



## **ST. JOHN'S P.S GILFORD**

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13<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well and have enjoyed a lovely summer break. Today, updated guidance has finally been released to help all pupils return to school full-time from the start of September. Whilst I had hoped to avoid a staggered start/finish time to make the situation more manageable for parents, from reading the 71-page document it appears unfortunately, this will not be possible. Before I outline the changes that we have had to make in order to maintain a safe environment for all, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the most recent members of staff to St. John's.

Firstly, in order to keep our classes to a more manageable size, we have been able to secure a 6<sup>th</sup> teacher for the next academic year. I am delighted to welcome Miss Dervla Power to our staff. We wish Miss Power well in her new role as P.5/6 teacher. As you are aware, we said goodbye to our 2 longest serving members of staff Mrs Gaillard & Mrs Teggart before the summer break. We hope they are enjoying their retirement, albeit in such difficult circumstances. In their place, I am pleased to announce the Board of Governors have appointed Mrs Sue-Ellen Hill as Clerical Officer and Mrs Cecilia Gallagher as Building Supervisor. We wish both ladies the very best as they join our St. John's family.

In keeping with the most recent guidance, all classes must now operate in a 'bubble' and there must be no mixing of bubbles throughout the day. This essentially means, from the time children come into school until they go home, they will as far as reasonably possible, stay with their own class group and teacher and will not mix with other classes, for example during break and lunchtime. We appreciate that this will be more difficult for some pupils than others, but we, along with your support, will do our utmost to assure everyone that it is just the way it has to be for the time being. Due to our limited staff, in order to ensure adequate supervision, there may be some mixing of staff within bubbles, however they will, where practically possible, adhere to the recommended 2metre social distancing rule.

The best option to keep our class bubbles separate, is to have a staggered start/finish time as recommended by the Minister, to limit the congestion in and around the school grounds. It is our intention to keep our practices under constant review and so as the school year progresses, this may be subject to change.

Each class bubble will share an entrance way into/out of school with another class bubble, however not at the same time. Each class bubble will also share a playground with another class bubble, again this will not be at the same time.

The following bubbles will operate:

- **Bubble 1** - P.1 (Mrs Lyness/Mrs McCrory) & P.2 (Mrs Power). Whilst both P.1 & P.2 will act as one bubble due to their proximity within the Foundation Block, to ease congestion, their start times will vary. **P.2** will start school at **9.00am** and finish at **2.00pm** and **P.1** will start at **9.10am** and will finish at **12noon during the month of September**. For those siblings in both P.1 & P.2, one drop-off at 9.00am will be accommodated.
- **Bubble 2** - P.3 (Mr King) This bubble will use the main building **back door** (accessed via the green gate at the side of the kitchen) and Junior yard. The children in this bubble will start school at **9.10am** and finish at **2.10pm**.
- **Bubble 3** - P.4/5 (Mrs Grimley) This bubble will use the main building **back door** (accessed via the green gate at the side of the kitchen) and Junior yard. The children in this bubble will start school at **9.00am** and finish at **3.00pm**.
- **Bubble 4** - P.5/6 (Miss Power) This bubble will use the main building **front door** and senior yard. The children in this bubble will start school at **9.10am** and finish at **3.10pm**
- **Bubble 5** - P.6/7 (Miss McCarthy) This bubble will use the main building **front door** and senior yard. The children in this bubble will start school at **9.00am** and finish at **3.00pm**

We ask that there is **no loitering** around the school gate or entrances and that children come to school at their allocated time **only**. Any requests to alter your child's start time **MUST** be put in writing and emailed to the school office **ASAP** to seek approval. The school building will open from **8.55am** each morning **and not before** so unfortunately early drop offs before this time **cannot** be accommodated.

#### **Uniform:**

Children are asked to wear a fresh school uniform each day. To help parents with this request we are asking that children alternate between their full school uniform and their P.E uniform. To facilitate this, **full school uniform** must be worn by **all classes on Monday's, Wednesday's and Friday's & P.E uniform on Tuesday's & Thursday's**.

#### **Safety measures around our school:**

- Hand-sanitiser stations can be found at all entrances and exits which everyone must use when entering/leaving the premises
- Children must wash their hands before they leave home to come to school and again as soon as they enter their classroom. There will also be regular hand washing encouraged in all classes throughout the day
- Appropriate signage is displayed around the school building
- There will be an encouragement of social distancing (where possible) between pupils
- 2m social distancing (where possible) will be kept between adults & adult and child.

#### **Additional measures:**

- Children **must not** bring anything into school (unless specifically requested to do so by a member of staff) apart from their **healthy break, water bottle** and **lunch** which should be brought in either **disposable packaging (we strongly advise using paper packaging, as opposed to plastic, to help care for our environment)** OR a **HARD**

**plastic wipeable lunch box NOT a fabric one.** The children will wipe these down each morning with wipes before placing under their table.

- School dinners will be available from **1<sup>st</sup> Sept** and **must** be paid for through our online payment App – **EZPayments** – more information will follow. Cash can **no longer** be accepted.
- Parents are asked **not** to enter the school building. An **exception** will be made to parents of **P.1** children for their **Induction day** and first week at school **only where necessary** and parents **must wear a face mask** whilst on the school premises.
- At present, there will be **NO** After-School Clubs or provision. The possibility of this will be reassessed at the end of September.
- Should parents wish to make contact with their child's class teacher, we ask you to phone the school office to leave a message or arrange an appointment

All of these measures have been formulated using the most current DE guidance along with scientific and public health advice and it is probable that this advice will change over the coming weeks. We will do our utmost to keep you updated and informed as we continue to review the current health situation and to heed the most recent advice in order to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in our school community.

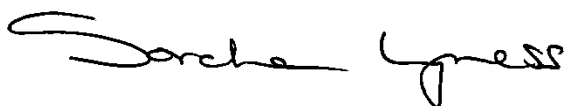
As part of our commitment to keeping St. John's as safe as we can, we are asking each child and parent/guardian to complete a **COVID-19 Home School Agreement** which will be given out on Induction day. Please read through it carefully, discuss with your child(ren) and return on **1<sup>st</sup> Sept**. Children from **P.3 upwards** are expected to sign it. It is imperative that we hold **up to date** contact numbers for all children. A data collection form will also be given home with each child on Induction day and again **must** be returned on **1<sup>st</sup> Sept**.

In order to help with the additional hygiene practices we plan to introduce, we are asking that **each family** please help by donating a **box of tissues and a packet of antibacterial surface wipes**. We would appreciate if these are brought in on Induction day. As always, we greatly appreciate everyone's ongoing support.

Those children that are in P.5 & P.6 will receive further notification as to which class they will be in.

In the meantime, enjoy the rest of the summer and we very much look forward to welcoming everyone back to St. John's.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Sorcha Lyness  
Principal

**Please note: Due to the August Bank Holiday, there will be NO school for pupils on Mon 31<sup>st</sup> August. School will resume as normal for all pupils on Tues 1<sup>st</sup> September.**