Dear Parent/Guardian,

Like many of you, I have just watched the expected announcement of school closure for the next 3 weeks. I thought it only right to contact you in advance of commencing remote teaching next Monday. I know that the last thing any of us wanted was to find ourselves going back to this situation but all we can do now is to try to make it work as best we can.

It will be a bit different this time. First of all, the children have brought home their books so this should be of some help. (If your child was missing on the final day of term and did not get his/hers, we will arrange for collection next week.) Secondly, and more importantly, we have set up learning platforms in all classes - Seesaw for the junior classes and Google Classroom for the senior classes. This should make teaching and learning easier and more interactive. We also have our class emails in place. And, we now have had some experience of remote teaching and learning so this will stand to all of us.

I am meeting with the teachers and SNAs later this week to set out how we are going to go about continuing the work of each class as best we can. On Monday, the class teachers will be in contact with you to set out the arrangements that we are putting in place. It is our intention, not just to set work, but to use the platforms we have set up to teach the children. We will focus on the key areas of literacy and numeracy. It is really important that, as far as possible, the children get into a routine, and engage with their teachers to try to keep some kind of continuity with their education.

I know that this puts pressure on you. I hope that it won't be for long. Just remember that everyone finds it difficult to teach their own children - it's very intense. Just set the best routine you can that works in your situation and try to stick to it. The teacher will support you. Just like in school, children, especially those in senior classes, should be encouraged to be as independent as possible so don't take all the responsibility on your shoulders.

My understanding is that the ASD classes will be opening but, I am just basing this on what was announced this evening. I assume that there will be proper clarification over the next few days.

What is most important is that we all stick to the guidelines because that is the quickest way to reopen the school for everyone. So please, let's work together on that as well.

From Monday, I intend to spend my regular school day in the office as normal, unless I am directed otherwise. Therefore, I will be at the end of the phone or email during office hours. Please let me know if there is something that I can do to support you or your children.

I'm going to finish by saying happy new year to you all. It might not seem great at the moment but we have a lot to look forward to. There is a vaccine on the horizon. The children will get back to school once we get the Covid numbers down. We just have to get through a few tricky weeks and then our thoughts can turn to spring and the hope that it brings.

Look out for each other and keep in touch.

Máirín O’Keeffe