



SAINT MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY UNIT

Principal: Mr P Gilchrist

E mail: pgilchrist570@c2kni.net

Telephone: 028427 28278

53, Windmill Hill
Portaferry
Co. Down
BT 22 1RH

31st August 2021

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

We hope and trust you all had an enjoyable summer break and are looking forward to the year ahead. We are delighted to officially welcome Mrs Fowler and Mrs Birt as two new Permanent members of our schooling teaching staff and Miss McErlean who will be teaching our Primary 5 class each Monday, Tuesday and Friday.

As always, our staff have been busy preparing the school in anticipation for the return of all pupils and ensuring the school is ready and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them, on your behalf, for their continued dedication and commitment. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Jamie who gave up his time during the summer to design a fantastic new mural for the front of our school.

Due to the ongoing presence of Covid-19, our school will continue to implement our previous class 'bubble' measures to ensure our pupils remain safe and limit the number of gatherings. As parents/carers we ask you to also keep our school safe by

- Keeping any pupil with symptoms of COVID-19 at home until they can get a PCR test at a local testing centre;
- Arranging for your child to isolate if they have been identified as a close contact and to take a PCR test. If the test is negative, there is no longer a need to self-isolate for ten days and they can return to school.

The advice on close contacts has changed and it now states that if your child has been identified as a close contact then;

1. **If your child has had a previous positive PCR with the last 90 days**
No action. Continue to attend school. If new symptoms develop stay at home, get PCR straightaway and self-isolate until results available.
2. **No previous positive PCR in last 90 days**
STAY AT HOME and book a PCR immediately. Your child must self-isolate until the result of the PCR test is known. If PCR test comes back as negative your child can return to school. You are also requested to book another PCR test at day 8. If either test is positive your child will need to self- isolate for 10 days from date of test.

A few other reminders are included below to help with getting back to routine.

Illness/ Sickness

Parent **must not** under any circumstances send their child (ren) to school with any symptoms of illness, however mild, including high temperature (37.8C or above), diarrhoea, nausea, sore throat, cough, loss of smell/ change to normal taste, rashes etc. If your child is absent from school, for whatever reason, please contact the school before 9.00am, either by telephone on 028427 28278 or by e-mail at info@stmarysps.portaferry.ni.sch.uk If there is no-one in the office to take your call, please leave a message on the answering machine stating that your child will not be in school that particular day. When your child returns to school please give a written confirmation for their reason of absence. This is also needed, even if you have contacted the school already.

Morning and Afternoon Drop offs

From Tuesday 31st August all pupils will be in school from 9.00am, with those in Primary 2 and 3 finishing at 2.00pm and those in Primary 4-7 finishing at 3.00pm. On Friday Primary 1/2/3 pupils will finish at 1.45pm and Primary 4/5/6/7 at 2.00pm.

There will be 3 points of entry into school from Tuesday 31st August 2021;

- 1. The main entrance at the back of the school for P1, P3 and P4**
- 2. The entrance in the P2/3/4 playground for P2**
- 3. The main school entrance for P5, P6 and P7.**

If arriving to school by car, we strongly encourage all parents to consider using all available car parking; ie at back of school, in main chapel car park and Windmill Hill; and use the pedestrian entrances at the back of the school, the Nursery entrance and on the Windmill Hill.

Be prompt to leave the area after drop off and pick up to avoid unnecessary crowding, allowing all pupils to enter and exit the school safely.

It is important that parents remain socially distanced when waiting to pick up their child.

All pupils will either be met by an adult in the car park or P5/6/7/ pupils are permitted to walk home, if the appropriate, 'Walk Home from School' forms have been completed. These forms are available from the school office and on the school web site.

Parental/Carer access to school:

Parents/carers should not enter the school building for any reason (other than by pre-arranged appointment). If you need to pass on information to any member of school staff or to your child, please do so via telephone or email to info@stmarysps.portaferry.ni.sch.uk

Lunchtimes/ Snack:

As a school we operate a Healthy Break Policy. We try to encourage all children to participate in eating a healthy break. Please aim to send your child to school with either a piece of fruit, vegetable, a bread or dairy product at break time each day. There is firm evidence to indicate that pupils' attention and concentration can be improved with regular drinks of water throughout the school day. Therefore, we would like you to send your child to school with water in their drink bottles and not fizzy or diluting drinks. If we are to adhere to a whole school healthy eating strategy, it is important to look after our children's teeth.

