



Dunclug Primary School
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Dear Parent/Carer

I would like to take this opportunity to update you regarding the current situation concerning the Covid-19 virus. I am sure that you are aware of the Department of Education's decision that schools should remain open at this time. It is important to state that the decision to close a school in such circumstances rests with the Department of Education and not with the school itself. This is an unprecedented situation and we do understand the worries you may have. We want to reassure you that we are here for all who wish to attend school until we are told to close. We also respect your family's right to choose to self-isolate and encourage you to make the best decision for your family's situation. We fully respect and support the decisions that some families have taken, in keeping their children at home, to protect their child and vulnerable relatives from becoming ill.

The Minister for Education has stated that it is a matter of 'when' schools close, not 'if'. As a school we are continually monitoring this situation and will keep you informed. When a school closure is announced we will inform parents via our school website, social media and text message. We have been preparing home learning resources for your children which will include online learning materials and learning packs. These will be distributed when school closures are confirmed. We also plan to have further guidance available for each class within the new '*Home Learning*' section of our school website. Please be assured that whenever school returns we will focus on the teaching of literacy and numeracy, to avoid any gaps in your child's learning in these crucial areas.

In the meantime, we are continuing to follow the advice given by the Department of Education and the Public Health Agency. Schools are advised to continue with their normal routines and activities as much as practically possible. However, there have been some changes to daily school life such as an increase in hand washing, hygiene and cleaning within the school. **Activities such as after school clubs, class trips, swimming classes, assembly speakers and visitors to school from outside agencies have all been suspended.**

What can parents do to help?

- Take the time to talk with your children and explain the situation in a way they will understand. This is the approach we have taken in recent weeks in school. We do not wish to alarm or worry them.

- Encourage the regular washing of hands at home and in school.
- Provide your child with tissues if possible and explain the correct way to use them both in school and outside. The "Catch It, Bin It, Kill It" approach is a useful way of doing this.
- Continue to follow normal procedures for reporting illness to the school.
- Make sure we have an up to date mobile number so that we can communicate with you effectively. If your contact details change, please email your new number to the school email address: info@dunclugps.ballymena.ni.sch.uk
- Make sure you check the school website regularly and in addition, have verified your mobile number for private messaging via the app.
- If your child or any member of your household is showing symptoms of the virus you should self-isolate at home for 14 days. These symptoms include a new cough and/or a temperature or fever. If you are not sure you should call the helpline on 111 or your GP.

Our advice in relation to absence from school is for all parents to err on the side of caution and keep children at home for the recommended 14 day period if they show any symptoms. Please also inform the school if you are self-isolating.

Above all, as I stated online earlier in the week, let us work together and help each other through this time of uncertainty. Remember, our kids are watching us and learning about how to respond. Dunclug Primary School is very much a school 'in the community for the community' and now is our time to show this. We can all work together and help those who may be unable to get out of the house for basic needs. As you know we work very closely with our local churches and businesses. We will continue to work together to support our community during the eventual school closures. If you, or an elderly neighbour or relative need help, please let us know at any stage.

We will communicate further updates via our school website and Facebook page. We are also here to answer any queries or concerns, on 028 2565 2327 or via email: info@dunclugps.ballymena.ni.sch.uk

Best wishes from all of the team at Dunclug Primary School.

Yours faithfully



Mr A Beacom

Principal