



15<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

I hope that you and your family are well at this time. As a school we are very appreciative of the work you have undertaken with your children during this period of closure. It would appear that a degree of normality is returning to society and we hope that this continues in the weeks ahead. This letter aims to update you on the current situation as well as looking forward to the future.

### **Online Parent Survey**

Thank you to everyone who completed our Online Parent Survey which closed last Thursday, just over 50% of parents completed this and it has provided us with very useful information as we plan for the future. The vast majority of parents who completed the survey stated that they were happy with the paper packs that were provided during closure and that the amount of work was just about right. Moving forward, however, a majority of parents stated that they would like to see a mix of paper packs and online learning and most parents have the devices and internet access to support this, although a majority of parents do not have access to a printer. While the majority of parents, who responded, were happy with the nature and amount of general communication from school through the website, app and text, three quarters stated that they would have liked more direct interaction with teachers during closure and it is clear from the many comments that this was an area of disappointment for many parents. With hindsight, during school closure there are things which we could have done differently and could have done better and I am sorry that in some areas, we have not met your expectations. We have, however, listened carefully to your feedback and are responding to this, teachers are currently training to use a new online learning platform called 'Google Classroom' which we will be using to spearhead our online home learning in Years 1 - 7 when school reopens. This will allow teachers and pupils to interact and communicate directly in the new 'blended learning' approach. Nursery will continue to use See Saw.

### **Annual Reports/Transition Forms**

Annual Reports and Nursery Transition Forms will be posted to parents on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June. Given that school is currently closed we do not require a signed copy to be returned this year.

### **Prize Day**

Friday would have been our annual Prize Day. In response to parental feedback we have decided that the prizes will still be awarded and announced on an End of Year News Sheet. The awards will be given out to pupils when school reopens.

### **Year 7 Leavers**

It is very sad that our Year 7 pupils have had their last year at primary school cut so cruelly short and that they have missed out on so many important events. We would have liked to have been able to bring them back to school before the end of June for an event but the government regulations in place prevent us from doing this and the Education Authority have reminded us that no Leavers events are to take place in schools. We are however arranging an Online Leavers Zoom Ceremony for next week at which we will be announcing our Year 7 Prize Winners. I will be in touch directly with Year 7 parents about this in due course. If it is

possible to bring our Year 7s back in the Autumn, we will. On behalf of the entire school community I would like to thank our Year 7 pupils for everything that they have given to Ballyoran Primary School over these past 7 or 8 years and wish them every blessing as they move on to the next chapter in their educational journey. We are delighted that all of our pupils were successful in getting a place in their first preference post primary school.

### **Nursery and Year 1 Induction**

I appreciate that this is an anxious time for parents whose pupils are starting Nursery or moving into Year 1. We are still unsure how our Induction for Nursery and Year 1 pupils is going to look and we await guidance on this. It looks very likely that there will be no meetings at this stage. Induction documentation will be posted to you and we would ask you to read this carefully and complete the paperwork and return it to school. This will give you, your child's teacher's name etc and will allow you to begin talking about starting Nursery and Year 1. We are however not able to confirm start dates or settling in patterns at present but as soon as we have further information on this we will communicate it to you.

### **Devices**

Those parents who emailed the school requesting the loan of a device to assist with Home Learning will receive this for the start of the new school year.

### **Reopening of Schools**

Unfortunately, the Department of Education has not yet issued definitive guidance to schools on reopening. They have told us that we will receive this guidance on 26<sup>th</sup> June, which you will appreciate is very late. You may have heard a range of different ideas and opinions recently through the media, it is important to state that these are nothing more than speculation and until we get the final guidance from DE we are unable to say what the reopening of schools is going to look like. The Education Minister has informally stated that he would like schools to reopen on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August for Year 7 pupils but this has not been officially announced yet by DE.

The following points are the limited concrete information that has been shared by DE with school leaders regarding the reopening of schools:

- Schools will reopen for the Autumn Term
- There will be a phased return to schools for pupils involving 'blending learning' meaning pupils will be learning in school for part of the time and learning at home for part of the time using online platforms
- Safety measures will be in operation in schools eg social distancing

Rest assured that when I have more information on reopening, I will share this with you as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.

Take care and stay safe.

Yours faithfully

Richard Woolsey  
Principal