



**Ballytrea
Primary School**

Principal: Mr Keith Black

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Wednesday 10th June 2020

Dear parent(s),

As we begin to approach the end of this academic school year, I am writing to parents in order to keep you up to date with the latest information and thoughts on certain aspects of school life.

I wish to begin by thanking you once again for both the support you are giving to your children at home and for the support and encouragement you have given to our school staff throughout this period of closure. We hope that in some way you have felt the same support and guidance from us.

Home-Learning

As you were informed of a number of weeks ago, home-learning packs are now only being sent home on request. We fully appreciate that each child and family are at different stages with their work and have been working at a pace that both suits the ability of the child and the circumstances at home. If your child is now ready for another home-learning pack, please get in touch with either your child's teacher or Mr Black, in order to arrange for its collection.

Throughout this period of school closure, parents have taken on an enormous burden with regards to helping their children with their learning at home. I wish to reassure you that we are still here and available for any help we can provide you and your child during this time. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if there is something we can help with, no matter how small it may seem.

Over the coming weeks you may wish to reduce the daily time you spend working at home with your child. This has been a very stressful situation for families and our children will need a complete break from the rigors of home-learning over the summer. Now might be the time to begin more practical activities with your child, if you haven't already done so, allowing them to complete tasks and develop life skills around home that they normally may not do.

Department of Education update on reopening schools

You may have heard in the media, over recent days, that the Education Minister has announced that some pupils will return to school in August (year groups have not been specified) with a planned return for all other pupils in September. You may have also heard that social distancing (2m rule) and other PPE requirements will have to be put in place by schools. This ultimately means that when all pupils return to school, it will initially be on a part-time basis. This will inevitably mean that disruption for parents will continue, however the governors and I will be working together in order to minimise this and to maximise the amount of time that your child will be in school.

At the time of writing this letter I have not received any information or timeline from the department, nor have I received any guidance as to how we go about organising a return to school for pupils. I wish to therefore apologise that we continue to leave you in limbo with regards to how school will look next year for you child, however please be reassured that as soon as we are made aware of any updates to the guidance, I will keep you fully informed.

To this end, if the school has not received any guidance from the department by the end of June, the school governors and I will proceed in releasing our own plan for the return to school of our pupils.

Classes for 2020/21

Reception/P1/P2 (1 pupil + 8 pupils + 6 pupils) = 15 - Miss R. Bleakley (5 days)

P3/P4/P5 - (7 pupils + 7 pupils + 9 pupils) = 23 - Mrs Colvin (3 days - Monday, Tuesday & Friday) Miss Dallas (2 days - Wednesday & Thursday)

P6/P7 - (9 pupils + 8 pupils) = 17 - Mr Black (3 days - Monday, Thursday & Friday) Mrs Craig (2 days - Tuesday & Wednesday)

Total pupils: 55

Reception/P1 Pupils September 2020

I wish to welcome all our new pupils and families to our school. We are delighted that you will be joining us in September, and we hope that you feel part of our Ballytrea school community.

Normally at this time of year we would be inviting our new pupils and their families into school for an induction morning, however due to the present circumstances this will not be taking place. Over the coming weeks I will be in contact directly with you to discuss aspects of our school life and hopefully we will be able to get you and your child up to school before we start back in September.

P7 Trip to Edinburgh

Further discussions with the travel companies involved have been taking place over the last number of weeks. In order for me to update parents on the current situation, I ask that the parents of the pupils who were to attend the trip, to please forward their email addresses to me as soon as possible. (This can be done via email or by texting the school mobile). I will then communicate directly to those parents any information available.

Parent/Pupil Surveys

Thank you to all the parents who took the time to complete our recent parent survey. Yesterday, a pupil survey was released, and I ask that you take the time with your children and allow them to share their views on how they have found this period of school closure. The views of both our pupils and parents will be invaluable as we continue to move forward and plan for school reopening.

Other information

- Pupil photographs purchased from Andrew at Studio82 will be available for collection from school on Monday 15th June.
- School reports will be forwarded to your home address during the week beginning Monday 22nd June 2020.
- If you think your child may be eligible for free school meals, or transport to and from school, applications can now be made via the Education Authority's website. (www.eani.org.uk)

Finally, on a personal note I wish to once again thank you for all your help and support over this extended period of school closure. Since I joined the team at Ballytrea in January, I have been extremely thankful for how the whole school community has welcomed me, and although this recent period has been a difficult time for us all, the encouragement and words of support from parents and others have been very much appreciated. I will continue to work with you for the betterment of all our children and have no doubt that we will continue to move forward as a school when we return to some form of normality.

Yours sincerely,

Keith Black (Principal)