School dinner service will begin on Tuesday 1st September and each week the menu will be published on the school newsletter. This week's menu is included below;

Wednesday	<i>Roast loin of Pork, Apple sauce, herb stuffing, gravy, fresh baton carrots, broccoli florets, dry oven roasted potato, mashed potatoes; Swiss roll & custard</i>
Thursday	<i>Breast of chicken curry with boiled rice, naan bread, fresh carrots & medley of fresh vegetables; Strawberry milkshake, fresh fruit & jelly</i>
Friday	<i>Salmon fishcake, sweetcorn, crunchy coleslaw, pasta, salad, tossed salad, chips, chilli baby boiled potato; Flake meal biscuit, melon boat with yoghurt</i>

Dinner will cost £2.60 per day and must be paid at the beginning of each week in a clearly marked envelope with your child's name, class, the amount included and the days on which they wish to have school dinners. Please try to include exact money as change will not be issued until later in the week.

For those having a packed lunch, please send your child to school with their own packed lunch in a clearly labelled lunch box, which must be taken home each day and washed thoroughly. It is preferably to use a plastic lunch box. All contents of the lunch box will be placed back in the box and returned home for cleaning.

Children may bring a water bottle. This should be clearly labelled.

Uniform:

Children will be required to wear full school uniform. We are planning for PE on two days per week and your child will be notified of their designated days during this week in school and these days will also be published on the school website calendar. On these days' pupils can wear their school tracksuit or come to school in plain black trousers and school uniform polo shirt and jumper.

Homework:

Homework will begin on the week beginning 6th September for all P2-7 pupils. At the beginning of this and every week your child will be issued with a homework pack and this is to be brought back into school on the Friday of that week. Where possible answers will be provided for parents to check homework during the week and to sign all homework completed at the end of each week before returning to school. **Failure to return the books on Friday will mean that your child's work may not be checked by the teacher.**

House Points System

We will again be operating a House Point System for Primary 3/4/5/6/7 this year and all pupils will be notified of their House Team during this week in school.

Jewellery

Can I please remind you that apart from small stud earrings, jewellery is not permitted for safety reasons. During PE activities earrings should be removed for safety reasons. Alternatively, pupils are advised to tape front and back to make them safe to prevent the stud penetrating the bone behind the ear. The taping should be done at home for younger pupils. Staff re not permitted to remove or tape earrings for students.

Welcoming and Inclusion Ethos

As part of our Welcoming and Inclusion ethos I would ask that no Birthday invites are given out during school time. Understandably, when a child doesn't receive one they can experience feelings of isolation and exclusion and begin to question friendship groups, which can have consequences within school. The circulation of invites should be a parental task outside school. Also, for health reasons, we can no longer accept Birthday cakes for distribution in class, due to a number of allergies present in our school. I thank you for your understanding on this matter.

Communication

The school will continue to use our web site and Facebook page to keep you up to date with goings on at Saint Mary's. **If you have not done so already, please download the Schools NI app from the school web site as all text messages and communications will be issued through this.** Please also ensure you get messages and a test permission message will be issued to all this week to confirm access. Just respond by granting permission

Should you wish to discuss these, or any other matters relating to the school, or your child's education, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We look forward to your co-operation on these matters and we have committed to keep all of our operations are under constant review. Any change to this will be communicated to all.

I thank you in anticipation for your continued support.

Yours sincerely

Mr Gilchrist
Principal

EDUCATION RESTART



EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN KEEPING OUR SCHOOLS SAFE AND HELPING TO STOP THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

EVERYONE SHOULD CONTINUE TO:

- ✓ **Wash** hands regularly
- ✓ **Cover** coughs and sneezes
- ✓ **Wear** a face covering where necessary
- ✓ **Practise** social distancing
- ✓ **Follow** the latest public health advice

WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?

- ✓ **Don't** send your child to school if they have COVID-19 symptoms or if they have been identified as a close contact
- ✓ **Don't** allow your child to use public transport unless you have no alternative
- ✓ **Don't** gather at the school entrance/gate
- ✓ **Don't** allow your child to share food/drinks with friends

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- ✓ **Do** let the school know if your child will be absent due to COVID-19 symptoms
- ✓ **Do** follow the advice given if you have been contacted by the PHA Contact Tracing Service
- ✓ **Do** encourage your child to socially distance if it is possible
- ✓ **Do** encourage good hand hygiene
- ✓ **Do** use alternative transport if you can
- ✓ **Do** walk or cycle if it's safe and appropriate to do so
- ✓ **Do** use park and ride or other car-parking facilities (if available), and walk the remainder of the journey to school
- ✓ **Do** avoid parking close to or at the school gates
- ✓ **Do** encourage the use of face coverings on school transport and in post-primary schools/settings
- ✓ **Do** encourage and supervise your child to carry out a COVID-19 test if they have been invited to participate

FURTHER INFORMATION, INCLUDING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS, CAN BE FOUND ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S WEBSITE AT: WWW.EDUCATION-NI.GOV.UK

