

**JONESBORO'PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Principal: Mr Donal Keenan*

**Monday, 22 November 2021**

Dear Parent/Carers,

We are more than half way through our first term, and well on our way towards the excitement the festive season brings. As we approach the final leg of term one, I would like to draw your attention to a few items.

### **Parent Teacher Interviews**

As you are already aware the majority of our Parent-Teacher Interviews will take place on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2021, the school will be closed that day. Some teachers with larger classes will be holding their interviews on others days.

We urge parents to please return your preferred contact phone number to allow class teachers to contact you easily, and be mindful that many teachers will be making these calls from a withheld/private number.

### **Christmas Plays**

**It's that time of year again when we all begin to look forward to the school Christmas Play, and this year more than most we really want to afford our children the opportunity to broadcast a Christmas production. The classes have already begun their preparation and our staff have been working on ways of sharing this with families and the wider school community.**

**Traditionally our senior production would take place in the Pastoral Centre, unfortunately this year the pastoral centre committee have aired on the side of caution and refused the use of the hall, fearful of a Covid 'super spread' risk.**

**We certainly do not want to disappoint our children nor our families, so we plan to stage this year's show in school, where we have sole control, and broadcast the performances over a number of days to live audiences. We will make every effort to provide the pupils with the same exciting experience as other shows and ask that you provide positive messages at home, so our children's efforts are considered as important as any previous year. We will communicate the final details with you as soon as possible, obviously we will be taking every precaution to ensure the health and safety of our children and staff. We thank you for your support as we navigate our way through the next few weeks.**

## **Staffing Pressures**

Like many schools across Northern Ireland we have been facing challenging pressures due to staff absence, these challenges have been faced by both our teaching and non-teaching staff, and are as a result of the continued Covid pandemic, winter flu and circulating stomach bugs etc.

As a result, of Covid related absence, across the entire education sector, there is a significant shortage of available substitute teachers and our school like many schools across Northern Ireland are finding it is impossible to secure substitute teachers to cover when staff are off.

On many occasions, where a teacher has been sick or required to self-isolate, we have contacted as many as fifty substitute teachers with none being available to work. Where this occurs we try to cover the absence using our own school based resources. On many occasions and when available our Engage/Learning Support Teacher Mrs McGowan has covered classes. This has a significant impact on the running of the school and on the additional support we offer to our children.

There have been a few occasions, in the last number of months, where we have had several members of staff off at the same time and we have been unable to obtain a supply teacher to cover, while we endeavour to make this as seamless as possible for our pupils, and redeploy our own staff this is far from an ideal situation.

As a school we cannot replace absent teachers with classroom assistants.

We have a duty of care to ensure the health and safety of all pupils and staff. Therefore, if safe levels of teaching staff cannot be maintained, our only option will be to temporarily close the class, and resort to remote learning, if possible.

Please understand this is something we hope we never have to do, and we will do everything within our power to avoid this. A decision to close a class or indeed the whole school is not one any Board of Governors or school management take lightly, however, Jonesborough PS will need your continued support and understanding should we find ourselves in this position.

## **School Communications**

As a school we try our best to keep our parents and families updated with events and necessary information. We use various methods of communication.

- School Email – we use this as our main communication platform sending school letters, essential information and general communications (we are endeavouring to be a paperless school).
- Text Service - the school also operates a text messaging service
- Social Media – we have a Facebook account where we post pictures of various things that are happening within our school and share simple reminders. This is for information purposes only.
- Class Dojo – is used to showcase ongoing activities in the infant rooms and send information about homework or Foundation stage events. ONLY during periods of Remote/Home learning will the teacher communicate with you via class dojo.

During normal school operation if parents wish to contact the school/teacher, they should do so using either an email to the school ([emurphy867@c2kni.net](mailto:emurphy867@c2kni.net)) or telephone call (028 30848330). Please remember teachers are in class all day and will only be able to return messages after class finishes.

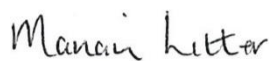
Parents can also email class teachers directly using their own email address, these can be found on our child's homework activities.

Please DO NOT try to communicate with school via social media, or class dojo during normal school operation. These channels of communication are not monitored and messages may be missed.

### **Reporting Absences**

We would like to remind parents the importance of reporting a pupil absence. Essentially the school require this information in writing or by direct email. You can email either the class teacher or office to report your child's absence, preferably before 9.30am, then the correct attendance code can be recorded for your child. We understand this may be viewed as an inconvenience, however the school is required by the Education Welfare Service to maintain a record of all absences and where no reason for an absence has been given the Education Welfare Service make contact with the parents. These strategies are all part of the Education Authorities continued safe guarding measures for all children.

**Kind regards**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marian Litter".

**Marian Litter**  
**Senior Manager**