

EDUCATION AUTHORITY - SOUTH EASTERN REGION

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Principal:

Mrs Susan Weir, B.Ed (Hons), C.P.S.E, N.P.Q.H

26th June 2020

Dear Parents,

This letter contains information about our plans for a phased return at the end of the summer break.

We are well aware that you are keen for information about how the New School Day will look when the children return in the next academic year. Senior staff have been working away behind the scenes to put in place new routines and procedures which may be required to bring the pupils back as safely as possible. Things may change as we go through the summer months but I feel that, at this stage, we have to make decisions for the initial few weeks to enable you to make plans for your family / work commitments. We are calling this our "Launchpad for Learning!" This plan follows the very recent guidelines published by the Department of Education and has been agreed and will be implemented by the North Down Primary Principal's Group.

It is our goal to return to full time 'normal' education as soon as it is possible to do so, therefore these plans could develop and progress as the medical advice changes. We will go ahead with the current 1m distance rule for pupils, even if this changes over the summer, as we have had to ask staff to set up the classrooms now before we run out of their contracted hours. In setting up rooms, we have found that classes will need to be split across rooms to fit in and we are therefore going to need to start the year in two groups using protective bubbles. There will be a mix of face to face teaching and learning with the teacher for two days, home learning for one day and supervised learning for two days (overseen by the class teacher). This is called a blended learning approach. **This will mean that we will be able to offer your child a place in school on 4 days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday).** We will need additional staff, furniture and resources to manage this and I will be working with the Education Authority to seek their assistance to enable this 4-day week. In the event that this is not possible, a part time model where children attend a minimum of two days per week may need to be implemented.

We will start with an induction period for all classes as the children will need help to return to formal schooling in a gradual manner. Our children have been away from the normal school environment for a substantial period of time. They have missed playing with their friends and interacting face to face with their teachers. The goal when we return will be to restore and rebuild these relationships. There will be a substantial part of the school day spent on pupil wellbeing, as well as addressing any gaps in learning and focusing on the 'catch-up' of basic skills.

In many practical ways school will be a different place when the children return and we will therefore send more information, videos and photos in late August so that the pupils will know what to expect about the new routines.



Whole School Induction Period

Week beginning 17 th August	Staff begin to return on a phased basis	
Week beginning 24 th August	<p>P7 induction period.</p> <p>P7 pupils will return to school for 4 days from 9am-12noon to trial the new routines and the Group set up. (No attendance on Wednesday.)</p> <p>P2 – P6 do not attend</p>	<p>P1 induction period</p> <p>P1 pupils will attend from 9am – 11am and will either be in on Monday and Tuesday (Group A) or on Thursday and Friday (Group B).</p>
<p>Week beginning 31st August</p> <p><i>Please note that school will be open on 31st August Bank Holiday</i></p>	<p>P2 – P6 induction period.</p> <p>All children in P2 – P7 in school for 4 days from 9am – 12 noon to learn new routines and group set ups with P7 leading by example.</p> <p>P2- P6 do not attend on Wednesday</p> <p>Home learning begins for P7 on Wednesdays</p>	<p>P1 induction continues</p> <p>P1 pupils will extend their day from 9am – 12noon and will be in part time either on Monday and Tuesday (Group B) or on Thursday and Friday (Group A)</p>
Week beginning 7 th September	<p>Lunchtime procedures introduced.</p> <p>All children P2-P7 trial routines including lunch and one afternoon session.</p> <p>School day 9am – 2pm for all.</p> <p>P2 – P6 start home learning on Wednesdays.</p>	<p>P1 induction extends further</p> <p>P1 pupils extend their week to 4 days but continue to go home at 12 noon before lunchtime. Monday and Tuesday AND Thursday and Friday.</p> <p>Home learning on Wednesdays.</p>
Week beginning 14 th September	<p>All children follow the pattern of being in school for 4 days with home learning on Wednesdays.</p> <p>School days will run from 9am -2pm for all pupils while the need for blended learning continues.</p>	<p>P1 induction completes</p> <p>P1 pupils stay in school for lunch time and one afternoon session per day making their school day 9am – 2pm, 4 days per week.</p>

Teachers will spend each Wednesday managing home learning, responding to parental messages, cleaning and preparing resources for the next group and carrying out other responsibility duties.

Support staff will spend each Wednesday assisting teachers with tasks as required.



Staff Allocations.

We realise that pupils and parents are very keen to find out who their class teacher for next year is going to be. An ongoing audit will be carried out to establish which members of our workforce will be able to attend when we return. At the stage, the plan is for the model below however, this could be subject to change in light of any staff audit issues.

