



St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, Dipton

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Headteacher: Mrs J Burgess

We follow in Christ's footsteps

Friday 3rd September 2021

Dear Parents/Carers and Pupils



I hope you have all had a lovely holiday and that you are all feeling refreshed and ready to go. It is wonderful to see all our pupils and staff back (smiling) – ensuring St. Patrick's is the vibrant and busy school we know so well.

We are sure the start to the new term has been particularly exciting, or maybe a little nerve-racking, for our newest pupils (and their parents) starting Reception. We have been delighted with the way our youngest pupils have settled so far and we are confident all new children and their families will quickly get to grips with school routines. Our community spirit is one of our greatest assets and, we are certain, all newcomers in the classroom and 'on the yard' will be warmly welcomed and well looked after.

Welcome to new members of staff

We are delighted to welcome two new members of staff. Miss Brown will be teaching in Y3, alongside Miss Clish and Mrs McGrady, when Mrs Bevan starts her maternity leave, and Miss Gregerson has joined our team of lunchtime supervisors. It's great to have them both onboard.

Protocols in school

As we start our new term, we have updated our risk assessment in school. You are aware that the class bubble system has now been relaxed and the requirements around self-isolation have changed. NHS Test and Trace will have the responsibility of contacting any close contact of positive COVID-19 cases. Individual schools also have an 'Outbreak Management Plan' should multiple cases occur. Within school, our pupils will be able to mix more freely at playtimes and lunchtimes although we will retain the use of a one-way system, different entrance/exit points and use of hand sanitisers to limit unnecessary congestion and maintain good levels of hand hygiene. Good ventilation around school will also be maintained. As is the case with any aspect of school life, we keep all our practices under constant review.

Please remain vigilant regarding any potential symptoms amongst family members. Whilst the advice around self-isolation has changed, if positive cases in the family are evident PCR tests are still recommended for close contacts. This gives everyone piece of mind and helps limit the spread of coronavirus throughout the wider community.

School uniform

Thank you! Pupils look wonderful in their school uniform and we would like to take this opportunity to let you know how much we appreciate your on-going support and co-operation in maintaining such high standards. We hope to work together to ensure this continues. It would be very helpful if all items of clothing could be

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labelled. Now our porches are in full use again, we hope to avoid a build-up of lost property.

A friendly reminder that particular attention should be paid to style of haircut. Hair should be a uniform length and not excessively shaved (no shorter than grade 3). Hair gel is not permitted in school. Large bows or other hair decoration is not permitted. Once hair length reaches a point when it can be tied back, we ask that bobbles or hairclips are discrete and in keeping with school colours.

I recognise the school bag has been a new addition to the uniform requirements this year. Thank you to those who have made this change. I would like to remind you all regarding the reasons behind this:

- We want every aspect of resources required for school (including all parts of the usual uniform/P.E. uniform + school bag) to be affordable for all pupils. Some bags chosen by pupils can be expensive and we want to avoid any element of competition/pressure for parents and pupils.
- We have very limited storage for bags in our porch area. We are therefore trying to restrict the size of the bags pupils bring to school. This means that the porch area remains tidier and more accessible for all pupils and we reduce the incidents of coats/bags on the floor. This can be both damaging to pupils' property and distressing for pupils if it becomes a regular occurrence.
- Now we are able to move away from some of the restrictions evident during the pandemic, packed lunch boxes (which may be brought in addition to the school bag) will be stored in dining area/rather than classrooms – again for easy access.

I understand some parents had already purchased their child's school bag, this year, before being alerted to this change and some of you may have felt your child's existing bag could be reused. I ask, however, for the reasons mentioned above, that any future purchases will be in-keeping with this new approach. Pupils then also see the equality of this approach for themselves.

Earrings

For health and safety reasons, earrings are not permitted in school. I realise some children will have had ears pierced over the summer holiday but it is now 7 weeks since term ended last academic year and that should have provided sufficient time for earrings to now be removed. We have allowed the covering of earrings this week but, from Monday, earrings will need to be taken out during the school day.

School Photographer visit – Friday 10th September

The photographer will be in school for individual and in-school siblings photos only. We are not able to invite pupils/family members into school who are not currently attending our school. All children to wear school uniform even if it is their designated P.E. day.

School diary of events/after school clubs

This term, we gradually intend to reinstate after school clubs, assemblies and a range of events throughout the term, particularly leading up to Christmas. We will let you know once these have been finalised. We will all have to be mindful, however, that COVID-19 is still within our communities and things may have to change, possibly with short notice.

Volunteering in school

During the last year 18 months or so, we have not been able to draw on volunteers in school. We all know this decision was necessary but, as we tentatively move forward and gradually get to grips with a 'new' normal, we know there are many people out there with a range of talents and skills we could use to excellent effect.

If you feel you could regularly offer us some time, please send us an email sharing your details, what activities you feel you could help with and the times you are available. We will see if your skills/experience can be matched up with a need in school and how this can be organised safely.

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All volunteers will need to complete a police check through the Disclosure and Barring Service and will have to participate in an induction process which covers other safeguarding information in advance of working in school. This check is free for school volunteers and we will help you with the process. All school staff currently engage in twice weekly lateral flow tests and we would ask all volunteers to commit to this.

School questionnaire

As we start the new academic year, we ask that you complete a very short questionnaire which will help us focus on what you feel is working well in school and what could be enhanced. Please follow the link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/XvJ8JgtS31>

The closing date is Friday 10th September.

Open day for Reception 2022

Whilst we are in the midst of welcoming our newest pupils, we are also thinking ahead to next year. As we are now able to operate more openly, whilst still following all health and safety guidelines, we have organised 2 'open-day' sessions for parents of pupils starting school in Reception 2022. The informal sessions will be held on **Monday 20th September 10.00 – 11.00** and **Wednesday 22nd September 1.30 – 2.30pm**. During the sessions, you will have the opportunity to meet the class teachers, view our wonderful reception class and outdoor area and have a tour of the school. You will also have the opportunity to meet some of our Y6 pupils who will tell you about their experiences of St. Patrick's. Please spread the word and contact school to let us know if you wish to attend. If these dates are not convenient, please ring the school office and we will see if we are able to accommodate another time. We enjoy the chance to let people see our school.

Good luck to Year 7

Last, but certainly not least, we wish all the Year 7 pupils well as they embark on their next adventure. They have been a credit to St Patrick's and we know they will all shine at St. Bede's!

We have all been through many challenges of late, but we have so much to look forward to. I know I speak on behalf of all members of staff when I say we are all very excited to get stuck in and help our children learn and progress. If you have any queries/concerns regarding any information in this letter, or any issues generally, please phone the school office or email: diptonstpatricks@durhamlearning.net

Please remember it is always better to deal with us to have queries/concerns answered, rather than rely on information which may filter through WhatsApp groups etc. The school office can always provide the most accurate information. Speaking to a member of the school office team should always be the first point of contact rather than emailing teachers directly via individual emails or Purple Mash.

Main points of the letter:

- Uniform requirements
- New risk assessment parent copy available if required
- School Photographer visit **Friday 10th September**
- School questionnaire - closing date is **Friday 10th September**
- Reception open day for parents of pupils starting September 2022
Monday 20th September 10.00 – 11.00 and **Wednesday 22nd September 1.30 – 2.30pm**

Thanks again, as always, for your great level of support. It is much appreciated.

Mrs Burgess
Headteacher

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