



School Information Booklet

September 2018

Dear Parents,

Please find detailed below some information that you will find useful regarding school life and procedures. We look forward to a wonderful school year supporting your children with their learning.

Contacting Office Staff/ Sending Money To School

As you can appreciate we have a busy school with over 400 pupils and one of the busiest places in the school is our school office. This is especially so at key times such as 1st thing in the morning. We reduce the amount of time parents have to wait at the office in the morning to see office staff and free up more time for the staff to spend dealing with their list of "morning duties" by following a few simple procedures.

- Parents should not bring children's money (break time/ dinners/ swimming etc.) to the office. This money should be sent to school with the child who will then pass it to their own class teacher if required. The money should be placed in an envelope clearly stating the name of the child, their class, the reason for sending the money and the total amount contained within the envelope. If you send money to school in this way, please ensure that you check school bags etc. in case your child has not given us the envelope or in case it has been mislaid. This is especially required with our younger pupils. We have quite robust procedures in place to ensure that we record the money sent in but an increasing number of parents are informing us that they sent money to school when we have no record of having received it.

We are currently investigating the possibility of parents paying for break/ trips/ swimming etc. electronically. We are in the early stages of this research and will be in touch with details if we decide to offer this service.

- Due to the busy nature of our school office staff do not have time in the morning to give change to parents and therefore parents are asked to send children to school with the correct amount of money each day that they will need.
- We would also ask parents of P4-7 pupils to use the Homework Diary system (see below) to contact teachers rather than going through the office staff when this is appropriate. This will help us immensely in reducing congestion at the office.

We do of course realise that there are times when parents need to speak with office staff and this facility will always be available. We would quite simply like to reduce the amount of time they spend dealing with things that could be dealt with just as effectively in other ways. We thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Contacting Our Polish Assistants

Our Polish assistants (Marika & Daria) are available to support parents who require them each day. This is limited to certain times of the day as they are busy with their other work supporting children's learning. They can be contacted in person or by phone at the following times: 8.45am-9.00am/ 1.45pm-2.00pm & 3.00pm-3.15pm. They can only be contacted at other times in cases of genuine emergency. We thank parents for their support with these arrangements.

Children & Illness

In a large school like St. Brigid's pupil illness is something that we encounter every day. Some illnesses mean that children have to stay off school for periods of time while others of a less serious nature do not stop them from coming to school. There are times when we will put in place certain measures to support children attending school when ill/ suffering from medical complaints such as keeping children in at break time if they are in plaster due to a broken limb etc. In recent times however we have noticed a sharp rise in the number of children for whom parents are requesting that they are kept in due to ailments such as sore throats etc. due to colder weather etc. This is something that we find difficult to do for a number of reasons including the number of parents requesting this and the supervision required to enable it to happen. In short we can no longer offer this service except in the most serious of conditions. It may be helpful to know that the children are only in the playground for short periods of time of around 15 minutes each break and lunch and that we only allow them to go outside if the weather permits this. This time is reduced even more if they attend dinners or buy a break in the canteen. It remains the responsibility of parents to decide whether their child is well enough to attend school each day. We thank you in advance for your support with this issue.

Allergies:

We have a number of children with allergies in school and we work closely with their families and others to ensure that we support them with management of their conditions. In order to do so we require a “care plan” prepared by medical professionals. Without such a plan actions to meet their needs can be difficult to put in place. It is therefore vital that if a parent is informing us about an allergy that medical professionals have been consulted in advance and information from the medical professional is shared with us.

Punctuality – Getting To School On Time

We would like to take this opportunity to remind parents that arrival at school on time in the morning is crucial to ensuring that every child’s educational experience is a positive one. The following will hopefully clarify our procedures etc:

- School starts at 8.55am.
- The length of time that children may arrive late for school varies but the consequences are the same. These include missing registration (and therefore being marked absent), missing the beginning of their lessons and disrupting the rest of the class as they arrive into the classroom late.

Ten minutes late every day is equal to over 3 hours of learning missed each month. This then equals over 30 hours/ more than 6 full school days missed over the school year.

- To support parents, we currently accept pupils into school from 8.30am onwards. Please note that we do not have supervision available for pupils who arrive before this time.
- The school bell rings at 8.55am. If you are just arriving at the school grounds as the bell rings, if you are still “on the road” or indeed if you are still at home at this time your child is going to be late for the beginning of the school day.
- We do appreciate that from time to time unexpected circumstances can cause children to be late for school however we have a duty to monitor the punctuality of our pupils and we therefore wish to inform you that we closely monitor the arrival times of all of our pupils and will be in touch with you should your child’s arrival times give us cause for concern. We trust you will appreciate the need for us to do so and thank you in advance for your co-operation and support.

