**Ballymoney National School,**

**Ballineen,**

**Co. Cork.**

**Phone: 023-8847583**

**14th March 2021**

Dear Parents,

Tomorrow the school will finally reopen fully. The junior classroom has been very busy since their return. Most importantly, they were given time to chat together and play together. Once they had settled back to school, they became very busy. They have done lots of gardening, started sticking the bottle tops to the mural and they have sent us daily updates on the tadpoles that they are observing in the playground. Tomorrow, we will all meet together as a school to have an assembly.

The senior classroom worked very well for eight weeks on zoom but there were some areas of the curriculum that we did not cover, such as PE. Please send your child to school in runners everyday as we will be covering athletics in PE over the next few weeks and we will be running regularly. It will take a few days to adjust to the open windows so please send them to school in warm clothes. We are not permitted to have external teachers during level 5 restrictions. Unfortunately, this means that our ukulele lessons still can not commence.

The Department of Education has brought in a few updates to their guidelines on re-opening school safely. All of their suggested amendments were already happening in our school during the first term, e.g. keeping the windows open at all times and staff should wear face masks when working in close proximity to a pupil. All of our staff members already wear their face masks at all times when inside the school building. Pupils are not required to wear facemasks in the school building but if they chose to, they will not be discouraged.

We have been asked to advise you of the following points:

1. Parents should not congregate at or near the school gate at drop off and collection times.

2. Please communicate with the school by phone or by e-mail rather than face to face.

3. Pupils should self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test.

4. Pupils should not return to or attend school in the event of the following:

 ¬ if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19

 ¬ if they live with someone who has symptoms of the virus

 ¬ If they have travelled outside of Ireland.

5. Parents and pupils should cooperate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school;

6. Pupils should be reminded that they need to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser when entering and exiting vehicles, and when entering and exiting school buildings.

7. The Department guidance sets out an overall approach for schools that windows should be open as fully as possible when classrooms are not in use (e.g. during break-times or lunch-times (assuming not in use) and also at the end of each school day) and partially open when classrooms are in use. The guidance provides that good ventilation can be achieved in classrooms without causing discomfort particularly during cold spells. Please dress your children in warm clothes.

Kind regards,

Shireen

**Dates for your Diary**

Monday 15th March: Board of Management Meeting

Wednesday 17th March: School Closed for St. Patrick's Day

Friday 26th March: Schools closes at 12pm for the Easter Holidays

Monday 12th April: School reopens for the summer term