

Monday 3rd August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I last wrote to you as part of our June Newsletter to explain that the Department of Education NI had issued guidance on Friday 19th June entitled “Coronavirus (COVID 19)- Northern Ireland Reopening Schools Guidance New School Day”.

I had hoped that at this point of the summer school Principals would have received updated guidance to enable us to provide parents with all of the necessary information for the return to school. In the absence of this updated guidance I feel that you, our parents and guardians require information to enable you to plan ahead for September. This letter will outline the contingency plan for St Eugene’s PS should no changes be made to the guidance issued on the 19th of June.

The current guidance outlines the requirement that children must adhere to 1 metre social distancing from each other and 2 metre social distancing from staff. If this restriction remains in place it will mean that schools will only be able to accommodate children in ‘protective bubbles’. We realise that this is not the ideal situation for children, families or staff and particularly for working parents, but the safety and well-being of our children will be key in the return to school and we must adhere to Department directive. Remote learning would take place on the three days that children are not in school and will be different from that experienced to date, with new training actioned, more structure in place and a requirement for pupils to actively engage in submitting work and receiving feedback.

The children will be split into Bubble A and Bubble B. Children in Bubble A will attend school on a Monday and Tuesday. Children in Bubble B will attend school on a Thursday and Friday with a deep clean being carried out between the bubbles on a Wednesday. The school will have enhanced cleaning on all other days, with the weekend allowing for a 72-hour break, the length of time that the virus survives on surfaces. In order to implement the 1 metre social distancing, there will be no more than 12 children in each classroom. The protective bubbles are outlined in the table below and all siblings have been accounted for on the same days.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MONDAY & TUESDAY** | **THURSDAY & FRIDAY** |
| **BUBBLE A** | **BUBBLE B** |
| Reception  P1 & Jack F | P2 |
| P4  Ella G, Erin Mc & Codie H from P5 | P3  Rest of P5 children |
| P7 | P6 |

It is important to realise that the science is changing all of the time and the guidance could well have changed significantly before the end of this month. Our Education Minister has hinted that a full reopening is possible and to date England and Scotland have removed the social distancing requirement for children in schools. **If this announcement is made for Northern Ireland we would be welcoming all children back on a full time basis from Tuesday 1st of September**.

Our planned Stay and Play in August has been cancelled and parents of children due to start St Eugene’s PS for the first time will be invited to attend for an individual meeting with Miss Gormley instead. Some of these appointments already took place for new P1 children in June and it was a pleasure to meet some of our new boys and girls and their parents.

Children moving into P7 will return to school on Monday 24th of August 2020. It is still unclear if transport or school meals will be provided during this week, therefore, parents may have to provide these for their child throughout this week.

If the protective bubble plans remain in place Bubble A will attend on Friday 28th of August and Tuesday 1st of September so that they do not miss out on their two days for the initial return.

In order to ensure that risk to our children and staff is reduced a number of changes will be made as we adapt to our ‘new normal’. It is crucial that if any child, member of staff or member of their household display any symptoms of Covid-19 they stay home and book a test as soon as possible. All children and staff will have their temperature taken on arrival at school and anyone with a high temperature will be sent home again.

Children will not mix at school with other children from outside of their classroom bubble, lunch and break will be separate. We await guidance on the use of school bags and lunch boxes so please hold off on purchasing these if you have not already done so.

Children will need full school uniform, however, we ask that anyone who is unable to tie their own laces wear Velcro or buckled shoes as staff will no longer be able to offer assistance with this. Should a child require intimate care or assistance with first aid staff will wear PPE as this will involve breaking the social distance required.

We ask that parents drop children off swiftly and only exit their vehicle to assist younger children. Safe handover will take place at the green pedestrian gate and we ask that parents do not proceed beyond this point. A member of staff will be at the gate to relay last minute messages to class teachers, however, we encourage parents to communicate in advance, if possible by telephoning the office and leaving a message or by emailing your child’s teacher directly.

Further details on drop off and collection will be issued prior to the school reopening. We are currently exploring options of being able to offer Breakfast Club/Morning Supervision as we recognise that many parents depend on this popular service. We also hope to continue to offer 2.15 to 3.15 supervision for eligible children in P1 and P2. Unfortunately, after school clubs will not be available initially, but this will be kept under continued review. Please be assured that we will aim to offer extra-curricular activities instead throughout the school day as we firmly believe these are vital experiences for our children, particularly now more than ever. There will be a strong focus on well-being and mental health and we aim to support our children as best we can as they adapt to their new school day.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your support and understanding as we adapt to changed times. We are blessed at St Eugene’s PS to have such supportive parents/guardians and I know that in 2020/2021 you will again support us as we work together to achieve the very best for your child. We will continue to use our text service to alert you to updates and new information. The staff and I look forward to welcoming you all back through our gates once again.

Yours Sincerely,

Miss Gormley.