



# Principal's Newsletter

## June 2020 – END OF TERM NEWSLETTER



Dear Parents / Carers,

Wow...what a year this has been! It is safe to say that we are all really looking forward to getting back into some sort of 'normality' come our new school year.

However, before you flick through this newsletter to see how to access our return to school information and what September will look like, please do take a moment to reflect on the experience of the past few months. The sudden closure of our school, way back on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, sent shock waves through us all. It was something that we did not expect. It was very clear that all school staff, parents and pupils hadn't had time to prepare.

You rose to the challenge!!! You, as a family, took time to adjust to home learning. You created your own school environment. You created a timetable for your children. You identified break times and lunch times. You taught and supported your children through their curriculum. You juggled normal family life; shopping, housework and many other tasks. You continued to go to work or work from home all while doing everything above. You managed to keep your children calm.....even when things may have started to get a bit 'tense' and you have supported them throughout this entire COVID-19 journey. You deserve a medal!! Well done to you all. You have managed to come through so much in such a short space of time. 😊

Can I also mention that, all of the above, also applies to my staff here at school. They too have had to change their normal daily life, with families at home, in order to support our pupils via remote and online learning. We have also remained open every single day, including school holidays and bank holidays in order to support children of key workers. On average, out of Northern Ireland's almost 1200 schools, approximately only 500 opened on a daily basis to support key workers. We also opened our doors to the Education Authority and opened as a hub school, facilitating key worker children from other local schools that had, for a range of reasons, decided to close. This has been a huge achievement for us as a school and I am incredibly proud of each member of my VPS team. They are an extremely dedicated bunch and I am delighted that they have played a really positive part in supporting our school community and local community during this very uncertain time.

As we move on to Summer 2020, please take some time to rest and recuperate. 😊  
Everyone linked with our school community deserves it!!



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On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June, the Department of Education released a comprehensive document detailing how schools should plan for a reopening for the new school year from August 2020. Further down this document, you will find links to information relating to each year group and how we intend to return to school in August / September.

**PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT THESE PLANS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE IF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GETS UPDATED MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ADVICE. IF OUR REOPENING PLANS CHANGE I WILL WRITE TO PARENTS, VIA THE SCHOOL APP, TO UPDATE OUR PLANS.**



For Primary 1 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 2 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 3 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 4 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 5 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 6 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

For Primary 7 re-opening plans, please [CLICK HERE](#).

[Please continue to read the rest of this newsletter alongside the re-opening plans.](#)



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## **BREAKFAST CLUB 2020-21**

I am aware that breakfast club is used by a large number of families within our school community and it is a really important resource for many people. It is our intention to try to open breakfast club when we return in August / September, however, discussions are currently ongoing with staff and the Education Authority School Meals Service, as to how this can be achieved if social distancing is still required.

If social distancing is still required, it is likely that breakfast club will be able to run, on a limited capacity, and that booking will be essential, on a first come, first served basis. (Booked weekly).

As soon as I know more information I will write to parents.

## **School Dinners**

As with breakfast club, if social distancing is still in place, along with strict hygiene measures, there may be some adjustments required for our school meal provision. It is likely that the school canteen will only be providing packed lunches for children when we return in August / September.

Parents wanting to purchase a packed lunch for their child can do so. Money should be sent into school, **IN AN ENVELOPE**, on a Monday morning. Please be advised that we are unable to accept any cash into school not in an envelope (for hygiene reasons). If cash is sent into school not in an envelope it will be sent home with your child. I'm sure you appreciate why this has to be the case.

## **Money Envelopes**

We know it can be difficult trying to find spare envelopes around the house when sending money into school. To make life a little easier, you can purchase a booklet of money envelopes from the school office for £3. These envelopes, a little like Church collection envelopes, can be used for dinner money, milk money, payment for trips etc. Simply call into the school office if you would like to purchase these. All money being sent into school **must** be in some form of envelope. If cash is sent into school not in an envelope it will be sent home with your child. I'm sure you appreciate why this has to be the case.

## **After School Activity Club – Kids' Cave**

If social distancing is still a requirement in August / September I'm afraid that our afterschool activity club, Kids' Cave **will not** be open.

We hope that the guidance from the Department of Education will change, however, I would urge parents to make temporary, alternative child care arrangements for when school returns.



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Each year group will be given specific back to school guidance, as outlined on page 2 of this newsletter.

