

*Principal: Mr. Seamus Dorrian  
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### **Dear Parents of Primary 1 – Primary 3 pupils**

St Mary's will once again be open from 8.45 am, with a staggered arrival time as detailed below, on Monday 08 March to welcome back our pupils from Primary 1, 2 & 3.

These have been extraordinary times for everyone involved, parents, teachers and support staff, not to mention our pupils.

Our emphasis at present is on reassuring our children and you their parents and on supporting children to reconnect socially, build positive relationships and engage enthusiastically with learning as they return to the school environment. In particular, for our youngest children, we know the importance of providing opportunities to be actively involved in practical, challenging play-based learning in a stimulating environment. The vision is for a balanced day where children are able to play, are ready to learn and feel able to re-connect.

As our youngest pupils return after almost three months away from the physical school environment, the Department of Education emphasises the importance of supporting children's emotional health and wellbeing, helping them to be engaged and motivated to learn and ensuring they have the tools and skills they require for learning. The focus for us in St Mary's for when they return initially on 8 March will be upon ensuring that pupils in Years 1 to 3 emotionally secure and are ready to learn.



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**2017**



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One of most significant consequences of remote learning for children is the lack of social development that comes with being part of the school community. Positive relationships are vital for child development. Children may have experienced a variety of loss during the pandemic, including the loss of relationships with their peers. Many relationships that were thriving, may need to be invested in and restored.

The language you use at home and we use in school is important and frequent references to “missed work” or “lost time” or “catch up” will potentially increase pupil anxiety. Please try not only to use phrases like these, but also try to begin seeing your child’s education as trying to light a fire than simply trying to fill a bucket with knowledge. Once the fire catches hold it will be very difficult to put out!

School tracksuits are recommended as they are more comfortable than traditional uniform. The school uniform policy will be relaxed so that parents are not out of pocket replacing items that no longer fit before the end of summer term.

We ask parents not to give their child any item from home to bring into school. Packed lunches must be provided in disposable packaging, which will be disposed of daily. Water bottles are permitted but must be washed thoroughly each day



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### **Inhalers & Regular Medications**

Clearly marked Inhalers / Regular Medication must be brought into school on 08 March and will be stored securely by the class teacher.

### **Drop off / Pick up**

Since August 2020 you have all been great at adhering to our drop off & pick-up arrangements. It is vitally important that this good practice continues as there does seem to be a definite link between social contact and a rise in the R value around school gates.

I would ask that you continue to remain in your cars at drop off / pick up. Parents on foot should be very mindful that 2m social distance must be adhered to at all times.

We fully appreciate that it will be very tempting to get out and have a chat etc., but as the Health Minister has repeatedly told us, the end is in sight, so please continue to show restraint in this regard.

All P1 pupils should be dropped off at 8.45 and P2/3 pupils at 8.55. Please leave promptly as other vulnerable pupils and children of key workers will be arriving as normal at 9.00 am.



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### **School Meals**

The school kitchen will be open from Monday 08 March. A menu will be issued via the school app towards the end of this week.

### **Home /School Transport**

At the time of writing this letter there has been no confirmation that school transport will be running, but we are going on the assumption that it will be running as normal. If there is any update to the contrary, I will inform you by message in the school app.



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### Suspected / Confirmed cases of Covid-19

If your or any member of your family suspect they may have covid-19 children should not be sent to school until the result of a covid-19 test is known.

All children over the age of 5 can be tested if they display any of the symptoms below:

Symptoms of Covid-19 include:-

- **a high temperature** – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature), or;
- **a new, continuous cough** – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual), or;
- **anosmia** - the loss or a change in your normal sense of smell (it can also affect your sense of taste)

Source:

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-overview-and-advice>

If any one in your family tests positive for Covid -19 the whole family must isolate for 10 days. This must



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be strictly adhered to on line with government guidance (Dec 2020)

Yours sincerely

*Seamus Dorrian*

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Principal.



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