



PORTSTEWART PRIMARY SCHOOL and NURSERY UNIT

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17th March 2020

Dear Parent

Coronavirus update (17/03/2020)

School is open and will remain open until such times as the Department of Education decides otherwise.

As you are aware, we are in the midst of a rapidly changing situation regarding the Coronavirus. My first priority will continue to be the health and safety of the pupils, staff and the wider school community. School has received some guidance from the Department of Education on Monday 16th March in relation to Coronavirus. The key points contained within the guidance from the Department of Education are:

- Children should be kept at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature to avoid spreading infection to others. Otherwise they should attend as normal.
- If staff or children become unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they should be sent home.
- Schools will clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces more often.
- Children will be encouraged to wash their hands more often than usual using soap and water or hand sanitiser. Children will be encouraged to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and then bin it.
- The Department of Education recommends that schools remain open at present, until advised otherwise.

As you will know school closure has been discussed by our politicians and at government level, but as yet we have no idea of when this will be happening. I am acutely aware of the impact that school closures will bring for families in the days and weeks ahead.

At present, school is open and will remain open until the Department of Education or Education Authority tells schools to close. **However, we totally understand if you wish to keep your children at home right now as a precaution. If your child has a new cough, fever or is feeling unwell please do not send them to school.**

As a proactive step to support our families we now have a **school mobile number for emergency outside of hours support**. It is **07716782580**. This number is only for our families in Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit. If you have any questions or concerns, you can telephone the given mobile number and Mrs Taylor will advise parents based on the current situation (if information is available). In the event of a school closure this mobile number will be used as the main school telephone line. You can also email school directly using Mrs Taylor's work email address which is **ktaylor357@c2kni.net**.

Our school has a **contingency plan in place**. Please see the attached sheet for information on the details of our school contingency plan. This focuses on the key steps that our school will take whilst school remains open to safeguard our pupils, staff and wider school community.

Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit is served by some of the most dedicated people and together we will do all we can to support our parents and pupils. As part of our response plan, **class teachers are currently preparing packs of work for our children to complete at home in the event of a school closure**. This work is to initially last over a two week period. It will include Literacy and Numeracy work and links to online learning. If school closes for more than two academic weeks we will endeavour to provide more curriculum guidance and work to parents. **It is planned that your child will receive a pack of work on Friday 20th March.** Please keep this work to use in the event of a school closure.

I had previously communicated online that the planned parent interviews would continue on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this week. However, in light of the information provided to school from the Department of Education that states that schools should be prudent to take reasonable steps to postpone or cancel meetings which involve significant numbers of parents and also in light of yesterday's briefing from the Prime Minister and his medical advisors **I unfortunately am going to have to postpone all parent meetings based on the advice given to me and to protect our school environment.** However, if you wish to discuss your child's progress with their class teacher please telephone school and we can set up a **telephone conversation with your child's class teacher.** Mrs Rankin has specifically stated that she is happy to receive telephone calls from Primary 6 parents wishing to discuss transfer arrangements.

School will continue to close early on Wednesday 18th March, Thursday 19th March, Friday 20th March, Monday 23rd March and Tuesday 24th March at 1.55pm. This will give teachers and non-teaching staff further time to prepare the packs of work which will be sent home in the event of a school closure and further contingency planning. On Wednesday 25th March school times will resume as normal.

As an exception, I feel I need to discuss the upcoming **London school trip** with the parents of children who planned to go on the trip. This meeting will go ahead on Wednesday 18th March at 7.15pm in the Primary 6 classroom to discuss a way forward.

After school clubs will not take place up until the end of this term. This includes Judo afterschool club which has now also been cancelled. There will be no swimming lessons for the foreseeable future and unfortunately the Book Fair has also been cancelled.

If you need to enter the school building, please use the hand sanitisers provided. If possible, leave your child to the Queenora entrance and encourage your child to come into school by themselves and make their way to the assembly hall as usual.

Remember our children are watching us and learning about how to respond to uncertainty. Let's not show panic to our children but support and resilience. I thank you for your continued understanding, patience and many messages of support. I will endeavour to keep parents up to date with any developments.

Yours faithfully



Mrs K Taylor
Principal



Portstewart Primary School and Nursery Unit – contingency plan until school closes



Cleaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced cleaning routines to ensure that surfaces and 'touch points' such as door handles, light switches and telephones are regularly disinfected.
Pupil awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will maintain procedures regarding hand washing. This will include proactively encouraging children to wash their hands at several times during the day. Additional hand washing facilities available in classrooms. Classrooms are stocked with soap, paper towels, hand sanitisers and tissues. School will encourage pupils that if they need to cough or sneeze - "to catch it with a tissue, bin it, kill it by washing your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser". School will encourage pupils to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser - before coming to school, on arrival at school, before eating, after breaks and after using the toilet. School will encourage pupils to try not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with their hands. Teachers will continue to use recommended resources to teach pupils about personal hygiene and good handwashing techniques.
Symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils displaying symptoms relating to coronavirus should not come to school. Any person who develops a new, continuous cough and/or high temperature will be sent home and advised to self-isolate. If there is a confirmed case of coronavirus of a pupil or staff member we will be contacted by the local Health Agency to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken. The Public Health Agency will also be in contact with the patient directly to advise on isolation and identifying other contacts, and will be in touch with any contacts of the patient to provide them with appropriate advice. Advice on cleaning of communal areas such as classrooms and toilets will be given by the Public Health Agency. If there is a confirmed case, a risk assessment will be undertaken by school with advice from the Public Health Agency. Then a decision will be taken about the potential closure of the school. It is most likely that school will close if there is a confirmed case of coronavirus communicated to us via the Public Health Agency.
Visitors to school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitors should use hand sanitisers or wash their hands when entering the school building.
Other considerations / alterations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be an additional parent meeting on Wednesday 18th March at 7.15pm to discuss the London trip. Swimming lessons will be cancelled until further notice. Parent interviews will be postponed. However, if parents wish to discuss their child's progress with their class teacher they can telephone school and we can set up a telephone conversation. Portstewart Speech and Drama Festival and Music Festival is cancelled but may be rearranged to a further date. All afterschool clubs are cancelled up until the end of this term. Other planned school events will be assessed on a case by case basis. School mobile is now in place for parents to contact the principal in an emergency outside of the school opening hours or in the event of a school closure. Parents kept up to date with developments through the use of Facebook online platform, our school website and if needed by letter and text message. Pupils encouraged to take home personal belongings each day in the event of an unforeseen school closure. Teachers to begin to prepare resource packs for pupils in the event of a school closure. School will remain open until such time as the Government or Department of Education decide otherwise. We will follow advice given by the Public Health Agency.