



Dear Parents,

The most recent correspondence from Mr Peter Weir, the Minister of Education, mentioned that although he expects to have to close schools at some point in the future, they will stay open for the time being. Further decisions made by the minister will be taken following clear and unambiguous advice from the Chief Medical Officer and the Public Health Agency. With this in mind, Ballytober will be open as usual on Thursday 19th March. It will continue to stay open until we receive guidance stating otherwise.

Guidance from the Department of Education outlines good practice for schools in order to maintain as stable an environment as possible for pupils, parents and staff, as well as the wider Ballytober community. Although COVID-19 appears to affect children less than other age groups. However, it should be remembered that children can pick up the infection and can spread it to others.

These guidance helps to address COVID-19 in all educational settings and will be updated in line with the ever-changing situation.

Steps include :-

Good practice in terms of hand-washing....for at least 20 seconds....will be encouraged and supported before and after any activity, such as meal times, break times and sporting activities.

Children should be kept at home if they are unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature to avoid spreading infection to others.

Otherwise, children should attend as normal.

Regularly touched objects and surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected more often than usual using our regular cleaning products.

The children will be supervised to ensure they wash their hands more often than usual, for at least 20 seconds, with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

Children will be encouraged to catch coughs and sneezes in tissues and then bin these tissues. This is our catch it, bin it, kill it approach.

If staff, young people or children become unwell at school with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature they will be sent home and advised to follow the home isolation advice on the PHA website.

If a child is awaiting collection, they will be moved, if possible, to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they should use a separate bathroom if possible.

The bathroom will be cleaned and disinfected using standard cleaning products immediately afterwards.

Please be assured that every effort will be taken to ensure your child's health and well-being is safeguarded. Additional measures have been put in place to maintain a functional yet safe working environment for all those concerned.

Should the decision be taken to close all schools in Northern Ireland, alternative arrangements will be made to allow your child to continue their education at home. This situation will not be without its challenges but where there is a will, there's a way. We already have the Accelerated Reading system well established in school, alongside a number of online opportunities, including Reading Eggs/Reading Eggspress, Doodlemaths and Spellzone. In addition, home learning packs will be prepared for all pupils. These will be planned carefully to ensure parity of provision throughout the school. Further details will be issued once details have been finalised.

In the meantime, please send your child to school. Challenging times lie ahead but for now we will make every effort to maintain stability in otherwise uncharted and uncertain waters. Should you have any concerns or queries, contact me directly on 07892 834428 for any further clarification.

Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Elaine Anderson *Principal*