

Returning to School Information Booklet

August 2021

Dear Parents,

I am delighted to be welcoming you back to St. John's Eglish, albeit in still strange and unusual circumstances. Unfortunately, the Virus is still prevalent in the wider community at the moment and we have to be very careful and cautious in reopening for the new School year.

At St. John's, we understand the importance of children returning to school. As a school, we will be reopening for children; taking a precautionary and safety first approach and will review on a monthly basis how each step is impacting on our entire school community.

We are conscious of the fact that continuing the present arrangements may be difficult for some and we will strive to work through and eliminate any issues. This can be achieved through open and honest communication between parents, children and staff.

Hopefully you will find this booklet answers some of your questions as best we can.
Please do not hesitate to contact us with any query you have.

In the meantime, let us continue to watch out for each other and please, stay safe.

Yours Sincerely,

Conall Lavery
Acting Principal.

Symptoms

The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature);
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual);
- **a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste** – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

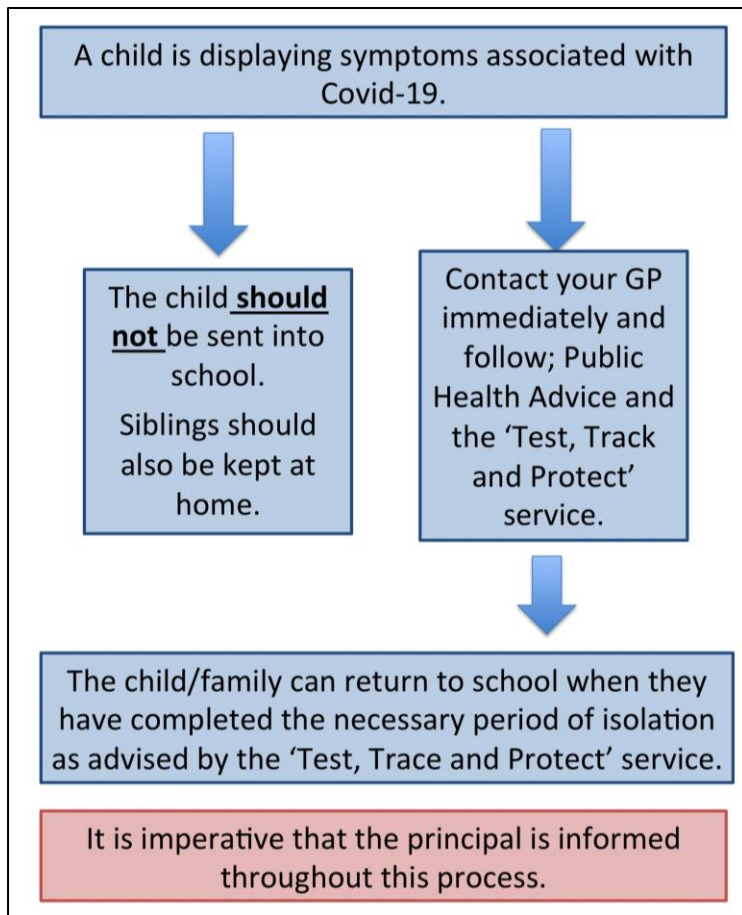


Children and staff who exhibit any symptoms associated with COVID-19 SHOULD NOT attend educational settings.

The Department of Health continues to run a contact tracing programme called 'Test, Trace and Protect' designed to control the spread of COVID-19.

