



Wednesday 31st August 2022

SCHOOL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Dear Parent,

The beginning of a new academic year is always very busy and so it is a good time to remind ourselves of some important information.

School day times: It is very important for parents to ensure their children are safely in their classrooms in good time. Children line up for class at 8:55am – which means children need to be already at their desks for this time. Remember – supervision of children starts at 8:45am. Children should not be sent to school before this time

Parents dropping children off: parents pass supervision of their children over to school staff when children are dropped off/arrive to school from 8:45-8:55am. Staff need to safeguard against strangers entering school grounds and it is impossible for all staff to recognise each and every parent and so, we ask that you leave the school grounds quickly. Parents should not be in the playground areas: children should be dropped off at either the Clocktower or rear yellow gate – thank you ☺

- 🌐 Parents **do not** follow children from the Clocktower area (if at front of school area)
- 🌐 Parents leave their children off at the yellow gate and then leave the school grounds (if at rear of school grounds)
- 🌐 **School uniform:** children attending Cregagh Primary must wear school uniform. This is the stated policy of the school – made clear to all parents before enrolling their children. The wearing of uniform gives each child a sense of belonging and pride in their school. It is also an economical way of dressing a child and avoiding competition among children. The only part of uniform that must bear the school badge is the school sweater (available from Signature Works); all other items may be purchased from shops and supermarkets. Uniform should be kept clean and tidy.
- 🌐 **School Office:** first thing in the morning is incredibly busy in school; especially in the school office. Over the summer we have invested in a fancy new telephone system that allows parents to leave messages about their child being off sick or leave a message for the attention of their child's teacher. Alternatively, if you hold the line, you can speak with our school secretary Miss Murphy. Please use this new system rather than call at the office just to leave a simple message.



Healthy Breaks: our school has a **Healthy Break Policy**. Only healthy break foods can be eaten Monday-Thursday. On Fridays, children can bring a 'sweet treat' to school if they so choose. Children may only bring water to school to drink for break and lunch (not diluted juice). Visit our school website for some healthy break ideas. Our school pupils' dental health was among the worst in East Belfast 20 years ago, now it's among the best.

Parking: please do not stop or park close to the school gates. It creates danger for children. Park a few metres further away and walk to the school gates.

School Fund: most school staff are parents themselves and understand that money doesn't grow on trees! However, without school fund contributions the boys and girls would miss out on a lot of things. The amount remains at £20 per family per school year. This can be paid through our online payment system **School Money** in either one go or in instalments.

Jewellery: children may wear plain gold or silver stud earrings and a watch to school. No other jewellery should be worn.

Homework: homework is set to encourage the children to revise or reinforce work completed in class. All our pupils receive homework that is both age and ability appropriate for them. Our school reading scheme, "Bug Club", is modern and popular with staff and children alike. Homework typically comprises reading, spelling and some form of written or investigative/researching task. Homework is thoroughly explained by teachers before being sent home.

Dogs: dogs should not be brought to school at drop-off or pick-up times. Some children are afraid of dogs and we have also had dogs fouling our school grounds before – unpleasant!

Positive behaviour: Cregagh Primary School operates a Good to Be Green Reward Scheme that encourages and rewards children's good behaviour for when they are present at school. Absent children cannot be awarded points for being at home! Parents should reinforce our scheme not only by supporting school's awarding of points but also supporting our occasional withholding of points when a child's behaviour has fallen below par.

Bullying: bullying is not tolerated in Cregagh Primary School. When it occurs, the children involved are held accountable and those found to be responsible are dealt with appropriately. However, while school's interest and concern for its students does not end when the boys and girls go home (and we need to know if there are negative things affecting our pupils), we are not responsible for pupils' actions before or after school hours – parents are. This is equally true regarding any misuse of *social media* by children. Social Media is such a minefield (especially for young children 13 or less) parents should almost expect their children to encounter negative and hurtful experiences.



Social Media makes teasing, bullying and trouble-making 'easy'. *More and more parents are finding that allowing their primary-aged children access to social media is more trouble than its worth!*

Child Protection and Safeguarding: this is without doubt the single most important thing we do. Should a parent be concerned about the welfare of their own child, or that of another child in the school, they should ask to speak to one of the Safeguarding Team members (Mrs Pearson, Mr Higginson or myself, Mr Heggarty). Mrs Hunter, who is Chairperson of the school's governors, is the nominated governor for safeguarding issues – can also be spoken to upon request. All concerns will be treated with the utmost confidentiality).

Attendance: At Cregagh Primary we take pupils' attendance very seriously – we have to. Poor attendance is a major contributor to children underachieving at school.

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks.

School providing work for pupils not attending school: except for circumstances where a child is recuperating in hospital after surgery or serious illness, it is school policy not to provide work for children who are not attending school. If a child is not well enough to attend school, they are not well enough to be completing school work. There is no facility for a child to receive the same work as they would have received had they been in school - this just isn't manageable



Keep the school office up to date: if you move address, change your phone number or want to change your nominated emergency contacts – please let Miss Murphy, our school secretary, know immediately (90 401246). If we don't have the correct details, we can't contact you!

Ways we will keep you informed: we use a variety of ways to share information with our school families. These include regular notes home, text messaging service, email, school's Facebook page and the school's website. Individual class teachers also use the *See-Saw App* to communicate with parents about children's work and other things.

Parents and Social Media: many schools across Northern Ireland have problems with parents using social media to “get at” schools. This *can* include parents WhatsApp Groups. Fortunately, Cregagh Primary School has had very little real first-hand experience of this sort of online abuse. However, to help protect its staff the school governors have an agreed policy that states, “*All online communications regarding the school are to be transparent and open to scrutiny. The Board of Governors will take appropriate action to ensure the safety and security of those within the school community and to protect the school's reputation. Any breaches of this 'Code of Conduct' will be fully and rigorously investigated by the Board of Governors and, where appropriate, legal advice may be sought.*”

When you want to speak to a teacher or the principal: while I try to make myself available to parents, it is not always possible to meet with parents immediately. Teachers are not available to speak to parents before the school day begins. If you need to speak to a teacher or myself, the best way of making sure you get an opportunity is to contact the school office and request a telephone appointment.

Parent-Teacher Interviews (autumn): most schools only hold one parent-teacher interview per year, Cregagh Primary School holds two. We are also looking forward to holding our Meet the Teacher Afternoons next week.

Our school motto says, “**Together, we make a difference.**” My school and its students' parents are on the same side: that of the children. If we work together in their best interests, we can maximise the difference we make. Let's start the new 2022/23 academic year the way we mean to continue!

Yours faithfully,



B.Ed., M.Ed., PQH

PRINCIPAL

