

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School



Principal: S Cumper
info@hardingmemorial.belfast.ni.sch.uk



105 Cregagh Road
Belfast BT6 8PZ
Telephone: 028 90458040
Fax: 028 90460917

Thursday 19th October 2023

Dear Primary 1 to Primary 7 Parent/Guardian

Department of Education: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide

In Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School we believe that it is vitally important that Home and School work together to help children obtain a high percentage of school attendance. Parent/Guardians are encouraged to work in partnership with Harding Memorial, notifying us of the reason for any of their child's absences and highlighting any areas of concern they may have so they can be addressed promptly. Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School has a link Education and Welfare Officer (EWO) employed by the Education Authority whose aim is to reduce unnecessary absences from school by offering support and help to pupils, parents and schools. A school will normally make a referral to Education Welfare Service when a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below 85%. The Department of Education has produced a leaflet called "School Attendance Matters - A Parent's Guide" which is available via the following web link and has also been attached with this email for parental information:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-attendance-matters-parents-guide

In particular we would like to make parents aware of the following information: "For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks." If any Parent/Guardian has any queries about the procedures relating to school absence, please contact the School Principal at your earliest convenience.



Booking Parent/Guardian and Class Teacher Interviews

The Primary 1 – Primary 6 Parent Teacher Consultations that will take place shortly after the Half Term are intended to provide an opportunity for you to be informed about your child's progress and performance in school and how you can assist your child in his or her learning. It should also give you an important opportunity to let the class teacher know of factors that may be affecting your child or concerns you may have. We hope that all Parent/Guardians will be able to avail of this opportunity to communicate with their child's class teacher, especially those Parent/Guardians who had been unable to attend their child's Parent Curriculum Zoom Meetings earlier in September 2023. **Please note that Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School will close all week for all P1 – P7 Pupils at 1.00pm during the week starting Monday 13th November 2023. Please remember to book your slot via School Cloud.** If you require any assistance with this process - please do not hesitate to contact school - and we will be happy to assist you with your booking.

➤ **The link for bookings is <https://hardingmemorial.schoolcloud.co.uk/> and this will go live on Tuesday 24th October 2023 at 12 noon.**



Inclement Weather Arrangements

As we come into more consistent cold and wet weather, please ensure that your child has a coat with them every day. If it is at all possible our children will be outside at break and lunch as they need opportunities for exercise, running about and playing with their friends. It is of particular importance that each child has their name written on their coats as several children may have the same type of coat and identification can be very difficult.

Dogs In School

We would like to remind all Parent/Guardians about previous School guidance regarding dogs in school and would like to thank all adults in advance for their co-operation with the successful management of this issue.

- **Dogs' leads need to be held by adults only.** Dogs may be tied up away from door entry on a short lead for brief periods of time (giving enough time to take a child into class)
- **No dogs are allowed near places where children are playing or waiting in the playground or near entrance areas as children must feel free to be able to enter and leave school and play away from dogs.**
- Dogs should be walked around the perimeter of the main playground when collecting children.
- **Dogs must be under constant adult supervision and must be kept away from the school entrance areas so that children have a choice whether they want to come in direct contact with dogs.**
- **No dogs accompanying children to and from school are allowed inside any school buildings.**
- **Parents are responsible for cleaning up any soiling by their dog on the school grounds and failure to do so will mean the dog will no longer be allowed in the school grounds.**
- When bringing dogs on to the site, parents do so with an absolute understanding that their dog has no issues around children, has never displayed any aggression towards children and **that the owner believes the dog is fully trustworthy in a school environment.**

Extra-Curricular Activities and After School Clubs

In Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School we aim to give our pupils the opportunity to further and widen their interests and once again in Term 1 we have offered our children an extensive range of After School activities. These clubs form an important part of our extended school life and are only possible because of the support of the various External Organisations associated with our school. In endeavouring to ensure the safety of our children it is important that Parent/Guardians are aware of the finishing times for all these after school activities and that arrangements are particularly clear for the collection of our youngest pupils at the end of After School Activities.

- **We would hope that all Parent/Guardians would be aware of the necessity to be punctual for P2 & P3 Pupil Pick Up Times as these pupils will not be dismissed until an appropriate adult arrives at 3.00pm.**
- In addition, we would request that all P2 – P7 Parent/Guardians please check which dates the Monday to Thursday After School Clubs will be taking place as they have been occasions in the

past when a child has not been collected on time due to a Parent/Guardian forgetting that the After School Club is not on that particular date.

