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**Remote Learning &
Supervised Learning
Information Update
from Tuesday 5th
January 2021 onwards**

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Friday 1st January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

I would like to start this letter by wishing everyone a Happy New Year. The previous 2020 year has been exceptionally challenging for Pupils, Parents and Staff and I sincerely hope that you and your loved ones have been able to experience a safe, relaxing and enjoyable Christmas Celebration. Yesterday you will mostly likely have noticed commentary in the news and on social media regarding “**DE Plans for School Closure**” during the week beginning Monday 4th January, which was our planned day of return.

The fact that there was “No Information Update Letter” received from the Department of Education until late last evening and that once again “news has been drip fed” to Schools via social media is extremely frustrating for myself as School Principal. Once again the guidance from the Minister of Education seems to be somewhat vague and contradictory. Therefore, I feel that it may be beneficial to share some information with Parents that has been made available from the various Teacher Trade Unions who comprise the Northern Ireland Teaching Council and in particular – **The Ulster Teachers' Union**.

*The Minister met with the education unions this morning prior to his attendance at the Assembly. We are hopeful that this is indicative of an intention to consult and communicate in a more effective and timely manner as his recent decisions are reviewed. Based on that meeting the following are a few details which may provide clarification for you regarding next week. These are based on the current plans but may be subject to change depending on medical and scientific advice. Nursery and Special Schools will return as planned. This decision has been based on the low risk factor in the former case and the greater need for support in the latter. Primary and post-primary schools will have remote learning next week. **This will not take place on the 4th (or your first day of return) as this will give time for preparation.** Schools will be available to cater for vulnerable children and the children of key workers from the second day of return. **The Minister, based on the previous lockdown, does not expect the number of children availing of this to be significant. These children will not receive face-to-face teaching; rather they will carry out the same remote learning as their peers in a ‘supervised learning’ environment.** Any preparations regarding catering, etc should be cancelled for the first day. Primary schools will return fully on 11th January. Post-primary schools will cater for Years 12-14 from 11th January with the remaining year-groups carrying out remote learning until the end of January. There is an expectation that post-primary schools use this opportunity to apply social distancing, splitting classes across two rooms for example. There will be further flexibility in the first week for post-primary schools to hold revision classes/sessions for examination pupils if they feel that would be beneficial. DE policy deems that this flexibility does not apply to Year 7 as the transfer test is a private and not a departmental exam. There is a clear*

expectation that all staff continue to adhere rigorously to the guidance already in place regarding the appropriate wearing of face masks, the use of virtual meetings where possible and gatherings of no more than six adults socially distanced. The Minister has further stated that staff may use face coverings in situations beyond the guidance if they so wish. Further information regarding vulnerable groups and the application of more stringent mitigations will issue shortly. We have continued to impress upon the Minister our contention that teachers and education workers, particularly those in Special Schools, should be a priority group for vaccinations. We will keep you updated on progress. We have also stressed again the last-minute nature of decision-making and the lack of consultation with the workforce. As previously stated, we hope that the Minister asking to meet with the unions this morning shows a change in attitude and direction but we will keep this under review.

The “last minute information” from the Department of Education has been very challenging to try to plan and implement and your patience and understanding is appreciated whilst we as a School try to figure out where we go from here. I have listed below information that I can definitely confirm with Parents at this stage:

- ✓ **Harding Memorial Primary School will be closed to all Primary 1 to Primary 7 Pupils on Monday 4th January 2021.**
- ✓ This information was already been sent out to all School Families by Text Message on Thursday 31st December. If any School Family did not receive this Text Message, please e mail eshannon845@c2kni.net at your earliest possible convenience.
- ✓ I am meeting with School Teaching Staff and Non-Teaching Staff on Monday 4th January to finalise the arrangements for Remote Learning and Supervised Learning
- ✓ **Remote Learning will then start for all Primary 1 to Primary 7 pupils from Tuesday 5th January 2021 onwards.** As Principal I feel that Harding Memorial Primary School has been well prepared for this eventuality since the start of the current school year as we have made a very significant financial investment with Digital Learning available via Seesaw, Bug Club, Education City, TT Rockstars etc
- ✓ Harding Memorial Primary School is determined to support the families of our Health Workers and Frontline Keyworkers. **Consequently I can confirm that Supervised Learning (Key Worker Childcare) will be available for the Pupils of Key Workers and vulnerable children from Tuesday 5th January 2021 onwards.** A list of “Key Workers” and an Application Form for your child to avail of Key Worker provision is attached at the end of this correspondence.
- ✓ **I wish to confirm with Parents the advice received from the UTU that states that The Minister, based on the previous lockdown, does not expect the number of children availing of this (Supervised Learning/Key Worker Childcare) to be significant.**
- ✓ **These children will not receive face-to-face teaching; rather they will carry out the same remote learning as their peers in a “supervised learning” environment.**
- ✓ Therefore I wish to confirm clearly and frankly with all Parent/Guardian my preferred approach to Pupil and Staff attendance at Harding Memorial Primary School during the week beginning Monday 4th January 2021 – **I want the fewest amount of people in school for the shortest amount of time to Minimize the risk of Covid Infection in HMPS.**