Please find outlined below a few generic pieces of information for all children:

## School Uniform

- In preparation for returning to school, please ensure that your child has the correct full school uniform. Just a reminder that training shoes are not allowed to be worn outside of PE lessons. Black school shoes should be worn at all other times.

## Equipment

- All children will have received a list of equipment and resources they will need when they start back to school – this was sent out with your child's report. I would be very grateful if children could bring all their equipment with them on their first day back to school.
- **Please be advised that all parents will be required to purchase a school planner for their children in September. These will be priced at £3.50 per planner and will be sent home at the start of the new academic year. These can be paid for in September.**



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## Staffing Information 2020 / 21

Please find outlined below some staffing changes for 2020/21.



Mrs Janice McMechan will be moving on from Victoria Primary School and Nursery Unit and entering the wonderful years of retirement.

Janice has been a teacher at VPS for 20 years.

We all wish her well in her retirement.

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Mrs Alison Neilly will also be joining Mrs McMechan and entering the wonderful years of retirement at the end of this academic year.

Mrs Neilly has been a teacher at VPS for 47 years.

We all wish her well in her retirement.....however....although not a full time teacher at school, Mrs Neilly will be coming back in September to help support Primary 7 in terms of preparation for AQE. Her knowledge and experience in this field is vast and will help support our P7 pupils returning to school.

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Miss Naomi Campbell will be joining us in September as a full time Primary 4 class teacher.

We look forward to welcoming Miss Campbell into our VPS Team.





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Mrs Rebecca Miskelly (Primary 7 Teacher and Head of Key Stage 2) will be leaving us, temporarily, this coming year. We are delighted to let the school community know that Mrs Miskelly is pregnant and expecting a new little bundle of joy in November. In light of the current COVID-19 Public Health Measures, Mrs Miskelly may not be back at school before her maternity leave begins – however, this is subject to

change.

We are delighted to be welcoming Mr Curtis Allen to our teaching team to cover Mrs Miskelly's maternity leave.

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Mrs Hannah Galbraith (Primary 3 Job Share Teacher) will be leaving us, temporarily, this coming year. We are delighted to let the school community know that Mrs Galbraith is pregnant and expecting a new little bundle of joy in October. In light of the current COVID-19 Public Health Measures, Mrs Galbraith may

not be back at school before her maternity leave begins – however, this is subject to change.

We are delighted to be welcoming Mrs Linzi McMillan to our teaching team to cover Mrs Galbraith's maternity leave.



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## UPDATED TERM DATES FOR 2020/21

<u>Term Dates</u>	
<b>August</b>	Mon 24 <sup>th</sup> August – Primary 7 pupils return to school. P2 – P6 begin revision online learning, Monday 31 <sup>st</sup> August – school re-opens for pupils in P1 – P6 (Please see individual year group starting information as per Principal's Newsletter sent 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2020.)
<b>October / November</b>	Mon 26 <sup>th</sup> – <b>School Development Day (School Closed)</b> Tues 27 <sup>th</sup> , Wed 28 <sup>th</sup> , Thurs 29 <sup>th</sup> , Fri 30 <sup>th</sup> November ( <b>School Closed for Half Term</b> ) Mon 2 <sup>nd</sup> November – School reopens
<b>December</b>	Fri 18 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School closes at 12pm for the Christmas Holidays</b> )
<b>January</b>	Tues 5 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School Development Day – school closed</b> ) Wed 6 <sup>th</sup> – School reopens.
<b>February</b>	Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School Development Day – school closed</b> ) Tues 16 <sup>th</sup> , Wed 17 <sup>th</sup> , Thurs 18 <sup>th</sup> , Fri 19 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School Closed for half term</b> ) Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> – School reopens
<b>March / April</b>	Fri 26 <sup>th</sup> March – ( <b>School closes at 12pm for Easter Holidays</b> ) Mon 29 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School Development Day – school closed</b> ) Tues 30 <sup>th</sup> March – Fri 9 <sup>th</sup> April – ( <b>School Closed for half term</b> ) Mon 12 <sup>th</sup> – School reopens
<b>May</b>	Mon 3 <sup>rd</sup> – <b>School Closed (Bank Holiday)</b> Mon 31 <sup>st</sup> – ( <b>School Development Day – school closed</b> )
<b>June</b>	Fri 11 <sup>th</sup> – <b>School Development Days (School Closed)</b> Fri 25 <sup>th</sup> – ( <b>School closes at 12pm for Summer Holidays</b> )