**St Patrick’s Primary School**

13 Castlewellan Road, Ballymaghery, Hilltown, BT34 5UY

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**Progress Through Partnership**

**20th October 2021**

Dear Parents,

**Autumn Sponsored Walk**

Sincere thanks to you for supporting your children in the ‘Autumn Sponsored Walk’ fundraiser. Congratulations children for your enormous effort! A fantastic £4914 was raised to fund much needed play-time equipment and class resources. I am a firm believer that children thrive through the experiences we provide for them in life and this money will most definitely add to enhancing your child’s experience in St Patrick’s Primary School!

Thanks also to the school staff for organising and making the sponsored walk a thoroughly enjoyable experience with the children gaining a flavour of their locality, walking up the lane beside the school, and to the GAA grounds as part of the route. The highest fundraisers in each class will be announced at assembly on Friday morning.

**Hallowe’en Dress Up Day for Ella**

Ella is one of our Primary 5 pupils, who sadly is battling cancer. We want Ella to know that we are all thinking of her and missing her and want her back to school as soon as possible.

To support Ella and her family, we are having a Halloween Dress Up Day fundraiser on Tuesday 26th October. We will be going for a ‘Wizards and Witches Walk’ through the village (weather permitting) to share our fun with the local community.

All donations will be gratefully received and sent to Ella’s Family. Please encourage the children to wear their Halloween costume and send any donations to school on Tuesday. Our cook is making a Special ‘All in Bag’ Dinner, so please book on Monday if your child would like to enjoy a spooky Halloween dinner.

**Covid-19**

Covid-19 is still very much with us and as winter approaches we must make sure we are all doing what we can to reduce the spread of it. Social distancing is the most effective preventative measure. Please ensure you **keep two metres distance from each other and staff lines at pick up times and when talking to staff.**

Face coverings **MUST** be worn on school property at all times and you will be refused entry to school unless you have proof of medical exemption.

We will continue to review mitigations on a monthly basis or as needed and keep you informed.

**School Website and app**

Learning and Teaching experiences have been rich and varied with lots of examples being posted on the school website and app. Please make sure you have the most up-to-date version and your phone number is your most recent one.

**Wellbeing**

Every effort is being made to assist in developing your children’s experience of learning with a focus on wellbeing every morning from 8.40am to 9am so it is vital your child arrives as punctually as possible. The buzzer gate opens at 8.40am and will be closed at 9am sharp after the Halloween midterm break.

**Attendance**

Please ensure your child attends school when they are well enough to do so. Missing school means your child is missing out and after the last year and a half it is extremely important that your child does not miss school unless they are ill or have an exceptional reason.

All absences must be reported on the **first day** and each day thereafter either to the general office or by email to info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk . When a child returns to school they should have a written note explaining reason for absence. The Education Welfare officer will be making contact with parents of children whose monthly attendance is below 85% where a valid reason has not been given to school.

**Parent Teacher Meetings**

Parent teacher meetings will take place on Monday 22nd November from 9am – 4.00pm. (School Development Day – school will be closed for pupils. Arrangements are as follows:

* These will be face-to-face meetings, with strict social distancing.
* Only one parent should attend the meeting.
* Face coverings must be worn on school premises.
* Strictly no children are allowed to attend the parent/teacher meetings.
* All meetings will take place in the children’s respective classrooms.
* Arrive no earlier than 5 minutes before your appointment.

Ten minute appointments will be scheduled, with appointments for siblings scheduled consecutively where possible. If these dates do not suit, a telephone appointment with the teacher may be arranged at a mutually agreeable time at a later date.

Parent/teacher meetings for children who have an Individual Education Plan have already taken place and therefore another meeting will not be necessary until early/mid-December.

**Halloween Midterm Break**

Our first half term finishes for pupils on Tuesday 26th October. There will be no school for children from Wednesday 27th October to Monday 1st November. School will reopen on 2nd November 2021.

**Coats**

All pupils should bring a coat every day as we aim to have outdoor learning as much as possible and classes are actively participating in ‘The Daily Mile’ programme.

**Car park**

The parish have very kindly permitted us to use the church car park. I urge you to display extreme caution and courtesy when moving through the car park. Please **DO NOT** park on the footpath along the Castlewellan Road or at the entrance to the Parochial House. You are endangering pedestrians lives when you do this.

**Reminders**

**Friday Home-time**

Pupils in P.1, P.2 and P.3 plus older siblings leave at 1.30pm preferably with an adult.

Pupils in P.4 and P.5 plus their older siblings leave at 1.40pm.

Pupils in P.6 and P.7 and all bus pupils in P.4 – P.7 leave at 1.50pm.

**P.1 pupils** are now well settled and know their way into their classroom so they can be left at the church carpark gate **or** at the buzzer gate each morning from now on. Staff are on duty at both gates to welcome everyone each morning.

Adults **should not** enter the school grounds when leaving children to school.

Dinner money should be sent to school in a clearly labelled envelope on the first day of each week. The envelope must have the child’s name, class, days on which dinner is being taken and the exact amount of money written on the front of the envelope.

Full information regarding the digital aspect of home and school learning was sent to parents earlier in the term. **It is essential that all families get logged on now for the on-line aspect of learning**. This is vitally important if your child is identified as close contact or class bubble has to be sent home.

Pupils must be able to access Seesaw, IXL, Lexia (for some pupils) and Accelerated Reading (P.5 – P.7).

**SEESAW** is a significantly important platform which teachers use to communicate class information and, in some cases, individual information about children, with parents. Please make sure you have access to it.

As always if you have any queries or concerns, please contact the school by phoning the office on 028 40630061 or emailing info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you wonderful Halloween midterm break and thank you for your continued help and support. It is very much appreciated.

Kind regards

G Smith