



5th February, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardians,

I hope your week has gone well.

Our school, although scattered in many different directions, remains a hub of shared learning and activity. Well done again to all our wonderful pupils. Levels of engagement with remote teaching and learning are excellent. The effort families are putting in is highly commendable- well done to all!

Parent/Teacher Meeting: Last week we held our Parent/Teacher meetings by phone. Meetings were extremely successful. Many parents voiced their appreciation of the hard work, creativity and dedication of staff while supporting continuity of learning for pupils at this time. Remote teaching and learning isn't easy for anyone but your words of thanks and gratitude are most appreciated and give us a real boost- thank you.

Information received from the Department of Education: This week the DES issued a timeline and guidance for the phased re-opening of special schools and special classes. We have not yet, however, received any information with regard to when we can expect mainstream schools to re-open. All members of our school community will be informed as soon as more information is known.

Yesterday, the DES issued information on the new programme entitled **In-person Supplementary Programme to Support the Education or Care Needs of Pupils with Complex Needs during this Period of School Closure**. There is a small number of children in St. Mary's NS who would be eligible for this additional in-person support. I will make contact with the relevant families early next week. In the interim you may wish to familiarise yourself with the details of the programme. I have attached the relevant information for parents below.

Safer Internet Day: Next Tuesday, 9th February, is Safer Internet day. This is a day that we celebrate in school every year. This year our celebrations will be held remotely. For more information on how you can get involved please click on the following link: <https://www.webwise.ie/saferinternetday/>

We are all spending far more time online these days. Safer Internet day is an opportune time to revise key messages of internet safety. For more ideas on tips and tricks to managing online safety at home please click the following link: <http://www.stmarysnscobh.com/managing-online-safety-at-home/>. The parents section of the Webwise website also offers invaluable advice on the topic of screen-time and online safety. <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/>. Our school's Acceptable Usage of the Internet Policy which was reviewed in December, 2020 is available to view here: <http://www.stmarysnscobh.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Acceptable-Use-Policy-Reviewed-Dec-2020.pdf>

Additional learning/ support material: Staff are working tirelessly to support children and families at this time. We are very proud that all element of the guidelines issued by the DES on remote teaching and learning have been considered and are being addressed. Seesaw, Aladdin Connect, Padlets, online programmes, phone, email and home learning support packs are all being used effectively to meet the needs of pupils and parents at this time.

I also wish to draw your attention to the many supplementary supports which have been compiled and made available under the parent's tab on the school website- <http://www.stmarysnscobh.com>

The following padlet also offers a vast number of relevant topics which families may find useful during this period of school closure. <https://padlet.com/stmarysnscobh/n6nctqcb0n0q9t4>

Should you require help accessing any of the above resources/platforms please don't hesitate to contact your daughter's class teacher by email. I am also contactable on office@stmarysnscobh.com.



Support is available: This is not an easy time for families. We do our best to support families despite the restrictions and barriers in place at this time. With this in mind I wish to share some information which has been compiled by TUSLA's Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Service in North Lee and the Cork CYPSC committee. The attached one-page leaflet outlines the many supports that are still available during the on-going COVID19 pandemic, it lists many support services available in Cobh, Carrigtwohill and the wider North Lee area.

Final Word: Frustration is to be expected both on the part of parents and children- we all long for greater levels of normality to return. To help children please continue to praise them as much as possible at this time. Celebrate their successes no matter how small. Encourage them, where possible, to go outside, to play, to get exercise and to have fun. Please also encourage them to take one day at a time, to show gratitude and find the magic moments (no matter how small) in every day. There's talk of snow next week- I'm sure the children will find some magic there!

I wish everybody a good week.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Fiona O'Callaghan