



Ballyclare Secondary School

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Principal: Mrs K O Bell BA Adv Cert Ed PQH

January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer,

I hope you all had a safe and an enjoyable Christmas and may I take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and prosperous new year.

As you will all be aware we enter the new term in a different way with all pupils learning remotely from home up until the February half term holiday.

As a school, in addition to our provision for vulnerable children and children of key workers, we want to try and make this period of time feel as less 'remote' from school as possible for our young people and we have a number of ways in which we will try and achieve this.

Firstly, can I ensure you that the Pastoral Team in school are here to offer every child pastoral support even when learning remotely. So, please don't hesitate to contact a member of the pastoral team by either ringing the school or by email to info@ballyclaresec.ballyclare.ni.sch.uk. I would encourage you to contact your child's class teacher initially and then it can be passed onto your child's Year Teacher if required. If you believe the issue to be more serious and you would like to speak to either Mr Beggs (Boys' Tutor) or myself, please feel free to do so. If you're unsure who your child's class teacher or year teacher are, the school's Pastoral Care Structure for 2020-21 can be viewed on our school website under Pastoral Care.

We are aware of the many issues facing our pupils and their families and as a school we are keen to provide support in whatever way we can. It is also helpful for us to know of any pastoral issues that may be preventing pupils from being able to complete their online work set by their teachers.

Secondly, to help our pupils stay in contact with their class teachers and year teachers during this period of remote learning or future periods of remote learning or self-isolation, each registration class will have their own google classroom where the class teacher will post a short pastoral message each morning which may remind the pupils which subjects they have on that day, checking that pupils have all that they need or it may include a message with a pastoral focus from our pastoral curriculum. This facility also gives the pupils a method of communicating with their class teacher to ask a question or raise a concern. Year Teachers will post the message on a Friday.

If your child is unsure how to access their form class google classroom the list of access codes to each form class' google classroom will be sent out via the SIMS Parent App. There is a guide on how to use google classroom for pupils, parents and carers on our school website if you need some support. This guide can also be used to support your child using google classroom for their academic subjects, however, if you have a work related query please contact your child's subject teacher. Please remind and ensure your child uses their school email address to join a google classroom. No personal email addresses should be used.

I strongly encourage all parents and carers to support their child to engage with their remote learning. I would encourage to try and get a routine that best suits your child and family circumstances, so that your child is well organised and can submit work to teachers on time. Engagement in remote learning and submitting work is vitally important to the learning and academic progress of your child. If you have any work related queries, please do not hesitate to contact your child's subject teacher.

Thirdly, if your child is in need of extra pastoral support can I draw your attention to the wide range of services our school's counselling provider, Familyworks NI, offer. I have attached three flyers on counselling, health and well-being and dealing with anxiety. If this would be beneficial for your child, please feel free to contact Familyworks NI (www.familyworksni.com). On their website, you will find contact numbers for their regional services, a number of very useful videos and blogs for both young people and parents including unplugging from technology, loneliness, kindness, when things feel too much and staying healthy during school closure to name a few. Another supportive website includes www.mindyourhead.ork.uk/what-we-do/support/wellness.

I have also attached the most up-to-date Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership's 'Details of Amendments to Locality Planning Groups Members Service Delivery During COVID-19' which includes the contact details for all family support providers and other useful resources.

In addition to this, there are a wide range of resources available on the NSPCC website, to support parents and carers, www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/, ranging from working from home with a family to talking about difficult topics with your children. There is also support for parents and carers on children's mental health, online safety and talking about drugs and alcohol, this can be found at www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/. A list of NSPCC's services are also outlined in this area of the website. Other useful providers of support for parents and carers include Parenting NI and you can browse their resources at www.parentingni.org and ParentlineNI (0808 8020 400).

Fourthly, I have attached a letter from FamilyworksNI, notifying students that FamilyworksNI will continue to provide counselling through Secure Online 1-1 Video Calling Counselling or Telephone Counselling. It also explains the referral process, urgent referrals, drop-ins and supplies contact details. Your child can still self-refer via the FamilyworksNI website.

Fifthly, if any parents have not yet joined SIMS Parent App and would like to avail of this facility, please contact the school office for assistance.

Finally, in the unfortunate event that your child or a member of their household test positive for COVID-19 you should continue to inform school on 02893 322610 or via email info@ballyclaresec.ballyclare.ni.sch.uk, as this may affect your child's return date to school.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Thank you for your continued support.

Yours sincerely



Mr A Cowden
Acting Head of Pastoral Care