- Finally, we would request that all Parent/Guardians remind their children that participation in all After School Clubs is dependent on Satisfactory Behaviour in line with School Expectations.

Please Leave All Toys at Home

We would seek to remind parents of our established school policy which is “**Please No Toys in School Except For Show and Tell.**” Each teacher will inform their class of their Show and Tell Day. The reason for this policy is that we are worried that a child’s toy may get misplaced or damaged. We would formally request that **all toys are left at home**, including stuffed animals as when children bring in toys from home, they become distracted and the other children do as well. This toy description would include a wide range of items such as Collecting Card Games, Miniature Action Figures, Dolls and Lego etc. It would also include any “electronic -type games.”

School Road Safety Information Update

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School acknowledges that driving children to school is seen as the most convenient choice for parents with busy lives. Many parents take the view that by driving their children to school they are keeping them safe. Yet the combination of each individual decision makes an increase in vehicle traffic and congestion, particularly at the school gate. Many children now miss out on the opportunity to develop vital road safety skills with their parents on the way to school. They fail to build up confidence and learn the ability to manage risk walking around their local community. Walking can improve overall levels of fitness in children and adults. It is a cost-effective method in which to exercise. This can have a positive impact both mentally and physically. We realise that there are some parents who have no alternative but to drive their children to school, however many are driving short distances where walking is a real option.

I do appreciate that the vast majority of our parents both drive and park responsibly during the school commute, but I am also aware of increasing incidents of dangerous and inconsiderate parking around school. I know pick up and drop off times are difficult and very busy due however a small minority of parents are parking without any thought for our local residents. Previous communication received by school from PSNI Strandtown Neighbourhood Team makes clear **that it is an offence to wilfully obstruct the highway which can be enforced by police.** However, this type of enforcement action will obviously be used only as a last resort and we hope that by communicating the information from the PSNI with our Parental Body, that we will be able to satisfactorily rectify any recurring local parking difficulties.



Education Authority Information Update for Parent/Guardians

The Education Authority (EA) has warned of expected disruption to some school services as a result of industrial action notified by UNISON. This action will consist of action short of strike from 16 October 2023 to 20 November 2023 as well as a full day of strike action on 16 November 2023. The EA is working with schools, youth services and partners to minimise any disruption to children and young people caused by the industrial action. However, despite this, there will be disruption to some services; at this stage the EA anticipate that the impact is likely to be most significant across some classroom assistant, catering and cleaning services. We encourage parents/carers to check the EA website for regular updates and details of any planned disruption [here: www.eani.org.uk/industrialactionupdates](http://www.eani.org.uk/industrialactionupdates) Information is also available across EA social media channels.

- The [communication above](#) has been recently sent to School Principals by the Education Authority. How the next few weeks play out and the implications for day of strike action on Thursday 16th November 2023 remain to be seen but HMIPS will endeavour to keep everyone in our school community informed as soon as possible.

There Will Be NO Request for School Fund During 2023/2024

It has been customary at this time of the year to ask for a voluntary contribution towards School Fund from HMIPS Parent/Guardians. Such contributions are becoming more important and in fact are especially relevant due to current Funding Crisis in the Northern Ireland Education System. However due to the “Very Challenging Financial Climate” at the moment – **Harding Memorial has decided NOT to request School Fund during the current 2023/2024 School Year.** In these bleak economic times we, as a school, understand how challenging life is for so many people at the moment. If your family is experiencing difficulties at home, as Principal of Harding Memorial, I will always try to provide additional support at school and I understand that you are not always able to share details and that’s okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning or weekend, **then please email me or phone me to let me know to “keep a wee eye on them.”** Nothing else will be said or asked. This will let me know that your child may need extra time, patience, or help during the day.

Physical Education

At Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School we feel that Physical education is crucial to health, fitness and well-being. It builds strength, maintains mobility, and challenges body and mind as well as providing a foundation for active living. Our school is fortunate to have excellent PE facilities both inside and outside due to the positive impact that physical exercise can have on young people’s health and wellbeing. Children are strongly encouraged to come to school wearing their PE Kit on their designated PE Timetabled Day. **Please note that it is strongly recommended that the items of PE Clothing worn by pupils on their designated PE Day should be based upon practicability, durability and comfort rather than fashion or image.** We would strongly encourage all Parent/Guardians to help school by regularly monitoring their child’s PE Uniform.

