Dear Parents of St Brendan’s PS Birr 8th January 2021

After two days of increasing speculation, the government announced the closure of the majority of primary schools until 1 February 2021. For the second time during this pandemic, mainstream primary education will move online. It was also announced that special schools, special classes and other specialised settings – secure units etc. will reopen on Monday, 11 January 2021. However last night there was thankfully a U-turn by Minister Norma Foley and in the interests of safety ALL pupils will engage with Remote teaching and learning from Monday 11th January.

**Remote teaching and learning plan**

The staff have met remotely yesterday at staff meeting and are indeed frustrated at another school closure and look forward to reopening in near future. As with last year, we are all fully committed to supporting our pupils through remote teaching and building upon the success of our programme last year. Teachers and SNA’s are permitted to access the school building in a safe, limited and staggered basis and will do so over the coming days to organise and prepare for distance learning. As outlined in earlier correspondence this will follow the schools Remote teaching and learning school policy.

* The teacher will email / post to the website an overall plan of work for each week. We aim to have this with every parent for 6pm each Sunday to allow you to plan the week ahead.
* The teacher will be in contact regularly with each of their pupils via SEESAW app / phone call / email and zoom meetings.
* Each staff member can be contacted via their school email which is listed on school website – distance learning tab. We ask you to respect school hours and the fact that many staff have no childcare of their own while working these lockdown weeks.
* Remote teaching and learning will begin on Monday with a log-in to SEESAW and a simple catch up activity until the books are collected on Tuesday most likely.
* Every school is different but we are confident that the school plan and support measures will again be effective.

**Books and school materials collection day.**

We will operate a book and school materials collection day in a safe manner from the school hall next Tuesday 12th January. Each class will be given a time slot to collect a book pack and parents can drive up the yard and get books out of the window as we operated successfully back in March.

Collection times are staggered for safety:

9.30am-10.00am – Junior Infants

10.00am-10.30am- Senior Infants

10.30am-11.00am- 1st class

11.00am-11.30am – 2nd class

11.30am-12.00pm- 3rd class

12.00pm-12.30pm- 4th class

12.30pm-1.00pm - 5th Class

1.00pm-1.30pm- 6th class

Cairdeas 1 / 2 / MGLD – can be collected at any slot (some teachers are sent out packs pre christmas)

* Do not come to school if you have been advised to self isolate or have COVID 19 symptoms. Packs can be collected on a future Wednesday or we could drop to the door in this case- contact the school.
* Wash and sanitize hands / wear gloves before coming.
* Front gate of school will be open so just drive up the yard to park outside the PE hall windows.
* One adult ( no kids) asked to come up to the hall window and give in the name of pupils and class.
* Staff member ( wearing gloves) will collect from table in the hall and hand out the window to you.
* Sibling book packs can be collected at the one slot you choose to call.
* We only have a few staff in hall to avoid social gathering so please be patient.
* Please pack up and leave then as we want to avoid any social gathering.
* Thanks to the staff who came in to organise these resources and to the staff who volunteered to hand them out on Tuesday.
* As with last march, please don’t panic and turn your home into a mini school and yourself into the pretend teacher. However do try to set up the school books for an hour or two each morning where your child can work away with writing , reading , colouring and maths. This is to give them some routine away from technology as well as giving mam/dad a well-deserved break ! Then allow them to play ( keeping social distancing advice) and make sure they get fresh “cold” air and even try some of the sports skill or TICTOC challenges that no doubt will resurface. Your child will not fall behind if they engage with the teacher on a daily basis for these few weeks and please don’t hesitate to ask the teacher / SNA for support.

**School lunch packs**

We operated an excellent and safe scheme last year where each Wednesday up to 100 food packs would be collected at the school shed. Collection time is 11am-1pm sharp. The packs are fresh packs comprised of bread / milk / cheese / jam etc to the value of approx.€10 and are to ensure that each child gets their school lunch food for the week. We have continued the same last as we finished with last August so all families of boys from Senior infants to 6th who got packs are included. We invite junior infant parents to get involved- please PM me on the facebook page to order a pack. Its open to all our families so if you wish to get pack this year for first time just PM me on the FB page also.

I hope and pray that you keep safe and we will get through this surge.

Kind regards,

Niall Crofton

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Principal Teacher