



September 2019

Dear Parents,

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome back to school to all our pupils and in particular, to those new pupils in Nursery and Primary One.

I want to assure you that I am always available should there be any issues relating to your child's education that you wish to discuss. As part of our arrangements for sharing information with you about the provision we make for your children, a series of Curriculum Meetings has been arranged the details of which are set out in the table below:

Thursday 12 th September	P7 Curriculum Meeting	School Hall	7.00 pm
Tuesday 17 th September	P1 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	7.00-7.45pm
	P2 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	8.00-8.45pm
	P3 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	8.00-8.45pm
Wednesday 18 th September	P4 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	7.00-7.45pm
	P5 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	8:00-8.45pm
	P6 Curriculum Meeting	Classroom	8.00-8.45pm
Thursday 26 th September	Nursery Curriculum Meeting	School Hall	7.00 -7.45pm

Dinner Money

School meals cost £2.60 and all dinner monies should be sent into school on Monday mornings. Your co-operation with this would be much appreciated as it assists with the efficient administration of the school meals. Where possible, payment should be by cheque made payable to **Education Authority SE Region (EA SE Region)**. Please note, the dinner menu is displayed in the Parents' Information section of the school website.

Contact Details

If you have changed your email address or mobile/landline phone numbers, please ensure you inform the school. It is essential that your contact details are kept up to date.

Morning Club and Supervision of Pupils while on the School Site

We appreciate the difficulties faced by parents in trying to get children to school and then travelling on to work. As part of our efforts to assist parents, the school operates a Morning Club which is supervised by school staff providing a secure environment for those children who arrive early onto the school site.

However, some parents are dropping children off at school from as early as 8:30am without having enrolled them in the Morning Club. **For the avoidance of doubt, I wish to clarify that the school will be open to receive pupils at 8:45am. No responsibility is accepted**

for pupils before that time unless they are attending the Morning Club. Classes will commence each day at 9:00am and no pupils should arrive later than 8:55am.

Any parents wishing to enrol their children in the Morning Club should contact Mrs Murray. Parents are also reminded that Morning Club opens at **8:00 am** and children should not be on the premises before that time. Furthermore, you are asked to escort your children to the Morning Club entrance. **No responsibility is accepted for pupils who are attending the Morning Club arriving on site before 8:00am.**

School Uniform

I would like to thank all parents for ensuring the children are wearing their full school uniform. We encourage the children to have great pride in their school and in being part of the school community. Wearing the school uniform is one of the ways in which we identify with our school and maintaining high standards throughout the year in this regard is very important. We would ask that you try to ensure that the children wear full school uniform on all days (**with the only exceptions being PE days and trips**). I would remind you that the school uniform includes black shoes for boys and girls.

School Attendance Matters-a Parent's Guide

I want to remind you that the Department of Education's guidance for parents regarding school attendance is displayed on the 'Parents' section of the school website and App. This guidance emphasises the importance of maintaining a pattern of good attendance throughout a child's school career. Excellent attendance enables a child to fulfil his/her full potential. Put simply, any child who is absent from school regularly will miss out on important learning and this could impact negatively on his/her achievements.

I would draw your attention to DE's guidance regarding family holidays taken during term time. Whilst it may seem like only a few days are missed to go on holiday, parents should also consider the likelihood of their children succumbing to illness during the year thus necessitating further absence from school. In order to keep your child's cumulative absence rate as low as possible, parents should try to eliminate all unnecessary absences e.g. holidays etc.

The school is obliged to monitor attendance and take appropriate action whenever a pupil's attendance falls to a low level. The overall attendance rate in St Joseph's is very good and parents clearly value education and make every effort to ensure their children attend. We understand fully that circumstances sometimes arise when children are simply unable to attend school e.g. illness or family trauma. Please be aware that when monitoring attendance, we take all mitigating circumstances into account and we also check a child's previous attendance record. In cases where a child's previous record is good there would normally be no need for any further action.

However, on occasions, a pattern of regular intermittent absence becomes apparent. It is at this stage that the school would contact you to discuss your child's attendance pattern. Together we will explore ways in which the school can best support you to ensure your child attends school regularly and attains his/her full potential.