School Football Team

Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School Football Teams have been playing in a series of Cup Matches this month. The Boys Team (with two girls also playing) played a competitive match in the second round of the EDCO Cup on Thursday 12th October and were narrowly defeated by a strong St Michael’s PS Team. We wish them every success in the quarter finals of the EDCO Cup. The Girls Team then played a second-round match against Orangefield PS in the Liz Bryson cup yesterday, Wednesday 18th October 2023, and were ultimately successful with a 6 – 1 victory against a spirited opposition team. We continue to be impressed by the enthusiasm, dedication, sense of fair play and sporting ability demonstrated by the children in our school.



We are pleased to confirm with Parent/Guardians that we have been able to arrange two separate events to celebrate Halloween with our School Pupils. P5, P6 and P7 Parent Guardians have previously been informed about a Halloween Party that has been organised by Simon Harper (HMIPS Education Authority Youth Worker) which will take place in school on **Tuesday 24th October from 6.00pm – 8.00pm**. Tickets for this event will be sent home with P5, P6 and P7 Pupils on Monday 23rd October 2023.

We are pleased to confirm with P1, P2, P3 and P4 Parent/Guardians that a Halloween Disco will take place during School on **Friday 27th October 2023**. The Disco will be “hosted” by Party DJ who have previously performed in school and everyone had a fantastic time. The Foundation Stage Pupils (P1 and P2) will have their Disco Time from 9.30am – 10.15am and Key Stage 1 Pupils (P3 and P4) will have their Disco Time from 10.15am – 11.00am. Additional organisational information about this event will be emailed to P1 – P4 Parent/Guardians early next week.

P1- P7 Children can wear their Non-School Uniform Disco Clothes or Halloween Fancy Dress on Friday 27th October 2023 which will be a Non-Uniform Day

But please make sure that any Halloween Costumes that are worn are Not Too Scary for other Children and the School Principal!



The Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education visited School on Tuesday 10th October 2023 to celebrate the Phase 3 distribution of Digital Devices to Primary Schools

Digital devices for schools in under-resourced areas of Northern Ireland



Education permanent secretary Dr Mark Browne visits Harding Memorial PS in Belfast, pictured with pupils Martin Jerabeck and Benedicta Johnson and school ICT co-ordinator Catherine Murray



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DE has announced that 2,700 digital devices will be provided to schools in under-resourced areas.

This means almost 9,000 devices in total, will have been provided to Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Special Schools and EOTAS centres by autumn.

More- education-ni.gov.uk/news/departmen...



On Halloween, lots of you may be heading out on the streets to go trick or treating. We've put together some tips to make sure you stay safe while having fun:

- Please make sure a responsible adult or guardian goes with you - it could be an older brother or sister if they're over 16.
- Plan your route before you leave the house and make sure someone else knows where you are going.
- Wear reflective or light-coloured clothing so you can be seen.
- Carry a torch to check what's around you and avoid falling over.
- Stay close to home and if possible, only visit the houses of people you know.
- **NEVER enter a stranger's home**
- Stay on pavements and check carefully before crossing a road - especially if there's a large group of you.
- Throw away any treats or sweets that have been opened or unwrapped.
- If you are wearing a mask, make sure that you can see clearly out of it.
- Make sure your costume is warm - it is almost November!
- Bring water with you, you may get thirsty!
- Don't argue with people or "trick" them if they don't have more sweets or don't want to celebrate Halloween. There will be many more who want to engage in the fun!
- Take Care - Be Safe - And have a great Half Term Holiday

Halloween Half Term Vacation

- School will close for all Primary 1 – Primary 7 pupils for the Half Term Holiday at their usual class stopping times on Friday 27th October 2023
- The School Half Term Holiday will take place from Monday 30th October 2023 to 3rd November 2023 (inclusive dates)
- School will reopen at the usual time for all Primary 1 – Primary 7 children on Monday 6th November 2023.
- We hope that all our families have a safe and relaxing Half Term.

Did you receive the Text Message sent out to all Priority 1 Numbers on Thursday 12th October?

- ❖ Harding Memorial Integrated Primary School sent out a test text message to all Priority 1 mobile numbers on Thursday 12th October to make sure that everyone can receive these urgent messages. If you have parental responsibility and are the first point of contact and DID NOT receive a text on that day please email the school office on info@hardingmemorial.belfast.ni.sch.uk with your updated telephone number. Please note that **ONLY one parent is set as Priority 1**