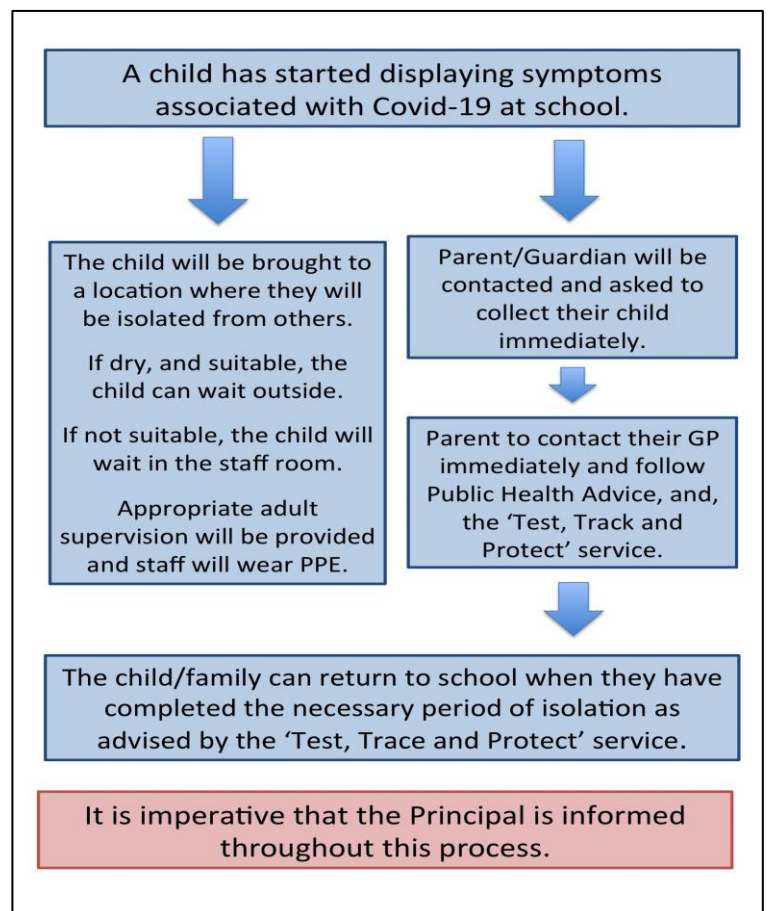
All pupils are expected to follow the requirements of this programme: to self-isolate if they are identified as close contacts of cases and to obtain a test for COVID-19 if they develop symptoms. All members of their household should follow the appropriate isolation guidance as provided by the Public Health Agency. It is important to note that the guidance around isolation has changed and will continue to do so.

What happens if a child starts displaying symptoms?

