

**St Mary’s Primary School**

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Dear Parent,

I hope you are all keeping safe and healthy. We are all working very hard at school to ensure that we all keep safe from Covid-19 and the children must be congratulated on how well they wash and sanitise their hands regularly throughout the day and how well they keep to their own bubbles as much as possible. I want to thank you parents also for your continual support and co-operation during these difficult times. The co-operation of the whole school community which includes pupils, parents, staff and Board of Governors all working together has enabled the transition from our ‘old normal school day’ to ‘our new normal day’ appear seamless. However, the number of people testing positive throughout Ireland is increasing alarmingly and while we pray and adhere to all of the guidelines we feel we need to share a ‘School Closure Contingency Plan’ with you all. I must stress that to date we have had **no** indication that schools will close for a length of time to facilitate a ‘circuit break’ which I am sure you have heard about on the news. Our contingency plan is for the event of a forced closure of any kind.

In the event of a school closure we intend offering a ‘blended learning approach’ to teaching. This will involve face to face teaching using Teams, paper based tasks and the online platforms Studyladder, Mathletics and Reading Eggs.

**Teams**

We have been using Teams for a few weeks both in school and at home. Your child’s teacher will use Teams to communicate what homework needs to be completed. In addition homework activities can be set on Teams such as watching educational videos to consolidate what your child is learning in school or to complete an online worksheet. In the event of a school closure we also intend using Teams for face to face teaching and interaction with the class. We feel that such interaction is invaluable as it helps the children feel less isolated if they can actually see their teacher and friends in a virtual classroom. In order to access this type of interaction your child will be sent a link via their school email address asking them to join a meeting. Please make sure you check your child’s Team’s notifications. If you are having any problems with this please contact the school. You will receive more guidance in the coming days on how to use Teams.

**Studyladder**

The children are all confident using Studyladder at this stage and we intend continuing to set 3 homework tasks per night using this platform. The children are only able to access 3 activities for homework each day after 3.00pm but please note that P1 & P2 pupils can access unlimited activities at home between 2.00pm and 3.00pm. In the event of a school closure or if your child has to isolate, your child has unlimited access to Studyladder activities throughout the school day - your child’s teacher will set specific tasks remotely on Studyladder. A few children and parents have mentioned that they are having a few technical problems with Studyladder – could you please let me know if you also are experiencing problems and the nature of these problems and I will contact technical support.

**Mathletics**

P2 –P7 pupils are all familiar using Mathletics and they should continue to use Mathletics as part of their nightly homework. Your child’s teacher will communicate using Teams how much time should be spent on Mathletics. The license for Mathletics expires in December and P1 pupils will be then added on accordingly.

**Reading Eggs**

Reading Eggs is an online reading platform which we are introducing in school this week. Your child will be issued with their own log in details. When your child first logs in they will complete a baseline test to assess their reading ability. They will then be set individual tasks at their level. We will issue guidance this week on how to use Reading Eggs.

**Role of Parents**

It is very important that you check Teams daily so you know what homework your child has to complete. Please ensure that your child spends time daily on all of the platforms but particularly Reading Eggs and Mathletics as the school pays for both of these licences. These licences are expensive but we feel that they are excellent platforms for consolidating Numeracy and Literacy skills.

**Coaching**

Due to Covid-19 there is currently no coaching being offered by Tyrone County Board but hopefully the situation will be reviewed at a later date. This is a great pity as the coaching skills of the coaches are excellent, the children really enjoy the coaching and it was also free to schools. To try and fill this gap I have managed to secure two 1 hour slots each Friday for each class with AB coaching. AB coaching is very popular with primary schools and they have worked with a number of local schools for the past few years coaching the basic fundamental movement skills required for all sports in a fun and energetic way. Unfortunately this is not free so we are asking that each child pays **£2 per week** and the school will cover the rest of the cost. To reduce contact with money I would ask that you to send in £10 with your child by 23rd October – this will cover 5 weeks of coaching for your child. We are hoping that the government will provide schools with money for health and well-being and if they do we will use some of this to help pay for the coaching.

**School Photographer**

School Photographer will be visiting tomorrow Tuesday 13th October.

**School Nurse**

The school nurse will visit on Wednesday 14th October to administer flu vaccines.

**Numeracy Week**

This week is Numeracy Week and to celebrate this we will be doing some fun Numeracy activities in school.

Thank you for your continuing support

Siofra Gallagher