**St Brigid’s PS**

**Castle Street**

**Ballymoney**

**BT53 6JXso**

**Principal: Mr Kieran O’Neill**

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**Tel: 028 2766 2664**

**Tuesday, 04 January 2022**

**Dear Parents/Guardians**

I hope that, even with all the restrictions you have all managed to have had a lovely Christmas and New Year break. We look forward to welcoming the children back to school on Thursday 6 January 2022.

Unfortunately, the issues with regards to COVID-19 show no sign of easing with the onset of the Omicron variant. The onset of this new strain of the virus has caused concern, in particular with the speed at which it is now spreading. The cases daily in our area and in Northern Ireland generally are still concerning to us all. As we begin this new term, with Covid cases increasing sharply, there is a concern about the pressure that it will place on public services, including our school.

The school has to plan ahead and put in place contingency arrangements to prepare for a potential increase in Covid cases amongst pupils and staff.  During term 1 the school came under pressure in terms of staffing levels and the lack of cover available in the temporary teaching and non-teaching system. Whilst we managed well in keeping everything covered, we are concerned about the impact this new variant may have on the school.

Planning needs to be in place to prepare for possible staff absences in Term 2 and this will impact on teaching staff, classroom assistants (including those employed to look after children with medical conditions), support staff, cleaning staff and all other staff linked to the running of the school. With that in mind we have plans in place to move to remote learning at short notice if there are significant staff absences that may impact on the smooth running of the school. We will always endeavour to get cover in place and keep the school open for all the children as normal.

**Pupils Testing Positive or Having to Self-Isolate**

When a child tests positive please forward the positive result to:

info@stbrigidsps.ballymoney.ni.sch.uk or by contacting the school on 028 27662664.

Please also state the day you have been advised that your child can return to school. Anyone who is unwell and absent with Covid does not need to continue with learning.

For those self-isolating a work pack can be collected from the school (with reading books).  Where a family is self-isolating, arrangements can be made for the pack to be delivered to your home.

Pupils will be able to continue to use their online learning platforms:  Seesaw (Y1-4, CA & CB), Microsoft Teams (Y5-7)

**Staff Testing Positive or having to Self-Isolate**

If a substitute teacher cannot be employed, then procedures will be put in place for classes to learn from home.  You should be prepared for this happening at very short notice.  Where we can, we will try to inform you the day before.  However, this may not always be possible.  We will inform you via the school’s text service, as this is the quickest form of communication.  The following procedures will be implemented:

* A work pack can be collected from school.
* Online learning will be available if the teacher is able to continue with it.
* Should the teacher become unwell then online learning will cease.
* Pupils will have their Learning at Home Packs.
* We will let you know, via text message, the date on which the class can return to school.

**Children who are unwell**

We want schools to remain open and operate as close to normal as possible.  Everyone can play their part:

* Do not send children to school if they are feeling unwell.
* Parents may be contacted to collect their child if they are unwell in school.
* Do not send a child to school if they are showing symptoms of Covid-19:
	+ - * + A new continuous cough and/or
				+ A high temperature and/or
				+ A loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia)
* If a child tests positive then consider if their brothers and sisters, who also attend this school, should take a PCR test or isolate as well.
* If you have access to Lateral Flow tests, please consider checking the children regularly during the school week and in particular if they are feeling unwell.

**Temporary Register of Employment**

If you are available, at this time, to temporarily fill-in for any Covid related absences then please contact the school and fill in form via clicking on the link below: <https://forms.office.com/r/MRefcEx8wc>

This is for teaching staff, classroom assistants, support staff, cleaning staff and lunchtime supervisors. Cleaning staff is a key role to ensure that the school remains open.

All other procedures with regards to COVID-19 that were in place prior to the Christmas break remain in place. It is important to remember that social distancing and wearing of a face covering is requested when entering the school grounds at any time.

Thank you for your co-operation in everything so far. Take care and keep safe.

Mr O’Neill

Principal