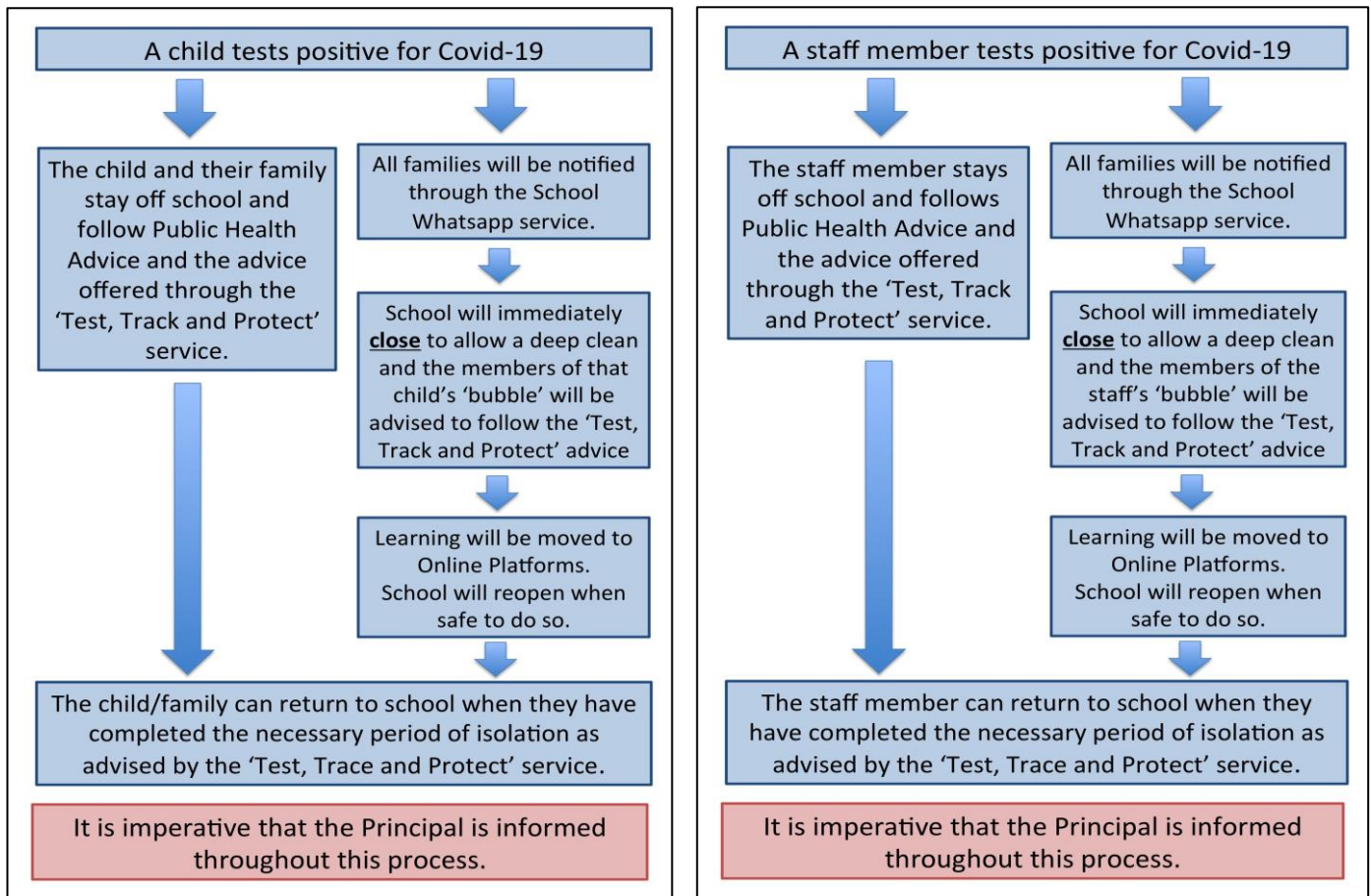


It is extremely important that the school has the parents/guardians most up to date contact details and are aware of the best number to contact first.

As you can appreciate, if your child displays symptoms, they should be collected immediately.



What happens if someone tests positive for Covid-19?



Information of a positive case and school closure will be communicated directly to parents, through the school's Whatsapp, as soon as the decision has been made. Please be aware, that because of the nature of this pandemic, this might be at very short notice, so please have contingency plans in place.



Commitment to Our Community

It is essential that the school, parents and children all work together and play their role to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to keep the members of our community safe.

The Role of the School

St. John's will strive to:

- Provide an environment which has been risk assessed in response to the COVID-19 infection
- Adhere to Public Health Advice
- Adhere to the guidelines issued by Department of Education as much as we reasonably can
- Provide a curriculum that meets the needs of your child's well-being, mental health and academic needs
- Contact parents if their child displays symptoms of COVID-19
- Inform parents if staff or children in the school have tested positive for COVID-19
- Communicate between home and school through school WhatsApp service, newsletters and school website.

The role of Parents

Parents know and understand that:

- If their child, or anyone in their household, shows symptoms of COVID-19, they will not send them to school and they will let the school know as soon as possible via telephone
- When dropping off and collecting children, they will follow the school timings for their child
- Their child must not bring any items into school with them or take items home from school, unless instructed by the class teacher
- Their child will need to use good respiratory and hand hygiene
- They will not be allowed into the school without a pre-arranged appointment – make appointments via telephone or email
- They need to support all staff in their efforts to create an 'as safe as possible' environment during this continuing crisis
- They will read all letters and messages that are sent home
- They will inform the school immediately of any changes to parents/carers and

emergency contact details.

- If their child becomes unwell during school, they will collect them immediately.

The role of Children

Children will do their best to:

- Adhere to the school rules
- Tell an adult if they feel unwell
- Follow good hand hygiene – use soap and water for 20 seconds/ hand sanitiser
- Not bring items into school from home, or take things home from school, unless instructed to by the teacher
- Only use the equipment provided to them by school and no other
- Follow good respiratory hygiene: coughing and sneezing into elbow or tissue (catch it-bin it-kill it)
- Follow the rules on the school bus when travelling to and from school.



New School Year

To help maintain social distancing, our school and classrooms have been reorganised to utilise all available space and ensure that children can return to as safe an environment as possible.

Initially we are using the school canteen as a classroom and the effectiveness of this will be regularly monitored. Displays, cupboards and soft furnishing have also been temporarily removed and stored in a container in the playground.

Class Groupings

The class groupings for the start of this school year are:

P1	P2 & P3	P4 & P5	P6 & 7
Miss McGeown (Mrs West)	Miss Rafferty (Mrs Mulholland)	Miss Hughes	Mr Lavery (Miss Gallagher Principal Release)

The children will remain in these 'bubbles' throughout the school day to help prevent the possible spread of the virus, and assist with Test and Trace procedures, if required.

Each bubble will:

- have consistent pupil and adult membership, which is appropriate to the size of our classrooms
- decrease interaction with other bubbles
- utilise all space within their classroom to maximise space between pupils.

