



16/12/2020

Dear Parents

As we approach the end of term, I would like to thank all of our governors, staff, pupils, parents and carers for working so hard to keep everyone in the school community safe over the past few months. We are all looking forward to the Christmas break and it is extremely important that we continue to follow the guidance and adhere to the PHA advice in the last few days of term. Cases of Covid-19 have been minimised in St Therese due to our combined community efforts in following the measures that have been put in place.

With the recent easing of the Covid regulations there is an increased risk of pupils and staff being exposed to the virus and developing symptoms in the last few days of term. To ensure that none of our families have to isolate over the Christmas period, please exercise caution and do not send an unwell child to school, particularly if they are experiencing a cough, fever or loss of taste or smell.

I want to commend all the children who have cooperated so well with the changes to our usual routines and procedures. However, in particular I wish to highlight the P7 year group, who have been wonderful role models for the younger children. All of the children in P7 have worked so hard throughout the term. With the postponement of the unregulated transfer tests, a heavy burden has been placed on their young shoulders. Please keep these children in your prayers over the coming weeks. The impact on their mental health and well-being must not be underestimated. However, they have shown remarkable resilience and maturity in school dealing with this delay, by working hard, concentrating well, listening carefully, asking focused questions and making the most of the extra time. Indeed, the P7 teachers have both commented on how well the children are using these extra weeks of preparation. The children who are not doing the transfer tests must also be congratulated, as they too have worked so well and so consistently, and have been a great support to their classmates. However, all of the children have had a long term and are now entitled to a rest. Therefore, I recommend they get two weeks of a holiday with no tests/practice papers/work mentioned! I have told the P7 children that I would make this request but that the final decision is with their parents. We will send home papers that can be done on Jan 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> to get them back into work mode in the new year.

Even though we cannot have our usual Christmas celebrations this year, we are still getting into the festive spirit in school, with lots of Christmas carols, songs and music echoing through the building. We will be sharing the highlights with you through our website.

The children are really looking forward to watching 'Cinderella Live' this week and of course the Christmas Dinner on Thursday is always a big hit. (Please send £2.60 in a labelled envelope if your child is having Christmas dinner). Class Christmas parties will be held on Friday afternoon.

Our P6 pupils performed our Carol Service beautifully last week and the rest of the school are looking forward to watching it and singing along on Friday morning. We will also share this with the wider community through our website.

Next term we are reintroducing the two longer days for P3 children on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If your eldest child is in P3 please collect them at the usual place at 2.50pm but if you are collecting older children in P4-7 you can collect your P3 child at 3pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

We have had a few queries from parents regarding attendance in the last days of term. We follow DE guidance in recording attendance. Therefore, if parents wish to keep children at home to isolate then we will record this as a Covid isolation absence. Just remember to let staff know so that they can record this accurately.

As long as DE guidance does not change we will be open next week as planned, finishing at noon on Tue Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>. We reopen on Wed Jan 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.

Thanks to everyone who made donations to the St Vincent de Paul appeal. We have had a huge response and your generosity will make such a difference to the lives of people in our community over the coming weeks and months. We will accept donations until Fri Dec 18<sup>th</sup>.

This has been a challenging year for many families. If your family is in need of support, please call the school in confidence or email [info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@stthereseoflisieux.belfast.ni.sch.uk). We can help with gifts and can signpost to local organisations. St Vincent de Paul can be contacted at 028 90351561.

On behalf of all of the staff, thank you again for your support, cooperation and kind words of encouragement. We hope that, despite all of the anxiety and uncertainty, you and your family have a healthy, safe and happy Christmas.

Best wishes

Mrs S McTaggart  
Principal