

OUR LADY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Principal: Mr Tomás Mc Kee



28th May, 2020

Reference: Home Schooling (3)

Dear Parents/Guardians

I write to you regarding the recent confirmation from the Minister of Education that schools will not reopen this school year.

First of all, I hope you are all keeping well. This has been a very difficult time for everyone and I am sure you are looking forward to a return to some level of normality in the next few months. The longer we continue to deal with COVID-19 the harder it can be to maintain a routine and structure for our children. I'm sure like us all, they are looking forward to returning to school and seeing their friends and classmates again. However, it is looking like school could be a very different place at the beginning of next year. The Department of Education has not published guidance to schools yet, however if we look at what is happening in other European countries it is possible that there could be a mixture of school and home learning in the future. I hope to give you more information about next year at the end of June when you receive your child's school report if additional guidance has been published by the Department of Education. I can assure you that we will do all that we can to open our school to as many pupils as possible and provide a positive educational experience for all of the children once they return next year.

I hope the children are all progressing well with their work packs and I would like to remind you that you can contact your child's teacher via email if you have any queries or concerns. All of the teachers are monitoring the children on Mathletics and I would encourage you to ensure that they continue to complete all assigned activities. Teachers will continue to set tasks for pupils up until 5th June. The children can then proceed to complete live Mathletics activities over the summer period. I feel it would be beneficial for all pupils to complete some additional work over the summer period such as: reading, revising number facts and completing any outstanding work from their work packs. Primary 6 children who received a transfer pack after Easter will also receive a summer pack with their school report. I realise that there has been some debate regarding transfer and I must say that I fully support Archbishop Eamon Martin in his request for the Transfer Test to be suspended this year but while no decision has been made we will continue to support our children who may sit the test in December.

School has been opened from Tuesday 28th April for a small group of children of Key Workers. We will continue to provide 'Supervised Learning' for Key Worker children who have no other form of child care until the end of June. Please contact the school via email if you are returning to work and require support. I would like to thank all of the staff who have volunteered to assist with 'Supervised Learning'. I would also like to thank all staff members who have supported children with their learning through this difficult time by assigning Mathletics tasks, interacting with children on 'See-Saw' (Mrs Hegarty & Mrs Dillon) and being available to support children and parents via email. I would also like to thank Mrs Mc Cloy for all the work she has done on our school website with regularly posting: information, activities for the children and our brilliant Home Schooling photo galleries. Thanks to all parents who have sent in photographs. Our next gallery will go live this evening.

I would also like to acknowledge the excellent work of the local community in keeping everyone's spirits raised through this difficult time. The 'clap for front line workers' has been taken to a whole new level with special events organised and a brilliant banner on display at the entrance to the GAA field. Well done to everyone involved in organising these events and to all who are able to support and attend them as well.

During the month of June we will be promoting a 'Virtual Sports Day', Mr Mc Cusker and Mr Mc Cann have put together a variety of activities that the children can complete at home and email their times/scores to their teachers and we would also encourage you to send in the children's virtual sports day photos to Mrs Mc Cloy (amccloy737@c2kni.net). A special gallery will be posted on our website in June.

Pupil Reports will be ready for collection on Friday 19th June. We will schedule collection of the reports similar to the collection of the learning packs with reports being collected from the class of the eldest child in the family. We will notify you in June regarding these arrangements. Reading books must be returned and outstanding monies can be paid when you collect your child(ren)'s report(s) although if you wish to wait until next September that is fine as long as you notify the school office. The school owes some parents money for: dinners, afterschool activities, swimming and P5 trip. All P7 children with no younger siblings in the school will receive a cheque for outstanding amounts. We will issue an 'Our Lady's PS Cash Voucher' to all other families which can be used next year towards dinner, trip costs etc. or we will refund parents for the amount in September. We wouldn't be able to write cheques to every family and we don't keep cash in school so we felt this was the best method to record money owed by the school. Teachers will include snack money which was pre-paid by some families for April, May and June with your child's report.

I would like to give a very special mention to our Primary 7 children who were due to be confirmed on Sunday. I had a Microsoft Teams meeting with most of the Primary 7 children on Tuesday and it was great to chat and see them. They were all in good form and are generally progressing well with their work. The overriding wish from the boys and girls was to see their friends again. Hopefully, we will soon be able to organise a special gathering for the children. They will be in our thoughts and prayers over the weekend. There is a special Confirmation Mass on Sunday @11am in St. Patrick's Cathedral that is available for everyone to watch on the Cathedral webcam.

We are very appreciative of your continued support over the past few months and would like to thank you. We would request that parents/guardians do not purchase or organise gifts for staff at the end of the school year. We would stress this without reservation. Staff feel parents/guardians have enough pressures at the moment and instead we would ask you to please treat yourself and your family to something nice for all your hard work whilst 'Home Schooling'.

Finally, I would also like to acknowledge the role that our school Board of Governors have played in assisting the staff in the management of the school during this period. If I could just mention our Chairperson, Mr Kevin Curran who throughout his recent illness has continued to provide amazing support to me with all school related matters. He has been invaluable to me as Principal and I wish to thank him. On behalf of the whole school community, I wish Kevin and his family our best wishes for the future.

Please continue to email your Home Schooling photographs to Mrs Mc Cloy and contact me if you have any queries, suggestions or concerns: tmckee362@c2kni.net. School photograph orders can be left into school next week. We will arrange collection of orders and delivery of photographs with Lafayette Photography. Thank you.

Take care and all the best,

Tomás Mc Kee

Tomás Mc Kee
Principal