These arrangements will be reviewed and a decision made on whether to maintain them or adapt them will be made in the week ending 1st October 2021.

This information will be communicated via Whatsapp.

What Children Need



For school starting, we ask all children to have the following:

Small Clear Pencil Case
Pencils x 3
Rubber
Sharpener



P5-P7 will also need:
Ruler
Red Pen

All these items will remain in school, and children will not be allowed to borrow/share belongings. We recommend that you have a similar pencil case which stays at home for homework.

Uniforms and School Bags

Children are encouraged to wear a clean, fresh uniform every day and a coat is permitted. At present, we discourage the use of a school bag.

Medication

If your child needs to keep medication in school, e.g., an inhaler, please bring this into school in a safe, secure box, which is correctly labelled. We recommend a Tupperware box.

It is important that this is discussed with the principal beforehand as a form needs to be completed.

It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that any medication left in school is in date and in correct working order.

Home - School Communication

This year we will be continuing our normal communication channels with parents/ guardians to ensure that everyone is kept up to date with school events.

1) **WhatsApp Service**

Important notices/ messages will be sent out through these broadcasts. Please ensure that you save the school mobile number 07717491852 into your phone contacts (only once) so that you receive the WhatsApp broadcast. This number is only used for WhatsApp and does not make/receive calls.

2) **School Website**

The school website will be regularly updated with news, upcoming events and important messages.

3) **Monthly Newsletters**

Our Newsletters this year will be electronic. A link will be circulated, at the start of every month.

Teachers will continue to communicate with Parents and Children through Seesaw.

4) **Twitter**

We will be setting up a new Twitter page, it will be on @EglishStJohns, we would appreciate all parents following the page and we will try to provide an up to date picture of School activities.

Appointments with Principal and/or Teachers

In St. John's, we pride ourselves on our relationship between staff and parents and encourage parents to contact us if there are any issues. This will continue to be the way, but, unfortunately due to social distancing restrictions, parents must continue to make an appointment before visiting the school. This will allow staff to make arrangements to find a suitable and safe location.

You can make an appointment through ringing the school on 028 3885 1743.

N.B. our secretary is only in school on Monday and Wednesday, if you are trying to contact on another day please wait until after 3:15pm.

Alternatively you can contact the Principal through the school WhatsApp's Service. This number is only used for WhatsApp and does not make/receive calls.

School Transport

The Education Authority is responsible for ensuring the provision of all home to school transport and a range of mitigating measures will be in place to minimise the risk to pupils. These include:

1. Use of face coverings where possible

“It is mandatory for all pupils aged 13 and over to wear a face covering on public transport. It is also strongly recommended that all pupils regardless of age, should wear a face covering on all buses, trains or taxis for the journey to school where it is appropriate for them to do so and they are able to handle them as directed”.

2. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell

Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 must follow the Public Health Agency guidance ‘COVID-19: Information for the Public’. This includes parents ensuring that their child(ren) do(es) not travel to or attend school if they or a member of their household has symptoms.

If a child or young person develops symptoms whilst at school, he/she should be collected by their parents and must not travel on home to school transport including public transport.

Parents should ensure their child knows that if they become aware of COVID-19 symptoms while on board a vehicle, they should either inform the transport driver or escort (if there is one on board their vehicle) and school staff immediately upon arrival at school.

3. Good hygiene measures

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that all children and young people travelling to school clean their hands before they leave their home. Where transport providers have made hand sanitiser available on board a vehicle, all pupils should use it upon entering a vehicle and when arriving at school and again when leaving school, boarding a vehicle and arriving home.

Parents should ensure that their children carry tissues on home to school transport and that their children are aware of the need to follow the PHA’s “Catch it, bin it, kills it” messages.

In order to reduce the potential risks associated with pupils sharing food or drinks on board a school transport vehicle, no pupil should eat or drink on board unless it is for a medical reason.

4. Vehicle cleaning

The EA will work with transport operators to agree the arrangements for cleaning vehicles. Operators should maintain high hygiene standards for buses delivering

home to school transport. This should include rigorous cleaning standards including frequent cleaning of high frequency touch points should be undertaken or other mitigating options put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19.

5. Minimising contact and mixing

The EA will work with schools and transport operators to consider how mixing might be minimised on **dedicated school transport**. Children should, as far as possible, sit beside their siblings on a bus and/or be grouped together by year group or school. The same children always sitting together would help to minimise the number of contacts each child has. Schools and families/children should work with the EA and Translink to try to facilitate pupils sitting on a vehicle in the same groups wherever possible.