Attendance – Contacting The School Office

School policy is that we wish to hear from parents on the first day of their child’s absence by telephone. This will allow us to update our records accordingly. Please telephone as early as possible each morning (and before 9.15am) in order to alert us to any absence promptly. We can receive calls from 8.30am. We thank you in advance for your support with these issues.

Pupil Medical Appointments etc:

Parents should note that medical appointments etc. should be made for outside of school hours. While we appreciate that this not always possible for certain types of appointments we would encourage parents to do so when appropriate.

School Canteen (Break-time Snacks & Lunches)

Our school canteen is managed by the Education Authority (EA). While the canteen is not under our direct school management we work in close partnership with the staff there to ensure efficient delivery of the service. School dinners are currently priced at £2.60 while break time snacks range in price. **All school dinners that require payment must be paid for on the day that they are purchased. We have been informed by canteen services that non-payment for meals will no longer be permitted. The same applies to canteen snacks.** We understand that from time to time a parent may need to contact us regarding this issue eg: if a child has left home without their canteen money or their packed lunch and we will ensure that in these cases the child receives a meal/ snack to be paid for later by parents. Doing so is not an issue for us at all. However, if a parent sends a child to school without dinner/ snack money on a regular basis and has not made contact with the school (or the school with them) then problems can arise. We thank you for your support with this issue.

After School Supervision

We continue to provide an after-school supervision service for pupils between 2.00pm-3.00pm. The service is primarily available to parents of P1, 2 & 3 children who have an older brother or sister at the school finishing at 3.00pm. At times when the after-school club is oversubscribed these children are given priority. Places in the after-school club must be pre-booked by parents. Bookings can be made by contacting the school office and can be made on a daily, weekly, monthly or termly basis. Though we do accept telephone bookings on the day the child will be staying the more notice that we have the easier it is to organise the service so if possible please contact us in advance. The cost of the after-schools service is £2.50 per day. This is payable in advance at the time of the booking or on the day of attendance. Where this is not possible eg: an unexpected situation causes a parent to book their child in over the phone on the day an arrangement can be made to pay on the next school day. Please note that non-payment, particularly for a prolonged period of time, may result in a child's place being postponed until payment is made.

School Diaries - "Keeping in Touch" (P4-7 Parents)

In recent times we introduced a new system in pupil homework diaries to allow teachers and parents to keep in touch during the year. It has proved very successful and we have therefore continued with its use this year. We have included blank notes to enable you to keep teachers informed about homeworks etc. It also allows teachers to keep in touch with you. The diaries also have a section to allow pupils and teachers to keep you informed about their progress with Accelerated Reader.

Cycling to School

We are very keen to encourage children to cycle to school each day where possible and would welcome an increase in the number of children who come to school this way. Children who are cycling should always wear a helmet and push their bicycles from the St. Patrick's gate on the Broughshane Road and the Hugomont gate on the Cushendall Road side of the school. Children should also bring a bicycle lock with them to secure their bike to the bike stands. A plastic bag to keep the seat dry when parked is also useful.

Names on Uniform etc

We would ask that all items of school uniform and other clothing have each child's name written on them. We regularly donate many unclaimed items to charity. Each June we have bags of unclaimed clothing left in cloakrooms that we were unable to trace owners for due to none of the items having children's names on them. Please encourage and check that your child has returned home each day with the items that they brought to school. We have displayed the clothing/ items outside the front doors of the school for a few days this week and will continue to do so until Tuesday when we will donate them to charity.

School Rules/ Hair Styles

School Rules were discussed with children in assembly recently. We would ask that parents support us with the rules with particular reference to the following:

- **Hair Cuts** – We would ask that parents support our guidelines on pupil hair styles. All hair styles should be neat with no extreme colours. We strongly discourage shaven/ part shaven hair cuts (including designs & letters shaved into hair), tails attached to or grown in hair and hair cut shorter than a Number 2 cut.
- **School Uniform** should be worn at all times when in school. Black shoes are an important part of our school uniform throughout the year.
- **Mobile Phones** are generally not allowed in school. Should a child need to bring a phone to school eg: for contacting a parent after school etc. it should remain turned off during the whole of the school day including break and lunch times. The school is not liable for any damage/ loss etc. to such items if they are brought to school.
- **Jewellery** – For health and safety reasons ***we would prefer that children do not wear earrings at all.*** Should parents allow children to wear them they should be limited to either a single earring or a single pair of earrings and they **must** be of the small stud variety. Pupils are not permitted to wear other jewellery such as rings, bracelets, necklaces etc. **Nail polish is also not allowed.**