.net.

Key Workers

Although the school building is currently closed, we will open to support children of key workers, where there is no alternative childcare available during normal school hours. Current Government advice is that if children can stay safely at home, they should do so to limit the chance of the virus spreading and schools should only remain open for those that absolutely need to attend.

If you are a Key Worker and you need our school to provide care for your child and you do not have alternative care provision, then please e-mail Mrs Watson pwatson676@c2kni.net.

Safer Schools App

The Department of Education has launched a new app on the Safer Schools platform which has been provided by INEQE Safeguarding Group on a trial basis during this COVID-19 crisis.

The app is currently used widely across the rest of the UK and can be downloaded on either the App Store or Google Play which can be accessed by professionals and by parents/carers.

When you download the App, you will need a QR code which is 7440.

For further information you can go to the 'Landing page' <https://ineqe.com/safer-schools-ni/>

Mental Health

Life has really changed for all of us over the last month. While we are trying to remain positive for our children and other members of our family, it can be very stressful. No matter how strong we usually are, there may be times when we experience anxiety about coronavirus or have a 'low-mood', especially if any of us have to self-isolate for long periods of time. There are different things which we can do to look after our mental wellbeing including keeping physically active, or connecting with friends and family via the telephone or Facetime...

Further information and advice for mental health support can be accessed at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/> - You can receive a personalised plan to help you feel more in control and to deal with stress and anxiety.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>

Child Protection

If anyone has any child protection concerns, they will continue to be dealt with by our Safeguarding Team. You can email the members of staff below, leaving a contact number and they will get in touch with you.

Designated Teacher:	Mrs Jayne Greer	jgreer521@c2kni.net
Deputy Designated Teacher:	Mrs Claire Morrow	cmorrow528@c2kni.net
Principal:	Mrs Patricia Watson	pwatson676@c2kni.net

Free School Meals (FSM)

If your child had been receiving FSM, arrangements have been put in place by government to ensure families who normally receive them do not suffer financial hardship while schools are closed due to coronavirus (COVID-19). Payments will be made automatically and directly into your bank account. If you haven't received any money yet, you will need to ensure the Education Authority has your correct bank details.

If your circumstances have changed and you would like to find out more information regarding FSM please follow this link: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/nutrition-and-school-lunches>

Covid-19 Community Helpline

The Department for Communities have asked that the information below is shared with our families.

The Covid-19 Community Helpline went live on Friday 27 March and operates 9am to 5pm, 7 days per week initially, although this will be kept under review and the service can be increased if necessary.

The Helpline has been taking calls from members of the public who need advice and support relating to the COVID 19 emergency, initially linking people into local services.

Some of the services which can be accessed via the helpline include:

- delivery of food parcels to vulnerable people including those in the shielded group who have no other way to access food deliveries;
- information about retailers offering delivery in a local area;
- help from the voluntary and community sector to deliver prescription medication and advice on claiming benefits. Advice NI have put in place a detailed directory of community and voluntary organisations at both a local and regional level covering everything from domestic abuse, to mental health to local sports groups willing to walk dogs for vulnerable people. Helpline staff will provide a warm handoff to the relevant service if they are unable to deal with a query themselves, and are aware of the need for a warm handoff to the Nexus service if a caller reports domestic abuse during the course of the conversation.

The helpline is for vulnerable people who have no other method of accessing support. If a vulnerable person already has sufficient support in place, either from family and friends or from a voluntary organisation then they should continue to rely on that in the first instance.

On the question of whether representatives could call the helpline on someone's behalf the answer is yes, as long as the person has given permission to the representative to share their details and act on their behalf.

The Helpline service also offers e-mail and text message response facility.

Telephone: **0808 802 0020**

Email: covid19@adviceni.net

Text: **ACTION** to 81025