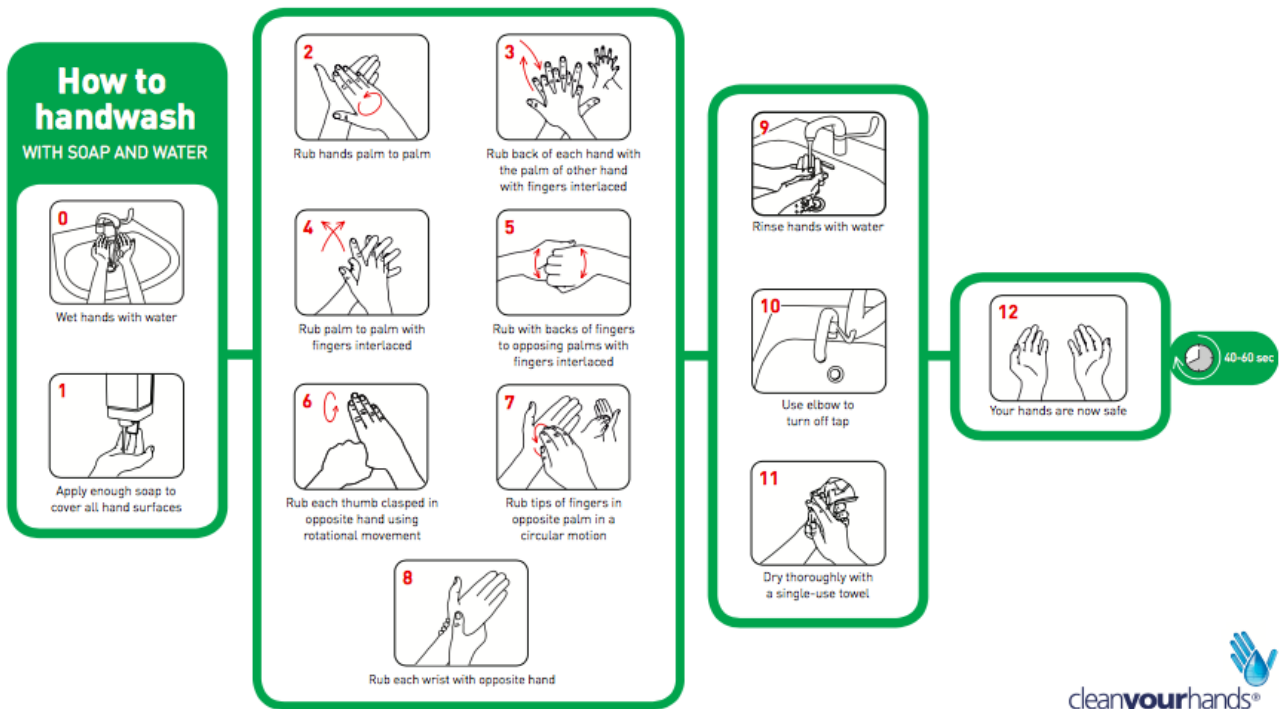
It is important to stress that the success of these measures will depend on the behaviour of our children, especially our older children who will be expected to set an example.

The Start of A School Day

Leaving Home

Before leaving for school in the morning, children should wash their hands thoroughly.

HAND CLEANING TECHNIQUE



www.publichealth.hscni.net

cleanyourhands[®]
campaign

As with current school policy, cars are to park on the OLD Primary 1 / 2 side of the school: this may mean turning at the football club. Parking will not be permitted on the footpath outside the new building. Children then exit their car and must use the footpath to walk up towards the designated crossing. Our lollipop lady will be there to cross the children safely.

Unfortunately, parents are not permitted to gather at the gate or into the school so there will always be a member of staff at the entrance to assist your child. If, for a medical reason, you believe that your child needs to be accompanied into the school, this should be pre-arranged with Mr Lavery and only one parent will be permitted. The school gates will open at 8:55 for all pupils.

All pupils will start on Wednesday 1st September, Primary 1 will finish at 12:30, Primary 2 and 3 will finish at 2:15 and Primary 4-7 will finish at 3:15.

Children entering the school

When children arrive at school they should use the hand sanitiser provided at the gate and then proceed straight to their classroom, where they will wash their hands again.

