1st January 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian

**School Re-opening, January 2021**

Firstly, I would like to wish all pupils and their families a happy New Year. As I indicated in my Christmas message to you, it was possible that school might not re-open as planned on Tuesday 5th January, given ongoing Covid-19 issues. As a result of the currently worsening Covid-19 situation, the Education Minister, Mr Weir, has announced changes to school re-opening, and they will affect our school as follows:

* All Year Groups will be taught remotely from Tuesday 5th to Friday 8th January 2021 using Google Classroom, other online learning platforms or booklets
* Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 will remain at home and continue to be taught remotely via Google Classroom, other online platforms or booklets until the end of January
* Years 12, 13 and 14 will return to school from Monday 11th January for face-to-face teaching
* GCSE module exams in English and Mathematics scheduled for January will take place as planned

While these are the arrangements for school re-opening, the school will be open from Wednesday 6th January for vulnerable children and the children of keyworkers, whose parents/guardians **need** them to be in school. Please note that pupils attending will be undergoing supervised learning rather than face-to-face teaching. This means that they will be doing the work which is being set for remote learning by their teachers under supervision.

The definitions of keyworkers are:

* 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 educational 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.

If you, as a parent/guardian of a child in any Year Group, fall into any of these above categories and you **need** your child to attend school, can you please contact us by email to info@stpatricks.ballymena.ni.sch.uk on or before Tuesday 5th January at 12.00 midday, or alternatively contact the School Office by telephone on Tuesday 5th January before 12.00 midday.

Yours faithfully



Dr M Knox

Principal