

15th October 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We have enjoyed a great start to the school year and look forward to the year ahead despite the challenges faced by the whole school community on returning to school at the end of August. We want to commend our new junior infants and extend a special 'Céad Míle Fáilte' to each of them, their families and to all our new pupils who have joined our other classes in St. Helen's Junior School.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide you with some updates and reminders which may be helpful as we continue to settle into the new school year.

- **Safe route to school:** Our footpath and driveway is a car free zone between 8:30 and 9am and 2:15 - 2:40pm. Parents are asked **not** to drive up the avenue to drop or collect your child to and from school unless there are special circumstances which have been communicated to school. Please ensure that your child crosses the road with Claire, our lollipop lady at all times.
- **Parking:** Please ensure that your cars are parked legally when near the school and that driveways of local residents are never blocked when dropping or collecting children.
- **Contact Details:** Please inform the secretary's office if there has been any change to your contact details. It is essential that the office has updated contact details in case of an emergency. These may also be updated on Aladdin connect.

- **Opening time and punctuality:** We realise how difficult it can be to get children to school on time but we encourage everyone to be here in time to join their 'line' at their designated time. Children arriving after 9:00 am should enter the school through the front door. The reception time from 8:40am to 9:00am is an extremely important part of the children's day. For many of the children it is the time of the day when they learn to share, to play with others, to take turns and a time they can share news. It therefore provides a "settling in process" which helps towards creating a more focused learning time for the rest of the day. We appreciate your cooperation with all our new drop- off arrangements in the morning.
- **Security on entrance door/ school access:** In the interest of health and safety, we have an access system on all exit doors of the school. If you are seeking admission to the school you must ring the buzzer, which is located to the left of the front door and wait until a member of staff will meet you. If you have to collect your child early we ask that prior notice is given to the secretary and/or class teacher.
- **Absenteeism:** We require that all absences are logged via the parents' section on Aladdin or email the class teacher to ensure we have a written log to explain your child's absence. It is not necessary to phone the school or give a verbal message regarding your child's absence.
- **Healthy Eating Policy:** In line with our Healthy Eating Policy please continue to encourage healthy lunches – no crisps/ fizzy drinks, please avoid frubes, yoghurts or actimels. The children have a 5minute fruit break where they are encouraged to eat a small piece of fruit quickly. We ask the children to bring home their waste from their lunch.
- **Allergies:** Please note that we have a large number of children with nut allergies, and for this reason our school is a NUT FREE ZONE.
- **Birthdays:** We realise how important it is to celebrate our pupils' birthdays as this is a very special occasion which we enjoy marking with the children. However, we are not able to accept cakes and/ or treats to distribute in school for birthdays.

Management of Covid: Procedures if your child is unwell

- If your child has any common symptoms of Coronavirus they should self-isolate and you should contact your GP for advice.
- If your child is unwell and you are unsure whether to send them to school, please phone your GP and follow GP advice.
- *Common symptoms of Covid 19 include:*
 - a fever - temperature 38 degrees celsius or above*
 - a cough*
 - shortness of breath or breathing difficulties*
 - loss or change to sense of smell or taste*Please remember that it can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. Getting an early diagnosis from your GP means your child can get the help they need and take steps to avoid spreading the virus, if they do have it.
- On return to school after an illness parents are requested to complete the *Return to Educational Facility Parental Declaration Form* - link available on our website.
- Please refer to communication sent out on 28th September regarding safety and control measures to be taken by home and school. (Available on website)

Parental Visits to the school:

Only essential visitors can be admitted to the school. Arrangements for necessary visits will be:

- Restricted to essential purposes and limited to those who have obtained prior approval from the Principal.
- Arranged by prior appointment only and received by the staff member with whom the meeting is arranged at a specific point of contact. The staff member will walk with you to the meeting room and afterwards to the side gate/ door which will be locked again.
- recorded using the contact tracing log and all visitors will be required to complete a health declaration form prior to the meeting.
- Visitors are asked to arrive at the appointed time and not arrive early.
- All visitors must perform proper hand hygiene on arrival.
- All visitors to the school must wear a face covering for the duration of the visit.
- Visitors should maintain 2m physical distancing from the staff while in school.

Outside of meetings, we would request that parents strictly limit their visits to the school for emergency purposes only. To limit the transmission of Covid 19, we ask that you communicate with your class teacher via email. The teacher may schedule a phone call with you if necessary. Face to face meetings carry a high level of risk and will only be arranged if absolutely necessary.

Ventilation in Classrooms

To limit the spread of infection, when possible ventilation in all rooms will be enhanced with open windows and exit doors. All rooms will have some form of fresh air ventilation at all times. We aim to bring the children to yard twice daily if possible. Please ensure that your child has adequate warm clothing and a raincoat at all times during the day.

We have updated the school webpage with more information for parents.

- **Management of other Infectious diseases:** Please continue to be vigilant re informing the school with regard to your child contacting the following infectious diseases: Conjunctivitis, Chicken Pox; Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease; Head Lice; Impetigo; MRSA; Ringworm; Rubella (German Measles); Scabies; Scarlet fever; Slapped Cheek Syndrome; Winter Vomiting Disease/ Gastroenteritis; Some children, staff members and parents may have medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to these infections. If exposed to any of these infections, we ask you to inform us immediately to enable us to communicate with the parent and staff body promptly where further medical advice can be sought.
- **Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment:** In line with the Children First Act 2015 and Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-primary schools the school's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment are accessible to view on the wall to the left of our school entrance.
- **Dogs:** The only dogs permitted on the school grounds are Guide/Assist Dogs. In the interest of health and Safety and to respect those in our school community who may be nervous around dogs we ask that dogs are not brought to the school in your arms or on a lead.

Some dates for your calendar:

- **Parent-Teacher meetings**: are normally held in November however due to Covid restrictions we are unable to hold face to face meetings at this time. Therefore, meetings will be deferred until **February 2021**. If your child's class teacher has not already been in contact with you regarding how your child is settling in, he/she will contact all parents in November by phone. A short questionnaire will also be provided to all parents to seek your input and to inform us about how your child can best be supported, progress and remain happy in school.
- **Halloween Dress-Up Fun day** - Fri 23rd October.
- **Enrolment for Junior Infants 2021** - January 12th 2021 *Please see website for further details*
- **First Holy Communion 2021**: TBC

Thank you for your continued support in these challenging times,

Le gach dea ghúí,

Lorna M Lavin

Principal