

BALLYORAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Principal | Mr Richard Woolsey, BEd (Hons), PQH



6th January 2022

Dear Parent/Guardian

Start of Term Letter from the Principal

Happy New Year

On behalf of all of the staff, I would like to wish you a happy and peaceful new year, I hope that you and your families had a safe and relaxing Christmas break and that it was not disrupted too much by Covid-19. We are delighted to welcome our pupils back to school and I want to reassure you that my number one priority remains the safety of pupils and staff, followed by keeping school open for face to face learning and teaching.

Covid-19 Update

You will be well aware that transmission of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 is a major challenge for all of society, in order to help us safeguard the school community and keep school open, I would ask you to help us by strictly adhering to the following:

1. If your child is unwell in any way please keep them at home until they are better. Children should not be in school if they are not well enough to be here, this is not fair on the child and it puts the health of other pupils and staff at risk. I would remind parents that if a child has vomiting or diarrhoea, they should be kept at home and not return to school for 48 hours after their last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea. Please see more detailed guidance on how long you need keep pupils at home, when they are sick at:
<https://tinyurl.com/yrypvhj>
<https://tinyurl.com/2ftth5j5>
2. If your child is displaying any Covid-19 symptoms, please keep them at home and follow the PHA testing guidance. A reminder that this has recently changed and if you get a positive LFD test, you do not need to have this confirmed by a PCR test.
3. If your child receives a positive LFD or PCR test result please inform the school immediately and ensure you follow the PHA guidance in terms of self-isolation which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yhumh8zk> A reminder that the self isolation period can be reduced from 10 days to 7 days if the child is well and they get two negative LFDs in a row from days 6 and 7 onwards.
4. If anyone in your household tests positive for Covid-19 using an LFD or PCR test, please do not send other pupils in the household to school. This is to protect our school community as much as possible as we have seen in many cases that when one person gets Covid-19 in a household the other children eventually get it as well.
5. Please encourage your children to adhere to the mitigations of good hand hygiene, good respiratory hygiene, staying in their bubbles, social distancing and not sharing things.
6. Please ensure that you wear a face covering when coming into the school grounds and keep a social distance from other parents.

School continues to have very robust mitigations in place including regular handwashing, class bubbles and good ventilation. All classes now have CO2 monitors in them which help manage the ventilation. We will also continue to inform parents when a child tests positive in your child's class, by text using the PHA alert letter.

While it is our desire to keep children learning in school, the challenge in doing this is having enough staff in school in order to do this safely. At the time of writing this letter, 15% of my staff are absent because they have Covid-19 and it is virtually impossible to get substitute staff to cover absences. Asking a class to remain at home and move to remote learning or indeed having to close the whole school will be a last resort but unfortunately I cannot guarantee that this will not happen. While we hope for the best we have robust contingency plans in place should a move to remote learning be necessary. You can play your part in helping school remain open by adhering to the mitigations above.

Office

The office will be covered by Mrs Smyth and Mrs Stewart for the remainder of Mrs Sloan's Maternity Leave. The new office hours will be 8.30am until 3pm, and the office will not be closed over lunchtime.

Menu

The menu for this term has already been sent out on the school app and is available at <https://tinyurl.com/mr24w2a8>

School App

A reminder that the School App is now our main method of communication with parents, if you have not yet downloaded the app please do so by following the instructions at <https://tinyurl.com/ycknwaay> Please contact the school if you are having any difficulty with this. Please also ensure that you have your phone set to show notifications from the School App in your phone settings. If you do not do this, you will not be alerted to new messages and may miss important information.

It is my hope that we have turned a corner in relation to the pandemic and that by the Spring things will have improved, we all look forward to better days ahead and a return to normality. However, we are not there yet so we must not become complacent. Finally, I would like to again thank you for your continued co-operation, patience and support as we endeavour to keep all of our school community safe.

Yours faithfully

Richard Woolsey
Principal