



Principal: S Cumper
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Wednesday 19th August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian

On Thursday 6th August 2020 the Minister of Education confirmed that the existing “*New School Day*” guidance would be revised to allow for **all Schools to return to more normal patterns of operation and attendance, in line with standard legislative requirements**. This means that all Harding Memorial Primary School pupil will return to school 5 Days a Week Full-Time and that the previous information shared with Primary 2 – Primary 7 Parents about a “Split Week” at the start of the 2020/2021 School Year is no longer relevant.



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INFORMATION FOR PUPILS STARTING SCHOOL

- ✓ School will start for all **Primary 7 pupils on Monday 24th August 2020 with a 2.00pm stop all week and no School Dinners will be available.**
- ✓ School will start for all **P2 to P6 pupils on Tuesday 1st September 2020 with a 2.00pm stop for all P2 to P6 pupils (School Dinners will be available)**
- ✓ Individual starting times will be confirmed with Primary 1 pupils during the week beginning Monday 17th August 2020 and the **Primary 1 Pupils will have a staggered start from Tuesday 1st September onwards** (There will be a 12.15pm stop for all P1 pupils)

The Minister of Education acknowledged that Schools will need the “*revised detailed guidance as soon as possible to help plan for the return to school*” and this guidance was issued to schools on Thursday 13 August 2020.” However there are still a huge number of additional issues that will need to be clarified for the start of the new 2020/2021 School Year. The most recent Department of Education guidance stated that “*Schools should also consider discouraging or prohibiting children from bringing anything from home and, at the end of each school day, limiting/preventing shared resources from being taken home. The Education Authority (EA) will develop further operational guidance and provide this to schools, where necessary.*”

Unfortunately no “detailed operational guidance” about a significant number of school issues has yet been received by Harding Memorial Primary School, or any other schools. Once again the most frustrating thing about this for me as Principal of Harding Memorial Primary School is that these pronouncements by the Department of Education rarely, if ever, provide clear, exact, detailed and unambiguous guidance. However I wish to confirm that it is the intention of all School Staff that our Primary 2 – Primary 7 pupils will return to our previously traditional welcoming, relaxed environment – “***Everyone Is Important In Our School***”. We will work hard to avoid a draconian, unwelcoming and intimidating environment. Our aim is that when your child leaves school after their first day back, they will feel that everything is “as close as possible to what day to day school life was like last year” and that our newest Primary 1 Pupils experience the joy of “their first day at HMPS”.

We would like to share with all Pupils and Parent/Guardians some of the various **“Covid 19 Mitigation Strategies and Procedures”** that are being introduced to Harding Memorial Primary School in 2020/2021.

❖ **There are going to be Three Separate Entrance and Exit Areas for Pupils and Parents at Harding Memorial Primary School.**

- ✓ Primary 1 and Primary 2 Pupils and Parent/Guardians will enter and exit at Mrs Shannon’s office. **They will use the main entrance and exit gate from the Cregagh Road at the Front of School**
- ✓ Primary 3 and Primary 4 Pupils and Parent/Guardians will enter and exit at the P3/P4 Playground Door. **They will use the entrance and exit side gate at Dromore Street**
- ✓ Primary 5, Primary 6 and Primary 7 Pupils and Parent/Guardians will enter and exit at the rear playground P5, P6 and P7 Playground Door. **They will use the second Cregagh Road Entrance and Exit that is opposite Iceland. This was previously where the P1 and P2 pupils exited school in 2019/2020.**
- ✓ SC1 and GLSC pupils will enter and exit at the rear playground gate in the alley way. SC1 pupils will start at 9.00am and stop at 2.00pm (Monday - Thursday) and 1.45pm (Friday). GLSC pupils will start at 9.00am and stop at 3.00pm (Monday-Thursday) and 1.45pm (Friday) to facilitate EA transport arrangements.
- Primary 2 pupils will Start at 8.45am and Primary 2 pupils will Stop at 1.50pm
- Primary 1 pupils will Start at 9.00am and Primary 1 pupils will Stop at **12.15pm until 28th September when they will stay until 2.00pm**
- Primary 4 pupils will start at 8.45am and Primary 4 pupils will stop at 2.50pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The P4’s will stop at 2.00pm on a Wednesday
- Primary 3 pupils will start at 8.55am and Primary 3 Pupils will stop at 1.50pm
- Primary 7 pupils will start at 8.45am and Primary 7 pupils will stop at 3.00pm
- Primary 6 pupils will start at 8.50am and Primary 6 pupils will stop at 2.55pm
- Primary 5 pupils will start at 8.55am and Primary 5 pupils will stop at 2.50pm
- ❖ A series of 3 bells will ring in the morning at 8.45am, 8.50am, 8.55am and in the afternoon at 2.50pm, 2.55pm, 3.00pm to assist with the organisation of **“staggered starting and stopping times at Harding Memorial Primary School.**
- ❖ Children should not congregate in the playgrounds in the mornings but instead go straight to their individual classrooms. A member of School Staff will be supervising at each School Entrance Area in order to ensure that all children use the appropriate entrance door for their age group and enter school at the correct time
- ❖ If you think your child is able to walk into school, you should consider leaving them at the school gate to avoid any unnecessary gathering of parents in or around the school grounds. (We would recommend this only for P4 – P7 pupils)
- ❖ All P1 – P3 pupils must be collected from school by an adult but it may be an option for P4 – P7 pupils to walk and meet you outside of School. **Please consider this as a way to reduce footfall in the school grounds in order to maximise Infection Control at HMPS.**

