



Birches Primary School



Updated Information

Arrangements for 2020/2021 School Year

Dear Parents,

I hope you have all had a nice break over the summer holidays. I'm sure the children are very excited about returning to school to see their friends and their teachers. We are all looking forward to seeing the children and having the school filled with laughter and children's voices again. We are aware that some children may be anxious or worried about coming back and I want to reassure you that we will do our very best to ensure we make this transition as smooth as possible for all of the children. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss anything.

I have some updated information for you regarding the children starting back to school. This updated plan for the reopening of school has been written in line with the latest guidance from the Department of Education (DE) 'New School Day' Version 2, August 2020 and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Social distancing requirements between pupils has been relaxed from 17 August which means that each class will be in their own classroom.

School Starting and Ending Times

DE guidance states that we must put in place measures to reduce congestion and aid social distancing among parents and pupils in the school grounds. In order to do this:

- Arrival and home times have been staggered.
- Each class has been allocated a separate entrance and exit.
- Parents are not to enter the school building. Please drop off/ collect your child/children at their allocated gate. The entrance foyer is not to be used at the moment.
- Parents are asked to maintain strict social distancing in the school grounds.

Starting back to school

- Children are not to bring school bags or personal items to school.
- All children will need to bring a healthy break and a packed lunch during the week beginning Monday 24 August.

Monday 24th August

All **P7** pupils will start school and attend all week.

8.30 – 8.45am to 12.45pm - Entrance through the main doors

P2-P6 Induction Days

All children in the same family can be dropped off at the same time as their eldest sibling.

Thursday 27th August - P4 and P5

8.30 - 8.45am to 12.55pm - P4 Entrance through side gate C (Robinsonston)

8.45 - 9.00am to 1.05pm - P5 Entrance through the main doors

Friday 28th August - P2, P3 and P6

8.30 – 8.45am to 12.55pm - P3 Entrance through side gate C (Robinsonston)

8.45 – 9.00am to 1.05pm - P6 Entrance through side gate B (kitchen side)

9.00 – 9.15am to 1.15pm - P2 Entrance through main door

School is closed on Monday 31 August for the Bank Holiday

Tuesday 1st September onwards

These times outlined are specific to our restart and will be reviewed as needed.

Drop off

8.30 am	P7 Main Entrance P3 Side gate C (Robinsonstown)
8.45am	P5 Main Entrance P6 Side gate B (kitchen side) P4 Side gate C (Robinsonstown)
9.00am	P2 Main Entrance

ALL CHILDREN WILL LEAVE THROUGH THE ENTRANCE THEY USED IN THE MORNING

When waiting for your child, please be mindful of social distancing.

Pick up times

1.20pm	P1
1.30pm	P2
1.45pm	P3 every day for the first half term (this will be under review)
2.20pm	P4 – P7 for parents collecting 1 child only
2.35pm	P4 – P7 for parents collecting more than 1 child.

Important Information

Protective Bubbles

As far as possible, each class will operate throughout the day in their own 'protective bubble' and will only interact with children and staff within this bubble.

Due to this there will be some changes to our normal routine, including:

- Break and lunch times will be staggered with playgrounds zoned for different classes. All pupils are to bring in a coat which is to be named.
- Children will eat their packed lunches in their classrooms.
- There will not be any after school activities for the first half term (this will be under review).
- Whole school assemblies will not take place at the moment.

Uniform

- All children should wear full school uniform unless it is their PE day.
- On PE days, children can come to school wearing their PE kit. Initially PE will take place outdoors.
- PE kit: Outdoor trainers, black tracksuit/ leggings, white polo top, school sweatshirt.
- Teachers will inform you which day your child has PE in the new term.

Face Coverings

- Following current DE guidance, staff will wear full PPE when administering first aid, medication or for intimate care needs. If at all possible, medication should be administered at home.
- It is recommended that children who travel on the school bus are to wear a face mask.

Healthy Break / Water In School

- Healthy breaks for P1 and P2 children will be prepared by classroom assistants at a cost of £1.00 per week. This can be paid in advance for the first term with the correct money being sent to school in a named and sealed envelope.
 - Children from P3 to P7 are to bring in their own healthy break.
 - Filled water bottles with your child's name on it can be brought to school.
- The water fountain will not be in use until further notice.

School Meals

- Packed lunches should be brought in named disposable bags or in named containers that can be easily wiped down.
- School meals will start on Tuesday 1 September.
- Correct dinner money MUST be sent to school in a named and sealed envelope on a Monday for the week ahead.
- The free school meals payment system will continue until the end of August 2020.

Stationery

- Stationery packs will be provided by the school.
- We would ask each family to make a voluntary contribution of £10.00 towards a stationery pack for your child. If you have two children at school, it is £15.00 and for three children at school £20.00. The correct money can be sent to school in a named envelope on Tuesday 1 September.

Transport

- The school bus will start on Tuesday 1 September.
- Although it is not mandatory, the DE is strongly encouraging all pupils to wear face masks on school buses, regardless of age. Please make sure this is clearly marked with your child's name on it.

Pupils with Medical Needs

I fully understand concerns you may have about your child returning to school, particularly if your child has medical needs or if there is someone in the family who has a medical condition. Specific guidance regarding this is available on the Education and Health Department websites. If, for any reason you feel your child cannot return to school, please contact me by email pwatson676@c2kni.net.

Medication in school

- If your child has a medical condition which the school needs to be informed of, please complete a medical form. These forms are available on the website for you to complete www.birchesps.com under parents and Medical Information.
- These can be sent to school in an envelope marked for the attention of Mrs Greer or emailed to pwatson676@c2kni.net
- If your child requires medication to be kept in school, please make sure it is named and sent with your child on their first day back. Please do not send the cardboard packaging to school.

Communication

The school will keep you informed of any developments in relation to COVID-19.

- Letters and other information will be put on our school website www.birchesps.com
- Our school text messaging system will be used. Please ensure the school has an up to date number to send messages to. If you have not been receiving text messages please email your contact details to pwatson676@c2kni.net or contact the school on 028 38851443.
- It is essential that you are signed up to SEESAW as this will be used as a major communication tool. Further information regarding this will follow.
- If you wish to contact school, please use Seesaw for contact with your child's class teacher or email myself at pwatson676@c2kni.net.

Health

- Children should not attend school if they, or a member of their household displays any symptoms of COVID-19. **If this is the case, please inform the school as soon as possible.**
- Children may have to quarantine if they have been on holiday. Please make sure you follow advice from NI Direct <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice>

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- A high temperature.
- A new continuous cough: this means coughing a lot for more than 1 hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough it may be worse than usual).
- Anosmia the loss or change in your normal sense of smell, it can also affect your sense of taste.

If a child presents as unwell in school, he/she will be isolated and supervised by a member of staff until collected. All relevant PHA guidelines must be followed.

Handwashing

Children will engage in regular handwashing during the school day. We ask that all children wash their hands before coming to school in the morning and when they return home in the evening. Children will be reminded of good handwashing techniques and we would ask that parents reinforce this at home.

Please reinforce the following at home with your child / children:

- Using a tissue 'catch it, bin it, kill it'
- Coughing / Sneezing into a tissue or elbow.
- Washing hands with soap for approximately 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Independently putting on and taking off their coat, opening their lunch box and items of food.

As you can see we have had to make some changes to our daily school life, but our priority will always be the health and wellbeing of our children and staff. If you have any other queries or questions relating to the re-opening of school that have not been answered through the information provided, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me.

Yours sincerely,

Patricia Watson
Principal