P1: Miss Hillen supported by Mrs Coffey

P2: Mrs Harris and Miss McCarter supported by Mrs Murray and Mrs Telford

P3: Mrs Bell supported by Mrs Cully

P4: Mr Fulton* (Mrs Weir) supported by Mrs McKee

P5: Mrs McClure

P6: Miss Mawhinney supported by Mrs Dunleavy and Mrs Chan

P7: Mrs Atcheson

You will note that the children moving into P5, P6 and P7 will remain with the teacher they had this year in order to support their return to school.

*We expect Mr Fulton to be taking paternity leave early in the school year and this could possibly be the first 2 weeks of school. In order to make the transition for the pupils going in to P4 as smooth as possible, I will cover the class for the duration of the paternity leave.

Class Bubbles

Our plans are to use our physical space in school as effectively as possible. Children will be kept 1m apart where possible while social distancing is in place and there will be restrictions as to how we use certain parts of the building and resources. We plan to utilise our outdoor spaces to the maximum benefit so that each class has their own outdoor learning area. However, we need to be realistic that it is very challenging for children, especially for young children, to keep to social distancing rules. The concept of class bubbles will therefore be used to ensure that your child is coming into contact with a limited number of the same peers each day they attend. This, along with frequent hand washing, the effective use of tissues and frequent cleaning of resources and the school in general, will greatly reduce the risk of the spread of any virus.

Learning Support

Advice stipulates that children should not be moving to other classrooms and mixing with different staff and children from outside their bubble. In order to protect the groups from cross-contamination, there will be no withdrawal from class for learning support. Instead the class sizes have been reduced so that the class teacher and classroom assistants will be able to provide extra support during class time.

Pupil allocations

We have split each class into two groups in order to accommodate all of the pupils using all of our space. We have used family groups and have also tried to take friendships and teacher judgement into consideration. Due to the significant planning in sorting these groups, unfortunately they cannot be changed. We hope this will be a short term arrangement.

GROUP A			GROUP B		
P1					
Denver	Charlie Mc		Zac	Jake	
Jace	Porsha		Charlie A	Teddi	
Benjamin	Ella		Sophia	Rose	
Lewis	Kasey-Leigh		Jack	(Rio)	
P2					
Judy	Lewis		Rudy	Dolly	
Ellie	Marley-Rae		James	Rosie	
Oliver	Sophie		Harrison	Cameron	
Annabelle	Soul		Winnie	Vinnie	
Gracie S	Layla		Gracie R	Marley R	
P3					
Jack B	Liliana		Dexter	Brodie	Nathan
Amelia	Lucy		Christa		Chloe
Jake	David		Sienna		Rhys
Scarlett	Daisy		Adam		Jude
P4					
Lakoda	Jacob	Evie	Bailie	Alex	Amelia
Josh		David	Hayden		Katie
Elisha		Rhys	Oscar		Ava
Jessica S		Paul	Anna-Joy		Freddy
Sonny		Jessica McK	Tom		Lucas
Curtis		Jack C	Joey		Lacey
P5					
Tyler	Joseph	Gabrielle	Chloe	Matilda	Rumer
Khloe		Roxanne	Clark		Alisha
Meah		Lily-Mae	Nathanael		Sophia
Katie S-M		Deacon	Eden		Katie M
P6					
Leah		Ruby	Isla		Bailey
Andrew		Mason	Ebbie		Daniel
Jay-Dee		Deacon	Grace		Ellie
Brooke		Shea	Sofia		Quinn
Luke		Jessica	Noah		Abbie
James		Grason	Arran		Imogen
P7					
Rihley		William	Heidi	Caleb	Ayda
Jayden		Leah	Rachel		Evan
Ollie		Robert	Ellie		Ryan
Jack S-M		Kalan	Joel		Wilfy
Charlie		Sam	Curtis		Ben

Group A will have face to face teaching from the teacher on Mondays and Tuesdays, home learning on Wednesdays and supervised learning on Thursdays and Fridays.

Group B will have supervised learning on Mondays and Tuesdays, home learning on Wednesdays and face to face teaching with the teacher on Thursdays and Fridays.

Drop off and pick up.

It seems likely at present that a one-way system will be in place in school. Pupils should enter the black gates on the side nearest to the field. Where possible, we would ask that pupils say Goodbye to their parents at the gate (although we understand that parents of some of our younger pupils will need to walk them to the classroom door initially) and proceed up the school drive and through the blue gate behind the carpark. Pupils should then proceed directly to their classroom following the one-way system. They will not be asked to line up and can go directly to their seat in the classroom. The one-way route will be clearly marked and we will make a video of the route to go on the website before pupils return. In order to keep our community safe, parents will not be allowed into the school building. All communication with the class teacher should be made by telephoning the school office. Similarly, all non-essential visitors will not be permitted entry during the school day.

