



21.08.20

Dear Parent,

Following last week's guidance and my letter outlining the Induction & Restart dates/times, your teacher will be in touch via Seesaw this afternoon to communicate further details regarding your child/ren's induction details and staggered school day. Timings must be strictly adhered to for effective social distancing. Now that whole class bubbles have been stipulated by the Education Minister, our Nursery and P1 year groups have reverted back to our 'tried & tested' Induction Settling Procedures.

Our next stage is to communicate information to help minimise risk for our school community and assist a calm start to our 2020-21 year. This is just the starting point for us, so it will be reviewed regularly and amended as necessary. For example, it is our hope that once everyone adjusts to the staggered pick-up times and acts promptly, we will be able to reduce the staggered 'end of day' times, therefore increasing each child's learning time in school. Your support with this process is essential so I thank you in advance for working with us to help reduce anxiety, and to ensure we are all focused on making the return as successful and safe as possible.

For your information, I have attached the Departmental document 'Northern Ireland's Re-Opening Schools Guidance New School Day' to give you the background of all of these decisions, a Parent Letter & Leaflet from the Education Minister with more detailed information for parents as well as a flow-chart outlining the action Rathmore will follow should a child (or staff member) display signs of COVID. Our School Dinner Menu (1.09.20-18.09.20) is also attached.

This Restart Information Letter is lengthy as it details our current parent information in light of Education Department advice: All guidance will be reviewed regularly and you will be made aware of any changes/additions as they arise.

Pedestrian Entrances: The main entrance (Rathmore Road) and field entrance (Lyndhurst Avenue) will remain two-way, with pedestrians staying to the left of their path and respecting others' journey. Change – Killeen Pathway is too narrow for two-way pedestrians. Morning will be entrance only for the P4-P7 children (unaccompanied by an adult) into their playground and Afternoon will be exit only for the P4-P7 children (unaccompanied by an adult) from their playground.

Start of Day: Crossing Patrol will be on duty on the Rathmore and Killeen roads from 8:40am with school gates opening at 8:45am – Classroom staff will be in their classes to welcome children from 8.45am each day.

P2 & P3 children can be accompanied onto the grounds by one adult who leaves them to the Junior Playground gate entry point as usual. Your child goes directly into their class (as on previous wet days). Staff will be available at the gates to assist children to their classrooms.

P4-P7 Children enter the school grounds by foot, unaccompanied by an adult and go directly to their classroom (as on previous wet days). Staff will be available at the gates to assist children to their classrooms.

Nursery & P1 Children will have their own arrangements for one adult to bring them directly to the class door from 8:45am.

Due to large number of children in our school, we ask families with Rathmore siblings to arrive around 8:45am and families with a single Rathmore child to arrive closer to 9am.

End of Day: Crossing Patrol will be on duty on the Rathmore and Killeen roads from 1:30-3:05pm. Each class bubble will leave at the same time and teachers will inform parents via Seesaw of the exact times and location for pick-up. It is vital that afternoon collections and departure from the school playground are prompt for both adults and children.

It is our hope that once everyone adjusts to these times and acts promptly, we will be able to reduce the staggered 'end of day' times, therefore increasing each child's learning time in school.

Road Crossing Patrol: EA advises parents that the responsibility for safety of the children coming to and going home from school remains with parents at all times. Rathmore has two crossing patrols to assist with road safety. Mr English, Killeen Avenue, and Mrs Crawford, Rathmore Road, are on duty from approx. 8:40-9:05am, 1:30-3:05pm. Please set a good example for your child, and others, by using the designated crossings.

Contact with School: We want to encourage all of the usual communications and interactions between yourselves and the school. Please use the telephone and email in the first instance to discuss any issues. Face to face meetings will be accommodated only where the need arises. Thank you for signing up to your new 2020-21 Seesaw account as this is how you will receive information and communicate with your new teacher/s.

School Office: can be contacted by:

Email: info@rathmoreps.bangor.ni.sch.uk

Phone: Main School Office 02891270399 & Nursery 02891469192

There is no public access to our school at present. Only deliveries and scheduled appointments will gain access to the foyer by phoning the office number from outside the door/ in the car-park. A member of staff will open the door for all visitors who must wear their face covering and sanitise their hands on entry. A social distance of 2M must be maintained at all times.

Drop Off/Collection of Items: Whilst there will be a reduction of items travelling between school and home there may be the need for items to be left to school or collected from school. A Drop Off/Collection Box is located outside the front door. Please label the item with your child & teacher's name before placing in the box.

Change of Pick-Up Time: Teachers do not have telephones in their rooms and so last minute changes cannot be accommodated. If you have a scheduled appointment for your child, please inform the teacher with at least 24 hours' notice so arrangements can be made for their safe collection from the school front door at the agreed time.

Absences: A phone call is not required. If your child misses any school, a note must be sent to the class teacher, outlining the reason on their return. Illness spreads very easily in a primary school environment. If your child is ill and/or receiving medication, please keep them off school until they are well enough to return. A Welfare Officer monitors monthly attendances.

School Illness & Bumps: It is vital that we have current contact details for your child, so please link with our office urgently if you need to update numbers etc. If your child is unwell during the school day, a staff member will phone, in order of emergency contacts, to arrange your attendance. If your child receives a bump to the head, you will be informed by text as usual. Please see attached COVID Flow Chart for instructions regarding potential COVID symptoms.

Medication: Children with epipens, inhalers or other essential medication should bring these with them to school on their first day along with a copy of the current care plan, where appropriate. Please check that medication is in date. All medication should be clearly labelled with the child's name and will be stored safely in school.