- ❖ If you do need to come in to school grounds to pick your child up, please make your way to the relevant exit and collection points and keep a sensible distance from each other.

➤ **Parents should not enter the School Building, except by Prior Arrangement made with a member of the School Management Team**

Additional mitigation strategies employed during 2020/2021 at Harding Memorial:

- ✓ Class bubble system – children will stay in their class groups and have a designated section of a playground at break and lunch. This will not feel much different for the children – they generally socialise in their class groups at break and lunch anyway and we will use all available space for outdoor play
- ✓ Doors open throughout the school to minimise contact points
- ✓ Regular cleaning of contact points – door handles etc
- ✓ Windows open in classrooms to provide ventilation
- ✓ No large communal school events such as Assemblies will take place during Term 1
- ✓ Reinforcement of the hand hygiene message through use of child friendly signage in toilet areas etc. regarding the importance of keeping hands clean
- ✓ There will be a number of handwashing opportunities during the school day
- ✓ There will be “Hand Sanitising” stations at various points around the school
- ✓ Reinforcement of respiratory hygiene (catch it, kill it, bin it) with child friendly signs reminding the children of this.
- ✓ Encouraging children to stay on the left hand side in the corridors



Harding Memorial Primary School has purchased a series of Protective Screens that have been deployed to each school classroom. We intend to monitor the effectiveness and manageability of this “infection transmission mitigation measure” during the month of September

➤ **What if my child displays symptoms of Covid 19 (new, persistent cough, high temperature, loss of taste and/or smell) ?**

If your child (or anyone else in your household) displays any of the symptoms of Covid 19, you must keep them from school and follow the PHA guidance for households with possible coronavirus infections.

➤ **What if my child displays symptoms while at school ?**

If your child displays symptoms at school, he or she will be moved to our School Isolation Room (Room 13) and you will be contacted to collect your child from there. You should then follow the PHA guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection.

➤ **Does my child need to wear a face covering ?**

Face coverings are not advised for children aged 11 and under. But this will be an individual decision for each school family and Harding Memorial Primary School will respect the decision of each Parent/Guardian when addressing this important but problematic issue.

➤ **What about School Uniform ?**

Harding Memorial has an excellent uniform wearing tradition. We feel that wearing the "School Uniform" promotes the child's feeling of belonging to our school. But the wearing of a school uniform is not governed by legislation but falls to schools to determine. The Department of Education has "*encouraged schools to show flexibility around the issue of school uniforms in these extraordinary times.*" The issue of uniforms was considered and advice issued as part of the New School Day Guidance: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/weir-publishes-guidance-new-school-day>. The guidance states that while Coronavirus can land on fabrics and remain for some time, schools are not a high risk environment and while all children and young people should be encouraged to wear clean uniform or fresh clothes each day, this is not essential. Therefore, Harding Memorial Primary School is proposing the following actions for the start of the new School Term.

We would strongly encourage the wearing of uniform by all Pupils as they start back to school in 2020/2021. Our P2 – P7 pupils are used to wearing school uniform as part of their established school day routine. The School has a significant number of "spare uniform" items which can be made available to parents who wish to have the opportunity to "clean the previous days uniform" to minimise the spread of any potential infection between Home and School. However if any parent is not able to ensure that their child has "clean uniform" for the next school day, their child/children will be able to wear "Non-Uniform Clothing". This issue of "flexibility of the wearing of school uniform" is something that we be monitored by the School during the First Half Term as we would still prefer that pupils get back into the "School Uniform Routine" during 2020/2021

➤ **Will school dinners be available ?**

Exact details of how the school catering service will operate have yet to be finalised, but it is envisaged that they will be available on a 'Packed Lunch' basis, i.e. children can order a lunch from the canteen and it will be delivered to their classrooms. Further details of this will be provided to Parent/Guardians once clarification has been provided by E.A.

