**Birches Primary School**

Dear Parents,

This is a time of great concern for all of us as the global spread of COVID-19 is unprecedented and is a rapidly changing situation. The information available to schools from the Public Health Authority is the same as is available to everyone. The Education Authority website at [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) has a direct link to the PHA webiste.

There is also a link to the PHA handwashing video if you would like to watch that with your child. Within school we are encouraging, promoting and facilitating thorough handwashing with soap and warm water. At home, please encourage and practice this, as well as the correct use of tissues and management of coughs.

Yesterday the governors and I made the decision to move one of our exceptional closure days to Monday 16th March. We are all very concerned about the health and safety of our children and the vulnerable people each of us has in our own families. We are following advice from Government and DENI but felt that as we were closed on Tuesday 17th March it would be advisable under the current circumstances to move a staff training day to the Monday. The staff will use this day to prepare teaching packs for the children. I realise that this is very short notice and I hope I have your understanding with this decision.

Currently school is to open on Wednesday 18th March.

There are two main factors which could change this:

1. Government decision to close.
2. Completion of a Risk Assessment.

Using the guidance below, I will complete a risk assessment to determine if school will remain open or close. It will take into consideration class sizes, number of teaching staff, number of senior staff and if school meals can operate.

This is an extract from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance#guidance-for-health-professionals>

**Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for health professionals and other organisations**

Guidance about coronavirus (COVID-19) for health professionals, businesses, schools and other organisations.

**The advice for anyone in any setting is to follow these main guidelines.**

1. The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough and/or high temperature. If you have these symptoms, however mild, stay at home and do not leave your house for 7 days from when your symptoms started. You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days, contact [NHS 111 online](https://111.nhs.uk/). If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
2. Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that’s all you have access to.
3. To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don’t have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
4. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

**Communication**

1. Text messaging service – if you have not been receiving a text message from school, please contact Mrs Watson – you can email your details to: pwatson676@c2kni.net
2. E-mail. Please make sure you send an e-mail address to your child’s class teacher. A text message was sent yesterday with your child’s class teachers e-mail address. If you need any further information regarding this please e-mail myself on the address above.
3. School website: [www.birchesps.com](http://www.birchesps.com)

If you download the website app and allow notifications messages placed will come up on your phone.

**Home Learning**

The staff are looking at different ways to support learning at home. Teachers are preparing teaching packs in the event of school closure and looking at different ways to support learning at home should a long-term school closure be announced by government.

If anyone is travelling during the break, please consider carefully the advice regarding the area you are travelling to and self–isolate on return if necessary.

It is important that we all act calmly, sensibly and with full consideration of others.

I will keep you updated as and when we know any further information and I hope I can rely on your continued support during these difficult and uncertain times.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Patricia Watson