

# Ballymoney Nursery School February 2021 Newsletter



Welcome to our February newsletter. I hope as I am writing this that you are all safe and well. When we came back to Nursery School after the Christmas holidays we were excited to be back with our children and starting the second term. However, we understand that our health must come first and if the safest thing is to reduce the numbers in schools at the moment then we must trust the health professionals. In light of last week's announcement from the NI Executive, the current plan is to reopen to all pupils on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. After last year's Lockdown and school closure, we didn't imagine that almost a year later we would be in a similar position. However, we will remain positive that with the measures in place and the roll out of the vaccine that some form of normality is not too far away in the future. I would like to thank everyone for their support and understanding during this time.

Although I have not seen most of your children since the school closed, I can imagine the change in all of their lives and know that although it may be confusing for them that they will be resilient and will be adapting although some may find it easier than others. We are proud of all of them from a distance. As much as schools, including us are providing ideas and work for children to participate in, the important thing for now is for us to reassure our children and make them feel safe in these uncertain times. We are aware that you have many commitments which could be working, home schooling other children, parenting other children as well as running your homes. The ideas that we share are there to support you if you wish to avail of them. Please don't feel pressurised at anytime that you must always be uploading things to Seesaw.

## Learning experiences at home



It has been wonderful to see all the learning that has been taking place at home over the last few weeks. You are your child's first and most important educator and we know they will be learning a wide variety of skills at home. Last month our focus was on winter weather. We got to see that many of the children had been carrying out the various activities on the home learning sheets which included making ice, coloured ice and painting with ice. Some children took advantage of the cold weather to make beautiful frozen sun catchers and best of all so many of you were out in the snow! Being outside, helps make us feel better and at a time like this, it is much needed. There were lots of walks, nature walks, stick man hunts, shape hunts as well as many snowmen and snow angels being created! There were lots of crafts related to Stickman, cold colours and some were based on the children's creativity which we loved.

The Big Bird Watch was at the weekend and there has been lots of learning linked to birds. Binoculars and bird feeders have been made and many of you have been out bird watching. There has been lots of baking, helping sort and pair socks, going for walks with pets and family members and doing the home learning work that siblings have from Primary School! The best thing, we have

all noticed through the photos and videos shared are how happy our children are. At a time like this, it is their wellbeing that is most important and happiness plays a huge part in that.

## Children's Mental Health Week - 1<sup>st</sup> February - 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The first week of February is Children's mental health week and this year more than ever it is important that we all focus on our children's wellbeing. This year's theme is about the children **expressing themselves** and their emotions. The February home learning sheet contains activities with regards to Valentines and Chinese New Year. Below, I will outline our approach to focusing on Children's mental health week. All documents can be found in the **Home Learning - Children's Mental Health Week** section of the school website.



\*We have adapted the NHS 5 steps to wellbeing strategy to suit activities our children would be participating in which has been emailed to everyone and uploaded to the school website.



\*Each day during children's mental health week there will be videos uploaded to Seesaw with regards to emotions and feelings.

\*Each day for the first two weeks of February, we will share a 5 minute mindfulness activity devised by the Mentally Healthy Schools programme. This will be shared on Facebook and Seesaw.

\*We will also share dance videos.

\*Tips, quotes will be shared daily on Facebook.



### Expressing emotions

\* I have attached a document from the Getting Ready to learn team which gives us lots of different ways we can encourage our children to understand and express their emotions. I would encourage you all to read this document and try out some of their suggestions to encourage your children to share their emotions.

\*Perhaps for some, they will express their feelings by drawing or painting (this will link to Wednesday's story 'The Colour Monster'). Others may sing or dance! Every child is different at developing their ability in expressing their emotions. We recommend trying only one of the methods suggested each day.

### Calming strategies

\*The Getting ready to learn supporting our children's mental health documents also gives lots of strategies for how to calm our children.

\*I have also included ideas from the Early Years Inclusion team with regards to calming techniques. I know, that I have been making use of their ideas over the past few weeks (the

tumble dryer is currently working in my house!). You will find other information on creating a calming area in your home and a social story about being calm on the school website.

\*techniques to keep children calm can also be found on the following Cbeebies link:-  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/seven-techniques-for-helping-kids-keep-calm>

As well as the wellbeing of our children, it is also important that we take the 5 steps for our own wellbeing. Here are some links that you may find beneficial.



### **Minding your head website resources**

[Resources | Minding Your Head](#)

### **Free online Stress Control classes**

These sessions are effective in helping to reduce symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. Topics covered include an overview of what stress is, controlling your body, your thoughts, controlling your actions, techniques to get a good night's sleep. These are available directly at [www.ni.stresscontrol.org](http://www.ni.stresscontrol.org)

### **Lifeline 0808 808 8000**

Lifeline is the Northern Ireland free-to-call crisis counselling helpline that provides immediate support for those in crisis, distress or despair and struggling to cope. Lifeline is available to anyone across Northern Ireland 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Lifeline can also provide advice for people who are concerned about someone else who is in distress.