✓ Although the Minister wishes to keep the numbers of pupils in schools at a minimum, we fully understand the need to support you in your vital Key Worker Role and if you have no other alternative but to send your child to Harding Memorial Primary School on Tuesday 5th January 2021, we will continue to care for them.

✓ This will not be Face to Face Teaching – this is being supervised in the school building, doing the same activities as the children who are at home.

✓ Please note that Children of Key Workers can be accommodated during their normal school hours e.g P1 – P3 from 9.00am to 2.00pm and P4 – P7 from 9.00am - 3.00pm

Yours Sincerely

Mr Stephen Cumper
Principal

REQUESTED INFORMATION ABOUT KEY WORKER ROLE

Can you please confirm your Key Worker Role Status by completing the following information and sending it via e mail to scumper654@c2kni.net on or before **12.00pm on Monday 4th January 2021.** Mr Cumper will confirm receipt of your e mail

Key Worker Employer Information

Working Pattern

➤ **You will be contacted by the School Principal via Email after 1.00pm on Monday 4th January 2021 to confirm the Supervised Learning/Key Worker Childcare Arrangements for your Child/Children from Tuesday 5th January 2021 onwards**

Department of Education Definition of a Key Worker (Jan 21)

- Health and Social Care. This includes doctors, nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, home carers and staff required to maintain our health and social care sector;
- Education and childcare. This includes pre-school and teaching staff, social workers and those specialist education professionals who will remain active during the Covid-19 response;
- Public safety and national security. This includes civilians and officers in the police (including key contractors), Fire and Rescue Service, prison service and other national security roles;
- Transport. This will include those keeping air, water, road and rail transport modes operating during the Covid-19 response;
- Utilities, and Communication. This includes staff needed for oil, gas, electricity and water (including sewage) and primary industry supplies to continue during the Covid-19 response, as well as key staff in telecommunications, post and delivery, banking and waste disposal;
- Financial Services - This includes staff needed for essential financial services provision (including but not limited to workers in banks, building societies and financial market infrastructure);
- Food and other necessary goods. This includes those involved in food production, processing, distribution and sale, as well as those essential to the provision of other key goods (e.g. hygiene, medical, etc.);
- Retail. This includes those workers who have been working throughout the pandemic in food retail, for example, and will now extend to those working in other retail businesses permitted to operate by the Executive from June 2020;
- Other workers essential to delivering key public services such as the National Crime Agency; and
- Key national and local government including those administrative occupations essential to the effective delivery of the Covid-19 response.

Department of Education Definition of a Vulnerable Child (Jan 21)

- A child who has an assigned social worker because he or she is a child in need, in need of protection (or on the child protection register) or is a looked after child.
- A child in need includes young carers, children with disabilities, and children living in families where there is domestic abuse, substance abuse, and / or mental health difficulties.
- A child who is receiving support from, or has been referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A child who has a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), a child who is accessing EOTAS, or a child who normally accesses Education Nurture Units.
- A child who is 'on-the-edge' of receiving support from children's social services.
- A child who is in need, including in need of protection, but whose need is not known to statutory services.
- A child who is not known to statutory or voluntary and community support services but who is vulnerable because their family is under increased pressure due to Covid-19 related circumstances.
- A young person who was previously a looked after child, whether or not they are receiving support from statutory services.
- A child who has been placed for adoption.
- Asylum seeking and refugee children and children whose parents have no recourse to public funds.