



Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope this letter finds you and your families safe and well. When we started back in September 2019 I don't believe that any of us could have foreseen how the year would have developed. While my thoughts are with all of the children there is undoubtedly one particular group that are uppermost in our minds; our current Year 7s. All of the usual events, celebrations and transitions into high school have been snatched from them due to COVID-19. I know that with your continued help and support they will succeed in the next step of their educational journey. Everyone in school wants to wish our P7 children good luck in their next steps.

I want to secondly take this opportunity to thank all of our parents for their communication, commitment and consistent support. We have felt exceptionally supported by the whole community and know that throughout next year we will create the "new normal" together as "Team Ballysillan".

Guidance

The Department of Education (DE) has now provided schools with guidance on the "New School Day" which states that children must remain 1m apart from each other and 2m apart from the adult. Under the current guidance we could not facilitate full class returns. However, the DE has informed schools that it is set to update their guidance in August. Therefore, we do not want to plan significant changes to the school week or day as the guidance issued in August may relax the social distancing measures. Our wish is for a full class returns; therefore, we are waiting to receive updated information before we inform our parents on the changes ahead. We understand this is exceptionally frustrating and that this uncertainty is not helpful for parents.

Return Dates

The only confirmed detail is that P7 children will be returning to school on Monday 24th August. Our hope is to have P1/P2 composite- P6 starting on 27th and 28th as per usual. As a team of staff, we will be returning to school on the 17th of August and we hope to update parents as quickly as possible once we have received and processed the final guidance from the DE.

Transition

We hope that the "Good Bye for Now" videos from the teachers helped to provide the children with some form of closure. We also hope the introductory Powerpoints (P5-P7 posted on website) and the "Welcome to Your New Class" videos (Nursery-P4 posted to Seesaw app) helped to reduce some anxiety for children returning in August/September. We understand this is not ideal and believe that once the school year starts the children will settle very quickly into the "New Normal".

P1 and Nursery

We will be inviting our Nursery and P1 children to visit their teachers and classroom the week beginning the 24th August (more details to follow via seesaw app). If there are any changes to groups or times they will be updated via the Seesaw app.

SEN Children

We will also be inviting children with SEN the week beginning 24th August to become accustomed to their new classroom and teacher. Any P7 SEN children will be visiting the week beginning the 17th Aug. Individual parents will be contacted in August to inform them of a date and time.

After School Stars

Under the current guidance we are very unsure on whether we can run our “After School Stars” programme. We are aware this programme greatly supports our working parents and hope that the guidance is set to change in August. We will inform parents the week beginning 17th August.

Communication

Thank you very much for providing us with email addresses and downloading our Seesaw App. Our individual class updates and messages for parents will come through to emails or Seesaw. Nursery-P4 parents are now communicating with school via the Seesaw app and P5-P7 parents will be communicating via teacher email. Any whole school letters or updates will be posted to Facebook and the website.

2020-2021 Staffing Arrangements

Teachers

Nursery: Mrs White

P1: Miss Sullivan

P1/P2: Miss Gourlay

P2/3: Mr Kailanathan

P4: Miss Hamilton

P5: Mr McGarrigle

P6: Mrs Davidson

P7: Mrs Chambers

SENCO: Mrs Rainey

Acting Principal: Mrs Kelly

Classroom Assistants

Nursery: Mrs Sullivan, Mrs Leckey and Miss Drake

P1: Mrs Murray

P2: Miss N Whiteside

P3: Mrs King

SEN Assistants

SENCO: Mrs Rainey

P4: Miss Craig and Miss Carmichael

P6: Miss Hanna and Miss McAlister

P7: Miss R Whiteside

Final Note

We hope that everyone has a long and relaxing summer. All of our parents, children and staff deserve a restful few weeks and we hope to see everyone together in the new academic year. We understand that the lack of confirmed guidance and uncertainty is exceptionally frustrating and we hoped we would be able to provide our parents with a definitive plan this side of the summer. However, be rest assured that staff have worked very hard in June to plan for all eventualities and our most definite hope is for the return of full classes.

Many Thanks

Mrs Kelly