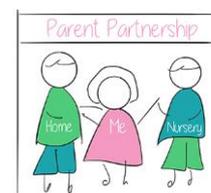


Attached to this newsletter is a 'Directory of services to help improve mental health and emotional wellbeing' within the Northern Trust.

We are delighted that we were allocated some money from the Department of Education to support the wellbeing of our children and staff. We have purchased various resources to create sensory areas within each classroom and some new resources for all children to access in the outdoors.

### **Parental Partnership**

#### **Remote learning and Seesaw**



We hope that you have found the ideas on the home learning sheets, home learning bags and the daily class teacher videos helpful over the past few weeks. To date, the majority of our families are engaging with Seesaw and it has been great to be able to share in our children's learning at home. Although we might not be seeing the learning that is happening in every house, we know that there will be much learning and life lessons taking place. As I have already mentioned, the most important thing at the moment is for our children to feel safe and secure as well as having access to lots of play!

Although we are giving specific suggestions on the home learning sheets, your child can direct the play and learning that takes place at home. Craft activities can take a lot of time for you to prepare and sometimes to search for ideas online. Occasionally, just put various resources out and see what your child does with them e.g. junk -empty milk bottle, yogurt tub, torn magazine, newspaper, glue/Sellotape, felt tips etc -let them develop their imagination and see what they create!

## Daily Seesaw videos

It is important that we maintain the connection with our children and the class teachers have enjoyed making their daily videos for the children. The positive feedback that you have taken the time to give them has been much appreciated.

The videos are now being uploaded as an '**announcement**' on Seesaw. This can be found in the '**messages**' section of the '**inbox**'. We have changed how the videos are being uploaded as this enables us to see who has been watching the videos.

## Weekly Facebook challenges

Seesaw has been great for families to upload their children's photos, the staff to upload videos and the facility for contacting the class teacher privately and directly. It is also accessible to all families as not everyone used Facebook. However, we feel we are missing some of the connectedness that our school community had via the school Facebook group during the last Lockdown, Therefore, each week we will set a challenge for the children to participate in. If they chose to participate, they can upload their photo for us all to see. The first challenge was teddy bear toast and they all looked very tasty!!



## One to one Zoom calls

We are now approaching the half way point of our school closure and we would like to offer a one to one zoom call for each child with their class teacher. If your child would like a Zoom call with their teacher, please message the teacher on Seesaw to arrange a suitable time for you both to have the call over the next two weeks. Zoom is an app that is free to download to a laptop, PC, phone or tablet and there is no cost for the call.



**ZOOM VIDEO**

As we are a school community there will be occasions when the items shared on Facebook or through the school messaging app may mainly be for your benefit such as looking after our mental wellbeing at this time.

## Important Information

### Books



I know that many of you are members of your local library and if you aren't already a member, I would encourage you to join online as there are many eBooks that can be accessed and downloaded.

[Welcome to Libraries NI](#)

## Online learning

If you are wanting to access online learning for your children we would recommend the cBeebies website which has a wide variety of learning activities on it. For example:- counting - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/puzzles/peter-rabbit-counting>



There are also many learning programmes that can be accessed through BBC iPlayer which is free to anyone who has a TV licence. Maddie's Do You Know?, My World Kitchen, Andy's aquatic adventures and Andy's adventures are some of the shows we would recommend for developing children's understanding of the world around us. If you have Sky television, there is a home learning section within the Kids category. We would recommend Charlie and his shapes for supporting children in their learning of shapes and colours.

## Mr Hullabaloo

Our visit from Mr Hullabaloo has been postponed until March 2021 and hopefully it will be able to go ahead. Although we don't promote companies, we wanted to let you know that he uploads activities and videos for the children to watch and do every day. These can be found on his Facebook page:- Mr Hullabaloo

## Keeping in touch

Up until now, each month we have emailed the home learning sheet and accompanying documents such as word lists, information sheets and Powerpoints as well as uploading them to the school website. From March 2021, the newsletter and home learning sheet will continue to be emailed however all of the other documents will no longer be emailed but will be found on the school website on the first of each month. An automatic message is sent to those who signed up to the messaging app.

Our main form of regular communication will primarily be through the school messaging app and then Seesaw. We would recommend anyone who hasn't consented to using the school messaging app to consider using it as important messages and uploads to the school website can be messaged and accessed instantly. If you haven't got access to the school messaging app and would like to access it, please email me and let me know.

If anyone would like to get in touch with us please either email [jtrimmings341@c2kni.net](mailto:jtrimmings341@c2kni.net) or private message us on Facebook.

## Dates for your diary...

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February - Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 - Children's Mental Health Week**

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> February - Friday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2021**-This would have been our half term break. If you have been working with your child and doing tasks with them, then take this time to give both them and yourself a break from the learning 😊

## Stay safe and take care

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Thompson'.

Principal