



ST. TERESA'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thursday 19th March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

We recognise that closing our school due to the Corona Virus Covid-19 is unprecedented and that this is an extremely challenging time for everyone. You will have many concerns, from worry and anxiety about your own health and that of your family to financial worries and many other concerns that this pandemic is causing.

One of those worries may be your child's learning and well-being if they are not at school for a significant period of time. If the school closure (as is being suggested by government) lasts well into the summer months, events such as the P7 school show, Residential, Leavers Mass, P3, P4 and P7 sacraments, P1 induction and many more term 3 events may not be possible this year. These issues will be considered one by one and alternative plans will be put into place when we are able to do so. Updates regarding these will be issued to parents as we know more throughout this closure. We are also working very hard to support your child's learning remotely using the latest technology.

Thank you to all parents who replied to our school questionnaire regarding IT and Wi-Fi Access at home. I am delighted that well over 400 parents replied to this and 98% of parents demonstrated that they have the necessary access to an appropriate device and Wi-Fi to use technology to support home learning. However, we are conscious that some parents may not have these facilities or capability to use computer technology at home. We will endeavour to provide hard copies of materials which can be collected via the school office. This however will not be as comprehensive as what we will be providing online to those families that can utilise technology to support home learning. Unfortunately, there is no way around this problem.

Please see below how we intend to support your child's learning at home during this period of closure:

Foundation Stage Children (Primary 1 and Primary 2 including P3&4 children in the Speech and Language Centre).

We want to provide structure and some routine for your child/children. Teachers have already provided a home learning pack for all children last week. A further home learning pack, has been prepared and can be collected along with your child's personal belongings from your **child's classroom on Friday morning between 9.00am and 10.00am.** Teachers will be at hand to give these resources to you as quickly as possible and ensure social distancing as best we can. If possible, please do not bring your child to collect these items.

P1 and P2 teachers along with P3 and P4 teachers in the Speech and Language Centre will communicate **daily with parents via Seesaw before 10am each day.** This daily communication will provide a breakdown of what your child should do each day from their home learning pack and provide some pastoral care for your child by motivating them and acting as a calming voice. **Please ensure that you have signed up to Seesaw and check this daily each morning after 10am. Please contact the school office if you are unable to do that independently.**

You may wish to purchase 'e books' from Oxford Reading Tree from Amazon to supplement home reading also. All Oxford Reading Tree Books can be found via Amazon.

Primary 3 Children (excluding children in SLC)

P3 teachers have also produced home learning packs for children, which were issued last week. As the children



in P3 are better able to use IT equipment and programmes, we are also supplementing that with daily learning being uploaded to 'Google Classrooms'. Google Classrooms is a virtual learning platform that teachers and children can access from home. It allows teachers to upload learning materials, videos, PowerPoint, audio books etc to each child in their class. Children can complete work and send this back to their teacher for marking and review. A help sheet on how to use Google Classrooms for parents and children will be sent along with this correspondence. Teachers again will upload new learning each day on Google Classrooms before 10am. Parents will need to help their P3 child access this and show them how to use Google Classrooms. Space and time will need to be provided for children at home to complete tasks set by their teacher. You will be informed when children should complete the work set. Teachers will also continue to communicate with parents and children via Seesaw and will be able to help you with technical problems you may face.

Primary 4-7 Children.

Primary 4-7 children will have the same instruction as P3 children so please read the paragraph above regarding Google Classrooms. However, in addition to that children in P4-7 will also have access to the following online platforms:

- **Accelerated Reading and 'My On'**

Children in P4-7 already know how to access Accelerated Reading and Maths from home. As a result of this current health crisis Accelerated Reading are going to be giving free access to an online library of reading books to parents which is called 'My On'. This will enable children to have access to a vast array of online books from home. When children have read any of these books they can complete an Accelerated Reading Quiz on that book and continue to attempt to meet their reading target set by their teacher. When Accelerated Reading have made this announcement, a further help sheet on how to use 'My On' from home will be sent to you in due course as soon as we have the information.

- **Accelerated Maths**

Teachers have set objectives for children in P4-7 to complete in Accelerated Maths. These objectives will cover all areas of maths. Teachers will provide daily guidance on how best to access and attempt to complete these objectives at home. Any new learning will include instruction and guidance from teachers on how to successfully complete these tasks.

- **Transfer Test Preparations for Primary 6 children**

I am sure that parents of Primary 6 children are particularly anxious about how their child can prepare for the transfer test in November when they are not at school. I have no doubt that this will be considered by post primary schools during this period of closure and an alternative to the normal transfer test procedure will be considered. Again, at this stage I do not know what that alternative might be and will of course inform parents regarding this important issue as soon as I know more. This will be a decision taken by post primary schools who manage the transfer test process. In the interim please continue to be guided by your child's class teacher via Google Classrooms and Seesaw regarding your child's learning as it would be in P6 irrelevant of the transfer test preparations. In addition, the P6 teachers are issuing you with details of how to use the 'Transfer Tutor' App from home. The school has registered with 'Transfer Tutor' which enables parents to access this programme and receive a discount for the cost of the facility. This programme provides online practice tests and support materials to help your child prepare for the transfer test. All of the details on how to do this will be issued by your child's class teacher via Seesaw and/or Google Classroom. In previous years, parents have found this programme of benefit. I must point out that



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this is entirely OPTIONAL and the school does not endorse this nor receive any payment for promoting Transfer Tutor. It is simply another tool that parents MAY wish to use to support home learning.

- **Learning Support**

If your child receives Numeracy support from Mr Haughey or Literacy Support from Miss Campbell a further home learning pack has been prepared for your child. This can be collected on Friday throughout the day from the school office.

We recognise that this will place a burden on parents and carers to support their child at home, sadly this is unavoidable. There is a necessity to have the appropriate devices to access some of these platforms, 98% of parents reported having these devices in place. Teachers and staff will do their best to support you remotely at home to achieve this. If you are in the small minority of parents that do not have access to Wi-Fi or an appropriate device, we will make additional efforts to provide hard copies of work which can be collected from school. Please contact the school office until Friday or email the school using the following email address from Friday onwards: info@stteresas.belfast.ni.sch.uk.

Please see attached along with this letter the following help guides for parents:

1. 'How to use Google Classroom' for parents of P3-7 children.
2. How to use Accelerated Reading and 'My On' to support home reading (will be issued in due course)
3. Google Classrooms class codes to access your child's Google Classroom.
4. Telephone and Web Support for vulnerable children or families in need.

Whilst we urge all parents and carers to take time to read this material carefully and do their very best to implement this at home, I am also conscious that this is a time for families to come together to spend time with each other, to learn life skills and do activities together like, games, baking, household chores etc, so I have instructed teachers to prepare around one hrs work for children each day to ensure that you have opportunities to do other things with your children and that the burden is not too heavy.

We hope you find this information of help and we promise to continue to support you and your child's learning during this very difficult time. Most importantly we want you to look after each other and ensure your health and wellbeing. I would also ask that you and your family recite our school prayer daily during this extended period of closure not only to gain strength from our faith but to be united as a school community despite being apart. I wish you every blessing during this period of closure and I very much look forward to welcoming children back to school as soon as possible.

School Prayer of St Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away. God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone is enough. Amen.

Yours sincerely

Mr T. Rodgers
Principal