Dear Parents,

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and healthy New Year.

There has been an alarming increase in virus infections in the past few weeks and the latest strain of the virus causes great concern. Our priority, since the school restart dated 17th August 2020, has been the safety of our children and all of our staff.  The response and support from our parents and children has kept us all going in these difficult times and will continue to do so. On the morning of 31st December 2020 the Minister for Education, Peter Weir, issued a statement altering the approach to reopening schools in early January 2021.

Primary school pupils will be taught remotely until Friday 8th January, after which they will attend school for face-to-face teaching on Monday 11th January. This is to ensure that children and families are given adequate isolation time after the New Year (10 days) before coming back into a school environment.

**Our arrangements for next week are as follows;**

**Wednesday, 6th January** is a planned **Staff Development Day (SDD)** and will be used to prepare activities for Remote Learning. **Children are not to attend**.

 We were due to open on Thursday 7th January for full teaching, however, Remote Learning will now be provided for 2 days for P1-7 until all pupils return on Monday 11th January. **Remote learning will be for two days only unless the situation changes.**

**Nursery Class**

Our Nursery class will open as usual as per guidance on 7th and 8th January.

**FSM Arrangements**

We have been informed by the EA that:

1 direct payment for all FSM pupils week beginning 4th Jan; to be paid retrospectively week beginning 11th Jan.

Where a FSM child is present a school meal can still be provided.

**Key workers and vulnerable children provision Thursday 7th and Friday 8th January**

Schools have been advised to accommodate vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the start of term. Therefore ,if your child falls into either category they can return to school on Thursday 7th January and Friday 8th January until 2pm, as normal.

Due to the rapid increase of the virus, I wish to emphasise again the importance of non-contact and strict social distancing between adults and children on the school premises during arrival and pick-up times. **Face masks should be worn at these times.**

The Department has stated children who fall into these categories will be in the school building for ‘supervised learning’. This is not ‘face -to -face teaching,’ rather supervised support in the school building, following the same activities as the children who are at home as much as possible.

Please fill in keyworker application form on the school website and **forward to your child’s teacher via Gmail by Tuesday,5th January** **@ 4pm** if your child falls into this category. Please click on the link below to fill out application form. <https://www.modelps.co.uk/news/modelpskeyworkerapplication/>

**Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (as per guidance, 31 December 2020)**

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| * Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector; * Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response; |
| * Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles; * Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response; * Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal; * Financial Services. This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure); * Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.); * Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020; * Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and |
| * Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response. |

**Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (as per guidance, 31 December 2020)**

The definition of Vulnerable Children as set out in the cross-departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan 2020 is: (https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-cross- departmental-covid-19-vulnerable-children-and-young-peoples-plan)

* A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
* A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
* A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
* A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
* A child who is ‘on-the-edge’ of receiving support from children’s social services.
* A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
* A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure dur to Covid-19 related circumstances.
* A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
* A child who has been placed for adoption.
* Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.

**If your child falls into the vulnerable category please inform your child’s teacher by Gmail by 4pm on Tuesday,5th January if he/she will be returning to school on Thursday, 7th January .**

**AQE and GL Tests**

There are currently no changes to the following planned tests.

AQE 1 Saturday 9th January

AQE 2 Saturday 16th January

AQE 3 Saturday 23rd January

GL Assessment Saturday 30th January.

If there are any further changes, I will be in touch.

Stay safe

M Ramsey