School Uniform & Equipment: As already outlined, school summer uniform will be worn as usual at the start of term. We request that all children from P1-P7 have a school bag (small/A4 size) which is washable and will fit onto the back of their chair. We would ask parents to sanitise bags each evening. This will hold break/lunch and necessary belongings for school. You received a list of the required classroom stationery in June which should be sent to school with your child on their first day. All personal school equipment will be stored in their personal tray to ensure no sharing of items.

Curriculum Meetings: Parents' Curriculum Meetings for P2-P7. This year your teacher will outline the necessary information for the year, including the curriculum content that will be covered with you via Seesaw instead of a face to face meeting.

Home Learning: Written homeworks will be established by each year group with start dates and details communicated with you by Seesaw. This is an important part of the learning process for our pupils and we would urge all families to establish a good routine for their completion each week. As usual, the homework will be sent home on Friday afternoons, (homework grid will be sent in digital form) so each family can organise their time in a way which is most suitable to the demands of their family life. If you are having any difficulty with this process, please arrange to speak to your teacher as soon as possible. In the meantime, we would recommend all our children to spend time reading and revising number bonds (FS & KS1) and/or table facts (KS2).

Breakfast: Breakfast Club will not be available initially, and will be reviewed pending further Government advice. (For your information: Usually, Breakfast Club opens at 8am each morning at a cost of £3 per day. Breakfast Club is paid in advance using our School Money System. Orders close on Sunday night for the week ahead.)

Break: We encourage our children to eat a healthy break and ask for your assistance in this. Please pack one item e.g. fruit, scone, pancake, crackers, cheese, vegetable sticks for your child each day. We do not permit children to swap items due to the prevalence of serious food allergies-this practice will continue.

Water - Please continue to send a filled water bottle to school each day as we encourage water breaks.

Lunch:

Packed lunches - Glass bottles and fizzy drinks are not permitted.

School Dinners – To aid our Restart, for the first three weeks of school (1-18 September 2020)

School Dinners will be 'packed lunch style', made by the kitchen team and delivered to each class.

This year school dinner cost remains the same at £2.60 per dinner.

Dinners are paid in advance using our School Money System. Orders close on Sunday night for the week ahead. If dinners are not booked, a home packed lunch will be necessary. Please see the School Dinner Menu attached. Many children will have credits carried through from last term. The School Money System will go live for your booking convenience on Thursday 27 August 2020.

Severe Food Allergies: We have a number of children in school who suffer from life threatening allergies. Please do not send any products, containing nuts, into school.

Free School Meals/Uniform Grant: We encourage all those who were eligible for Free School Meals or think they will now be eligible, to complete the EA online application process on eani.org.uk (Home-Financial Help-Free School Meals). This will ensure you can access Free School Meals from the start of term.

YMCA After-School Club: YMCA have worked throughout the summer with our children and will continue our After-School provision at the end of each school day. YMCA have been informed of our re-start dates/times and will operate usual pick-ups from the playgrounds. Please contact them directly regarding places for your children.

After School Activities: After School Activities run by teachers and/or outside agencies on site will not be scheduled initially. This will be reviewed pending further Government advice and communicated with you.

Outdoor Play Equipment: The outdoor play equipment is to be used solely by children during school time, when they are supervised by staff. Please ensure that when you are leaving or collecting children from school that no child under your supervision uses this equipment.

School Car Park: Only staff, visitors and parents with school passes are allowed into the car-park. This helps to ensure the safety of your children. As only one adult of Nursery-P3 children is currently permitted onto the school grounds for drop off & collection, a reduced number of passes will be required this year.

School Parking: Whilst most parents show consideration for the safety of the children leaving the site, we still receive complaints from residents or concerned people when parents park over the zig-zag lines and residents' driveways. Please show consideration to each other and our local residents.

Smoke-Free School Gates: Rathmore is part of the Smoke-free School Scheme. We remind parents not to smoke in our grounds or around our school gates.

Dog-Free Grounds: We remind parents not to bring dogs on to our school grounds.

PTA Fundraising Success: We are so grateful for your generosity last year. We will proceed with the purchase of a defibrillator and will confirm the year's grand total in our September Newsletter. With the Committee's kind permission, we have used this fund to purchase P1-P4 Reading Books as well as resources to enhance our Key-Worker school & prepare for a safe Restart. As the Government is not providing additional funds to support the Restart of schools and we predict hidden costs associated with this, we will be relying on your support again this year.

Finally, School Routines & Well-Being: Our aim is to keep the in-school routines for our children as close to normal as possible because we know when children feel safe and well they learn best. We are extremely lucky to have a large building, large grounds with multiple outside doors with access to the playgrounds as well as toilets adjoined to each classroom. These will all help to reduce movement, retain class bubbles and minimise risks.

Desks are now suitably spaced and facing forward to allow maximum social distancing. Staff will remain at a suitable distance or opt to wear their face visor. Ventilation is excellent in the building and we will open doors and windows where appropriate. Every room has sinks, soap etc, extra cleaning resources and hand sanitiser. Child friendly posters and signs have been placed around the classrooms and children will be taught the new ways in their classroom by their teacher.

Your teacher/s will send a video via Seesaw to your account this afternoon (as well as the details of the class end times). Please use this video to aid home discussion, informing and reassuring your child about the Restart of school this year. Every Year Group Team has planned Well-Being activities which will form a focus of our time with the children initially and then part of our weekly curriculum as we journey through this year.

The well-being of our pupils remains our priority and we will continue to implement current guidance to our Rathmore context, reviewing it weekly and communicating updates of practice and procedures with you.

The weeks ahead will undoubtedly pose many challenges for staff and families so I want to thank all of you in advance, for your understanding and patience.

Yours sincerely,

Julie M Hardy

Principal