Whilst hand sanitiser will be available throughout the school, children are encouraged to have their own.

Primary 1-3 will enter through the new gate to the new classrooms.

Primary 4-7 will enter through the gate at the other side.

Break and Lunch Times

To limit interaction between ‘bubbles’, we intend to stagger our break and lunchtimes until such time as we deem necessary.

School Meals

We are still awaiting confirmation on how exactly school meals will work this year. We will inform you as soon as we know. At present we will be using the same procedures as last year until we receive further information.

As we are limiting the interaction between groups, and because we are using the canteen as a classroom, children will remain in their own classroom to eat their lunch. To facilitate this, lessons will stop 5 minutes before lunchtime to allow for desks etc to be cleaned. In Key Stage 2, children will assist with cleaning their own area.

Children should use a lunch box/bag which is named and which can be cleaned every day. A water bottle clearly named and cleaned daily is also recommended for all children.

Teaching and Learning

As a school, we are committed to providing a curriculum that meets the academic needs of our children as well as their well-being and mental health needs.

We are aware of the importance of reducing the anxiety that children and parents may be feeling as a result of the recent disruption to school life. We will strive to engage and motivate children to develop the tools and skills they require for learning.

The Department of Education envisage that in primary school, a relatively straightforward approach can be adopted which will allow for full delivery of the Northern Ireland curriculum.

In Foundation Stage, children will, insofar as is possible, be given opportunities to be actively involved in practical, play-based learning in a stimulating environment. Older children will be provided with engaging activities with opportunities for collaboration, play and creativity. Practical, “hands-on” learning and activities, experiments and investigations are an important part of the curriculum across all Areas of Learning and will be used when and where it is safe to do so.

Teachers will use the initial time together with the children to develop and restore relationships and to elevate any concerns. Teachers will also assess the children's academic progress, using both formal and informal methods, so they can plan work to meet their needs.

Throughout the return to school, a strong emphasis will be placed on the child's well being. Through the PDMU and Religion programmes, teachers will plan and provide opportunities for the children to express their worries and the uncertainties we all face. We will help children to continue to develop strategies in order to move forward with confidence.

Home Time:

For the first 2 weeks we will trial a new system of pick-ups. The Primary 1, Primary 2 and Primary 3 parents will line their cars up, each car in line will proceed to the pickup point, at which time their child will go to the car. The parents will then be able to turn at the pitch and go back out again. We realise this might not be the perfect solution but would like to try it.

Primary 4-7 will leave the school in the normal way. Thank you for your cooperation as we try this out.


Isolation:

Unfortunately at this time we are still awaiting guidance on who would have to isolate in the event of a positive case in a class. As soon as we receive this information we will communicate it to you.

The Language we use

The language that we have, and will continue to use, especially with older children, will be key to building their confidence with their learning and motivating them to move forward in a way that is supportive of their wellbeing.

Our approach to this relies on consistency with both school and home using positive developmental language.

LANGUAGE WE AVOID 	LANGUAGE WE USE 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catch up• Learning gaps• Lost learning• Repair learning• Damage to learning• Lost time• Make up lost time• Behind• Cover ground• Speed up• Cram in• Won't fit it all in• Impossible to fit it all in	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Map where we are currently at• Move forward• Develop what we already know• Enhance our knowledge• Deepen our knowledge• Revisit to strengthen• Next sequence• Build upon• Enhance• Develop the learning• Challenge ourselves <p>WE can be a powerful collective pronoun – as it shows that we are all working together.</p>

Blended Teaching and Learning

What is blended learning?

Blended learning is defined as:

An approach to education whereby schools will combine classroom based teaching and learning methods within school, with a range of remote learning in order to deliver the Northern Ireland curriculum.

Online Platforms

This year, we will be continuing to use a range of online platforms and programmes to assist us with teaching and learning. How much and when we use them will depend on where we find ourselves with the Pandemic. These may include Seesaw, Mathletics and Accelerated Reading.

If we return to lockdown, what happens?

If the worst-case scenario happens and we are forced to close again, for however long, please be assured that we have contingency plans in place and will be in a position to maintain the high quality teaching and learning.

Information of a closure will be communicated directly to parents, through the school's Whatsapp, as soon as the decision has been made. Please be aware, that because of the nature of this pandemic, this might be at very short notice, so please do have contingency plans in place.

Throughout any lockdown, teachers will communicate with their classes through the Seesaw app and will deliver appropriate lessons.