Staggered start and finish

In order to keep congestion in and around the school and at entrances to a minimum, drop off and pick up times will be slightly staggered. This will be arranged in family groups. Please ensure that you keep to your allotted times as this will help us to manage the safe arrival and dismissal of our pupils. As usual, to ensure pupil safety, the blue gates by the carpark will be closed promptly after arrival times. School will close to all pupils at 2pm once they reach that stage of the induction and until home learning on a Wednesday ceases. This harmonised dismissal time will enable teachers to respond to any parental contact between 2pm and 3pm daily and also eliminates the need for multiple collections in the afternoons for family groups. Parents who are entering the school grounds to wait for children at the end of the day should use the one-way system which will be marked out.

Allotted times

8.45am drop off and 1.45 pick-up – pupils with surnames: A-H

9.00am drop off and 2.00 pick-up – pupils with surnames: I-P

9.15am drop off and 2.15pm pick-up – pupils with surnames: Q-Z

P.P.E.

We need to keep our staff safe, so there may be some P.P.E. used by certain staff and at certain times of the day, for example during lunchtime supervision. Face masks will only be used minimally as they do not fit with our ethos of developing strong relationships between our staff and pupils. We may need to use face visors, gloves and aprons etc. to use when assisting children in close contact e.g. if they need first aid or intimate care. All teachers and some support staff will work behind desks in order to maintain a safe distance but the classrooms have been set up in ways to enable meaningful interactions when they are discussing pupil's work. Pupils will not be required to provide or wear PPE.

Prevention of cross contamination

In order to ensure safe use of resources and to limit the chance of cross contamination, children are asked to only bring their lunchbox to school. School bags will not be permitted and children are asked not to bring any other items in to school.

Extended Services

In order to support the Bubble system, and due to limited staffing and cleaning routines, we will not be able to provide Breakfast club at school. We **hope** to be able to provide After School club once pupils are in school until 2pm as we understand the need to support our working parents where possible. There will be restrictions on the number of children who can be accommodated and in order to manage this, it is likely that bookings will be required well in advance. **If possible**, After School Club will run from 2pm - 4pm only in the school hall. Due to the need to have caretaking and cleaning staff on site during the school day, there have been changes to the working patterns of these members of staff and we are unable to provide the service after 4pm. This service would need to be financially viable to go ahead.

School Holiday Dates

As the school start dates have now been moved forward, we have amended our term dates for pupils to allow for this early start to the year. The dates have not yet been confirmed however, the provisional plan for the year is detailed below. **Please be advised that these are provisional dates and may be subject to change.**

Term 1: Monday 24th August - Friday 23rd October
(31st Aug bank holiday will be taken on Weds 2nd September in light of the 4 day week)

Half term break: Monday 26th October – Friday 30th October

Term 2: Monday 1st November – Friday 18th December

Christmas break: Monday 21st December – Tuesday 5th January

Term 3: Wednesday 6th January – Friday 12th February

Half term break: Monday 15th February – Friday 19th February

Term 4: Monday 22nd February – Friday 26th March

Easter break: Monday 29th March – Friday 9th April

Term 5: Monday 12th April – Thursday 27th May
(3rd May is a bank holiday if we are still on a 4 day week this will be taken on Weds 5th May)

Half term break: Friday 28th May and Monday 31st May

Term 6: Monday 1st June – Friday 25th June

Family Holidays

Please be aware that if you holiday abroad in August, you will be expected to follow the relevant quarantine advice for Northern Ireland.

School Uniform

School uniform will still be required however, due to the expectation that there will be a lot more outdoor lessons, children will be allowed to wear navy tracksuit bottoms and trainers along with their school jumper as a **temporary** adjustment during the initial period.



As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any questions about these plans. We ask that all questions are sent to school via the main school email address: info@vicpsballyhalbert.newtownards.ni.sch.uk to enable the traffic on staff email addresses to be kept as free as possible for internal communication and communication with the agencies advising us with the changes.

Please remember to share these plans with any family members or childminders who will be assisting with the drop off and collection of your children.

You may hear on the grapevine that other schools are making different arrangements. Each school setting is different in shape size and circumstances. Where possible, Principals have worked together to try to provide a similar service but, while we are all similar, we are also all unique. It has taken a massive amount of work and collaboration to get to this stage and we have all tried to the best of our abilities to make the situation workable for our own school settings. We hope that we have done you proud and ask that schools are not compared or judged for what they have been able to offer.

I apologise for the lengthy communication but we felt that the more information we can provide you with at this stage, the easier it would be for your own planning. I will just reiterate again that this is our “Launchpad for Learning” and will be in place for the induction period, when the procedures will be reviewed again, depending on the situation we find ourselves in at that time of year.

I hope you will all be able to enjoy a wonderful summer break and look forward to seeing you all again in the new school year.

Yours faithfully,



Susan Weir.
Principal