

# Holy Rosary Primary School

Principal: Mr Paddy McAllister BEd(Hons), MA(Prim Ed), Ad.Dip.Ed.Man., PQH(NI)

Sunnyside Crescent  
Belfast  
BT7 3DB

Tel (028) 90491817  
Fax (028) 90492416  
Email [info@holyrosary.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@holyrosary.belfast.ni.sch.uk)  
Web [www.holyrosarypsbelfast.com](http://www.holyrosarypsbelfast.com)



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Dear Parents,

I am sure you are very aware that the Minister of Education and the NI Executive have announced the closure of all schools for the next two weeks. They have also recommended that there would be no online learning and they are not restarting provision for the children of key workers.

Holy Rosary has been very proactive in supporting children and families since the crisis began. We were proactive closing the school quickly as we could see the immediate dangers. We were then proactive in organising online learning, providing IT equipment where needed and continuing to be open for the children of key workers with staff volunteers carrying out the role regardless of the risks, perceived or real.

At the end of June, we were very clear that it was our intention to reopen the school to all pupils on a full time basis at the end of the summer.

As Government advice developed we again went over and above the normal expectations and opened the school for all children quicker than expected.

During September and October, we put in a number of measures to try to make sure we kept the virus out of our school including the following which is not an exhaustive list:

- Longer arrival period in the morning and staggered home times in the evenings
- All site users, children and adults, getting temperature checked in the mornings
- Very regular hand washing during the day
- Children remaining in class bubbles while learning, eating and playing
- All school staff being very careful and staying at home if they've any concerns that they may be ill with COVID
- Children staying at home or being sent home if they are ill
- More areas of the school being cleaned more regularly such as door handles, stair rails etc.
- Moving quickly to being a cashless school
- We have moved all homework online and we using a wider range of online resources, apps etc so that children are ready to move to blended learning if needed
- We avoided using the canteen due to the restricted space but instead initially moved to a sandwich lunch and are now moving to a cooked lunch, initially for Free School Meal children only
- We have bought in 1 day a week counselling support from Barnardos.

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We have also been able to restart our after schools using a bubble approach as we know that many of our families rely on this to allow them to go to work.

We have made other internal modifications to what we do with staff keeping social distance from each other. Employees facilities have been amended/reduced quite a bit. Our meetings with staff are largely organised using Zoom etc and linking in from the different areas of the building and so reducing the amount of time the staff come together as a group.

So whether by some sort of miracle, just good fortune or though the measures described above we have not had a confirmed case of COVID among pupils or staff since September. I would like to thank everyone children, staff and parents for their cooperation that helped create an environment that has protected everyone.

There are still a number of actions we need to work on to return the school to its full and normal functions such as the Breakfast Club and use of the canteen for hot meals.

This has all taken a considerable amount of work and change to what we do and I can see the stresses and strains beginning to show especially among the adults both parents and staff. So maybe this pause for 2 weeks is coming at the right time.

Over the next two weeks we will be organising paper packs of work for the P7 children who are preparing for tests as the Grammar schools are still organising the Transfer tests in January in spite of the Global pandemic that are all dealing with. This work will be sent home with the children today or tomorrow.

For the rest of the pupils we are asking them to **read, read and read**. There are online reading resources that the children are either already using or that passwords will be sent home for. These include Oxford Owl (P1-7), Collins (P1-7), Accelerated Reader (P4-7) and Epic reading resources (P5-7).

We will be sending home a letter on Showbie about how we are rearranging Showbie folders throughout the school so they all are organised in the same format to allow greater ease of use by parents.

I would also ask you to closely follow Government advice regarding social distancing etc so we can get the R rate down ASAP.

So finally many thanks again for all your help and support. Holy Rosary is very fortunate to have a wonderful school community. Your kind words over the past while have been greatly appreciated by the staff of the school.

Take care.

Best wishes,

P. McAllister (Principal)

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