



St. Colman's Primary School
and
All Saints' Nursery Unit
(Annaclone)

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Progress Through Partnership, Leading To Excellence



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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Full Opening of School in August/September 2020

Very soon we will have all of your children back in our school. We know that it can be an anxious time for children and parents when they are starting back at school after a long break. Teachers and classroom assistants will be working carefully in the autumn term to support the children to settle back into school life and offering personal, social and emotional support as well as academic support to make up for the time they missed in school in the spring and summer term.

Since our school was instructed to close in March our staff have been working in school and at home to provide learning opportunities for all our pupils. These opportunities have been using 'on-line' support through our website's class pages from nursery unit to Primary 7 classes, with regular updates and advice to parents and children through the school's communications email at info@stcolmansandallsaints.co.uk. Teachers and support staff twice provided 'Learning Packs' to children in their homes – a total of 380 learning packs were produced and distributed by our school staff to all children in our primary school.

Our home visits, online feedback, recent telephone contact with parents and children were very positive and it was encouraging to hear about how you were coping during school closure. Many parents mentioned that it was getting more and more difficult to motivate their child to do work, our response to that was always, "Please don't worry, you are not alone, it is difficult to replicate the school classroom in a home environment, you have been doing a great job! Sometimes it's even difficult to motivate children in the 'real' classroom environment!"

What do we know now?

'Education Restart Programme' documents have been received from Department of Education, and these are updated with 'new' information daily and weekly, so while schools are receiving some information, it is very difficult to provide parents with exact information about how we intend to return children to everyday schooling as the information changes so rapidly!



For example, this information letter is my fifth attempt to update you with factual information and advice, as all of the previous attempts have had to be amended with updated information before I could finish them and send them to you.

A welcomed recent development has been DE guidance signalling that there is no need for social distancing between children in the Nursery or in the Foundation Stage (P1/P2). Currently pupils in these year groups will not be required to socially distance when returning but will have to limit their interaction with other classes. The Nursery obviously has a separate site from the school and using the bubble approach, we hope to run our Nursery as close to normality as possible within the guidelines. Social distancing rules for P3-P7 pupils is still provisionally advised at minimum of 1m (31/07/20). Guidance is still being formalised regarding transport and catering, when I receive an update from EA on this I will let you know immediately.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

Our return to school, planning is underpinned by the hierarchy of effective infection protection and control:

- minimising contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend childcare settings, schools or colleges
- cleaning hands more often than usual - wash hands thoroughly for 20 seconds with running water and soap and dry them thoroughly or use alcohol hand rub or sanitiser ensuring that all parts of the hands are covered
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene - promote the '*catch it, bin it, kill it*' approach
- cleaning frequently touched surfaces often using standard products, such as detergents and bleach
- minimising contact and mixing by altering, as much as possible, the environment (such as classroom layout) and timetables (such as staggered break times)

Contact in school will be limited in two main ways:

1. By ensuring pupils remain in consistent groups ('bubbles') wherever possible.
2. By maintaining distance between individuals wherever possible ('social distancing').

LEARNING

Initially, there will be a focus on transitioning the children back to school and their wellbeing. We understand that some children may find their return to school difficult and staff will be supportive and flexible in their approach. We have watched with interest stories from schools in England where the children who returned to school on 1 June settled back very quickly into routines and how staff/parents were amazed at their resilience and ability to adapt. However, some children may be upset when they come into school in the morning. As hard as it is to leave when you see them upset, the children generally settle more quickly once their parent/carer has left. If you are worried, you can telephone the school office who will check that your child has settled to put your mind at ease. We understand that children have been at home for an extended period of time and will endeavour to make their groups a calm, quiet place where children feel safe. We also understand that, academically, children will be at different starting points in their learning and staff will spend time to assess each child's next steps of learning and take this into account in their planning for learning and expectation for each child.

Initially whole school assemblies will not take place in the hall until we are advised that this rule can be relaxed. Further information about curriculum and routines will follow over the coming days. This will include more detail about homework, arrangements for PE, reading and library books and the equipment that children may bring into school.

SICKNESS ABSENCE

We will strictly adhere to the guidance from Public Health. If anyone becomes unwell with a new continuous cough, a high temperature, loss of taste or smell they will be sent home and parents will be advised to follow PHE guidance - COVID-19: guidance for households with a possible coronavirus infection guidance. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

We now have a designated isolation area where children who are feeling unwell can be isolated under careful supervision until they are collected by a parent. Please report sickness absence as usual via email on or by phone.

Breakfast Club/ASC/EASC

At this stage it is too early to say when the above wrap-a-round services in the school will resume. However, we are exploring a number of options regarding these and when/if it is safe to do so, we will roll them out incrementally.

Key Dates

Here are key dates for your diary, these are:

P1 Pack Collection – Monday 10th of August (1000 – 1400)

NU Pack Collection – Wednesday 12th of August (1000 – 1400)

Week commencing 17th August 2020 – Teachers will officially return to the school during this week to continue preparing and planning for children's return. No children will be in attendance during this week.

Confirmation for last year's Primary 7 will take place on **Tuesday 18th of August** at 3pm in Annaclone Chapel. *(There will be a short practice from 1000 – 1130 for P7 children in the chapel on Monday 17th of August).*

Week commencing 24th August 2020: All Primary 2-7 pupils will return each day from **0845 until 1200**. This is a pupil to school re-introduction week, a pastoral practice that will be followed by many primary schools across the wider Newry area. P2 – P7 classes will spend time with their new teacher and in their new classroom that week to begin the process of settling back into school and sample the new routines and rules that we will all need to follow.

On Monday 24th of August 2020: Mrs Burns will hold a curriculum meeting for (1 person max) parents of children starting in Primary 1 this year. Children from P1 will begin a staggered start and progressive school timetable from Tuesday 25th of August onwards. (Details will be in the pack given to parents on 10/08/20).

From Tuesday the 1st of September onwards:

- we will start the induction process of our new Nursery children.
- P2-P7 will be in school until 145/235 respectively
- P1 children will continue their progressive timetable
- school meals will be available (though is likely to be a packed lunch)

As mentioned above social distancing between children in P3-P7 currently remains at 1 metre. However, we are hopeful that we can facilitate the return of ALL of our children. Some classrooms will have to be organised to facilitate this legal obligation in order to maintain health and safety of pupils, staff, and other persons who may be required to enter our school environment. We will be utilising communal spaces such as our playroom and school hall so that we can follow social distancing guidelines whilst catering for as many pupils as possible. Some pockets of children may even, in the early weeks, be taught by a different teacher. **All of which is preferable to blended or home learning.**

Pupils from P1-P7 will likely also follow the bubble approach and work, play and eat with only their class during their time in school. This will mean using different entrance and exit doors for each grouping. We are also likely to adopt a more flexible morning window for pupil arrival and may yet need to stagger finishing times so that classes can be kept apart. Your cooperation in this matter is much appreciated – we all want our children back in school and these minor adjustments will be worth it in order to facilitate their return.

A more detailed and concise plan for reopening will be shared via letter next week. I am also very mindful that new and additional guidance from Peter Weir is expected imminently and that this may also impact further upon our arrangements. I apologise that this may not be best notice but in these unique circumstances we believe it is the best course of action in light of a constantly evolving situation.

Parents may contact me via email on either the email address listed in the first paragraph or on koneill344@c2kni.net if they have any concerns. I thank you for your continued patience and cooperation and look forward to seeing you and your children again soon.

Best wishes to all of you.
Mr O'Neill

