



BIRCHES PRIMARY SCHOOL
Newsletter
November / December 2020

Dear Parents,

I would like to thank you all for your continued support and also for our children for the way they have embraced the changes to their school day. They have been fully engaged in their learning, socialising with their peers, striving to do their very best at all times and a delight to teach!

Our Newsletter will keep you up to date with areas of school life, please do not hesitate to contact myself or your child's class teacher if you wish to discuss anything.

School staff

Mrs Haugh, who has worked as cleaner, caretaker and in our school meals canteen for over nineteen years will be leaving school after our Christmas break. We would like to thank her for her many years of dedicated service to the school. I know I speak on behalf of everyone when I say that she will be sorely missed by the staff, pupils and parents and we would like to wish her every happiness in her retirement.

We are also very sorry to say goodbye to Mrs Kathryn Anderson who has been our school secretary on Thursday and Fridays for two years. We are very appreciative of the work she has carried out and on behalf of our school community we would like to wish her all the best in the future.

If you would like to make a contribution towards a gift for these members of staff, please send money in a sealed envelope marked for the attention of Mrs Watson.

Christmas Performances

Covid-19 has brought about many changes to our life, both inside and outside school. With Christmas fast approaching, we have been talking about ways we can celebrate this. Each class will be carrying out a range of activities and we will be in touch with further information later in the term.

Music Tuition in School

We are delighted that music tuition has started back in school with children who had previously been having lessons. Information regarding new starts should be available soon.

Holidays

As you are aware, all schools in Northern Ireland had an extended half-term break. A new holiday sheet is attached at this end of the letter.

Anti-Bullying Week 2020 - Monday 16 November – Friday 20 November

Anti-Bullying Week 2020 will take place from Monday 16 November to Friday 20 November 2020.

The theme is **United Against Bullying** and the week will start with Odd Socks Day on Monday 16 November. Odd Socks Day is an opportunity to encourage people to express themselves and celebrate their individuality and what makes us all unique.

Our pupils will be taking part in a range of activities throughout the week. The concepts and themes that will be explored will be used throughout the school year in conjunction with our Pastoral Care policies and ethos in Birches Primary School.

Parent Interviews

Normally we would be able to offer parent interviews during the first term, giving you the opportunity to come into school to talk to your child's class teacher. Due to the current situation, telephone consultations will be available instead of face to face interviews for parents who wish to avail of it.

Information has been sent to parents through our communication tool 'Seesaw'.

Christmas Party Day - Friday 4 December Non-Uniform Day

This year the School Meals Service have produced an exciting Christmas Party Food Box for children instead of the traditional Christmas dinner. Details of the party box will be on the December Menu.

If your child wishes to take school dinner on this day, it is very important that they let their teacher know on Monday 30 November for catering purposes.

Save the Children – Friday 11 December – Christmas Jumper Day

Children can wear a special 'Christmas Jumper', a Santa hat or come to school in their own clothes to help raise money for Save the Children. If children wish to take part they can bring £2.00 in a sealed envelope.

Non-Uniform Days – Thursday 17 and Friday 18 December

Non-uniform days on Thursday 17 and Friday 18 December - £1.00 per child for both days.

Each class will have their own Christmas party, in their classroom on Thursday 17 December. A contribution of £1.00 per child will go towards food for the party day.

Early Closing

Friday 18 December - School will close early. There will be no dinner on this day

Older brothers / sisters can leave at the earlier time with their siblings through their normal gate

- P1 12.00pm
- P2 12.10pm
- P3 12.20pm
- P4 and P5 12.30pm
- P6 and P7 12.40pm
- School bus 12.40pm available for children who normally travel on the bus

Please arrive promptly to collect your child to aid congestion in the car park and social distancing. Thank you

General Information

Free School Meals

ARE YOU ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS?

Parents/Guardians can apply if your son or daughter is in full-time education and if you are in receipt of one of the following benefits:-

Income Support; Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Related Employment and Support Allowance; Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit; Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less; Universal credit and have net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals-uniform-grants>

Money Wallets

Money wallets are available to buy from school. These come in packs of 40 and cost £3.00 per pack. These can be purchased from your child's class teacher. The correct money can be sent to school in a clearly marked envelope.

SEESAW

Seesaw is currently being used as a communication tool between staff and parents as well as for homework.

Drop off and collection times

The procedures currently in place will continue for the rest of this term.

When waiting for your child, please be mindful of social distancing and the Education Ministers recommendation of wearing a face covering.

COVID-19 Concerns

If you are concerned that your child or a member of your family has COVID 19 or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with it, please refer to PHA guidance. This can be found on our website www.birchesps.com under Parents / Letters.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Watson if you have any concerns pwatson676@c2kni.net

Illness

There are occasions when your child may suffer from childhood illnesses eg: chickenpox, vomiting or diarrhoea. As has always been the case, a child who is unwell should not be attending school.

Absent Notes

If your child is absent, please email a note to our school secretary Mrs McClelland on the day they return to school stating the reason for their absence hmclelland012@c2kni.net

Emergency Contact Numbers / Personal Details

Please ensure the school has at least three up to date contact numbers for your child should you need to be contacted during school hours and while your child is travelling home on the school bus.

Medical Information

Please keep the school informed of any recently diagnosed allergies or other medical conditions.

Allergies - Reminder

We have several children in school who have severe allergies. Therefore, it is extremely important that **NO NUTS or foods containing nuts** are to be brought to school by the children. Thank you.

Contact Details

Please ensure that school has an up to date phone number on which to contact you on. If you have moved house recently, please make sure that you have notified school of your child's new address. If you have not been receiving text messages from school, please contact Mrs Watson.

School Uniform

Please ensure children's names are on all coats and sweatshirts. Please use name tabs as names written in ink can wear off during the year.

The only piece of jewellery to be worn in school is a watch.

For health and safety reasons **earrings, rings and necklaces are not to be worn.**

Contacting School

If you are concerned or unsure of anything relating to your child please do not worry at home, pick up the phone and speak to either Mrs Watson or your child's teacher. We will be only too willing to talk to you after school at a mutually convenient time.





School Holidays 2020 / 2021

Subject to change due to COVID 19

Christmas Holidays

Monday 21 December - School closed to
Friday 1 January
School starts again on Monday 4 January

Half Term

Monday 15 February - School closed to
Friday 19 February
School starts again on Monday 22 February

School Closures / St. Patrick's Day

Monday 15 March
Tuesday 16 March
Wednesday 17 March

Easter Holidays

Monday 29 March - School closed to
Friday 9 April
School starts again on Monday 12 April

School Closures / May Holidays

Monday 3 May

Thursday 27 May
Friday 28 May
Monday 31 May

Dates for your Diary

Monday 16 November 'Odd Sock Day' – Anti-bullying week
Children can wear their own clothes and odd socks (No charge)

Friday 4 December Christmas Dinner Party Day
Children can wear their own clothes (No charge)

Friday 11 December Save the Children – Christmas Jumper Day
Children can wear their own clothes and a Christmas jumper
£2.00 per child to go to Save the Children

Thursday 17 December - Christmas Parties – Non-Uniform Day - £1.00 charge

Friday 18 December Early Closing – Non-Uniform Day
NO DINNER SERVED TODAY

School Reopens
Monday 4 January

*I would like to wish everyone a safe and
Happy Christmas and New Year*