Finally, I would encourage all parents to read again the DE leaflet-School Attendance Matters and to pay particular attention to the final section Every Day Counts. In this section percentage attendance rates are converted into actual days missed e.g. 90% attendance equals 19 school days missed i.e. nearly four weeks.

After School Activities

We have issued information about the After School Activities programme for Term One and this is also displayed in the Parents' Information section of the school website www.stjosephscarryduff.com. Children will be expected to wear their uniform on days on which they are attending After School Clubs. It is not acceptable to wear their P E uniform on these days. Those children involved in sporting activities will be able change into sports gear before their activity begins.

Traffic Management Plan: Car Parking and Vehicular Access to the School Site

The school has been considering the arrangements to ensure the safety of all site users, especially children. A Traffic Management Plan has been drawn up to inform and instruct staff, parents, visitors and pupils about the site rules concerning pedestrian and vehicle separation. The Plan also aims to encourage site users to drive carefully, to adhere to parking restrictions and to behave courteously towards all other site users. Therefore, as we begin another school year, I would like to remind you of the following key points:

- exercise extreme care and attention when driving into and exiting from the Parish Hall car park
- signs notifying users of a 5mph speed limit are clearly displayed; all drivers should adhere to that limit
- show courtesy and consideration to other car park users
- the Parish Hall car park and the access roads to and from it are clearly marked with double yellow lines; you should not to park in these areas as this restricts access and causes congestion and delays
- to ensure the safety of all children, we endeavour to keep the school grounds as a pedestrian zone; please refrain from driving into the school grounds to pick up children from Nursery particularly at 2:50pm when the children in P4-P7 are being released from class. Please advise child-minders, crèches etc. of the above.

The school is currently liaising with the Parish regarding some further safety measures and we would hope to complete this work in the coming weeks.

We are very fortunate to have such extensive car parking facilities so close to the school. However, it is imperative that we all adhere to the speed limits and show due care and attention to avoid accidents occurring. The Traffic Management Plan can be viewed in the 'Parents' section of the school website and app.

Healthy Eating

The children are encouraged to eat healthy options for their break and lunch. We would ask you not to provide fizzy drinks, sweets, chocolate bars and crisps for the children's snacks. This reinforces the key messages delivered by the teachers in Health Education lessons. We appreciate that on occasions healthy options may seem to be less appealing for the children. However, we would encourage you to continue to support this initiative and do not need to stress the importance of this aspect of the children's development. We would like to thank you for your continuing co-operation.

Provision of Birthday Treats for the Class

On occasions, parents have asked school staff to share a cake/buns/ sweets with the whole class as a celebration of their child's birthday. The school acknowledges that birthdays are special days for children and these are often marked in school by singing 'Happy Birthday' etc. However, we do not feel that it is appropriate to distribute treats to the whole class to mark a child's birthday for the reasons set out below:

- the increasing number of children who have allergies
- the need to adhere to the wishes of those parents who have specifically requested that their child is not given any treats for which they have not given their prior consent
- the inconvenience and disruption to classroom routine that can be caused by distributing treats during the course of a busy day, particularly if there is no classroom assistant placed with the class
- the desire to avoid creating a sense of expectation within classes that each child should bring 'birthday treats' to share with their peers

For these reasons, the school respectfully requests that parents refrain from sending in birthday treats to be distributed to classmates during the school day.

Please note also that school staff will not issue party invitations to your child's classmates on your behalf as this has given rise to difficulties in the past.

After School Provision

The 1, 2, 3 Club is now operating from 1:50pm –5:00pm. Please contact Michelle Scott should you require any further information. (90492472) or (07846043236).

Key Dates for 2019 - 2020

To assist with your forward planning some key dates for the 2019 - 2020 academic year are attached. These have also been placed in the 'Parents' Information section of the school website and App. I would draw the attention of parents of children in Nursery and Primary One to two dates on which Nursery and Primary One children should not attend school. These are **Monday 16th December 2019 and Thursday 21st May 2020**. Open Mornings for prospective pupils are scheduled for these dates.

May I thank you once again for your continuing support

Yours sincerely



Principal