➤ **What equipment will my child need ?**

The advice from the Department of Education is that "*Schools should also consider discouraging or prohibiting children from bringing anything from home and, at the end of each school day, limiting/preventing shared resources from being taken home.*" Whilst we are still awaiting further advice from the Education Authority (EA) about this issue – so will suggest the following actions for the start of the 2020/2021 School Year

- Children **should not bring in a pencil case or any stationery supplies to school**
- They will be provided with individual writing items in school for their use only as there will be no use of communal class materials.
- However you may provide your child with a small bottle of hand sanitiser, preferably with a minimum of 70% alcohol which will be kept in school under your child's desk.
- This policy will be reviewed once further guidance has been received from the Education Authority during 2020/2021

➤ **What about school bags and lunchboxes ?**

Harding Memorial P.S. would request that **“No School Bags are brought to School”** at the start of the 2020/2021. We would recommend a **“disposable bag”** with lunch and break and a bottle of water which can be refilled daily in school. **All Lunch boxes and Containers should be wiped down each day with suitable wipes before being sent in the next day.**

➤ **Am I able to call into Harding Memorial Primary School ?**

Department of Education Guidance states that “at both arrival and collection times, parents should be actively discouraged from entering the school buildings as a means of preventing spread of the virus. Where parents must enter school buildings, appropriate hygiene measures should be in place.”

Harding Memorial Primary School is part of the local community and is very appreciative of the support it receives from the various stakeholders in the school. In recognising that the education of our children is a partnership between the home and school, the Board of Governors, Principal, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff seek to allow Parents/Guardians a clear right of access at all reasonable times to their child’s Class Teacher and the Principal. **The Principal, as the day to day manager of the school, will seek to ensure that all such contacts are conducted in a manner which will promote the educational interests of the pupil and allow for the safety of all the children and staff.** This is particularly important regarding the current situation with Covid Infection Control Measures at Harding Memorial Primary School. If a Parent/Guardian has a non-urgent question or query then a phone call should be made or an e mail sent to school and then school will respond in a timely manner. **If it is an “urgent issue” – then the Parent should “wait outside school” until the Principal or a member of the School Management Team is available.** In accordance with the recommended actions of the Department of Education - No parent should access school without invitation and any Parent/Guardian granted access to school will be expected to use **“Appropriate Face Mask Covering”** as this is also a recommended organisational procedure identified by the Department of Education.

“Face coverings must be worn in staff rooms and during adult to adult meetings lasting more than 15 minutes and by adults visiting the school site.”

Harding Memorial Primary School, will approach the issue of Restarting School in 2020/2021 in exactly the same way that we approached the closure of school. We will avoid the noise, bluster and speculation and will make what we consider to be the decision that is in the best interests of our whole school community and, in particular, our children. What the “new normal” will eventually look like is still anyone’s guess but as a school we will continue to provide what help and guidance as we move to getting our children “Back Into School Routine. We hope that as our children return to school, it will be a significant step on our route back to normality. I hope that the information contained within this letter will have given you confidence that we will will continue to put your child/children at the centre of our Restrating School Plan and are sensible and proportionate to the current risk levels of Covid 19 in Northern Ireland.

Mr S Cumper



Helping Your Child Deal With Their Anxieties

One of the ways we assist children is to build their confidence in taking (age appropriate) control of situations that affect them, in doing this we teach them that difficult emotions may not be pleasant but sometimes we have to live with them and that these feelings, although frightening and unsettling, can be manageable.



Ask your child how they might deal with things

By doing this we are allowing the busy brain to be constructively busy, allowing it to work on coming up with solutions as opposed to busying itself being worried.

Remember the importance of age appropriateness, a perfectly good solution to a child being upset or afraid is to tell an adult.



ASK - Who might you want to tell? What if you couldn't get them? Anybody else? What might you say?

If we help a child break BIG worries into small manageable worries, then we reinforce the idea that the world and more importantly THEIR world is not a scary place for them.

It is understandable that worries might arise for Parents and children in relation to Covid related concerns- more specifically the reintegration of "normal activities"

Respect a child's concerns and then aid them in coming up with solutions.



ASK - what might help you feel less worried?

Reinforce what they already know, but encourage them to say it themselves, eg washing your hands, covering your mouth with your elbow etc.

Back to Basics



"Right now, we are living in an anxiety-inducing world and we are all doing the best we can."

Parentline is running 3 free sessions for parents on:

1. Our Anxiety
2. Dealing With Your Child's Anxiety
3. Assertive Communication

Come join our Parent Support Officer Julie on Zoom as she gives hint and tips and answers your questions.

When: Tuesday 25th August 2020 (session 1)

Time: 11am-12 noon

For more information or to book a place call free 0808 8020 400