

12 Courtenay Hill, Newry, Co Down, BT34 2EA
Phone: (028) 3026 2175

Dear Parents,

We have had an absolutely great week in school. The children have been refreshed by the break and have worked hard and played happily each day. It has been a pleasure to welcome everyone back.

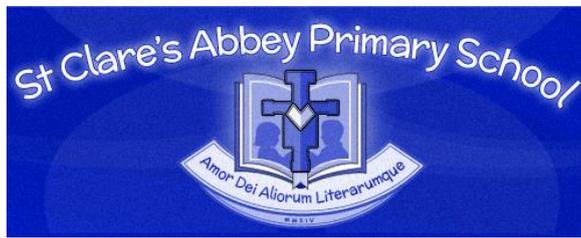
Update on pupils' standards following last year's 'lockdown.'

We have six weeks of school ahead of us before the Christmas holidays and we intend to work really hard for each of those to reduce the gaps in learning that have come about because of 'Lockdown' last year. You may have heard from your children that they were being assessed in Literacy and Numeracy throughout the first half term and the outcomes have shown us how we need to set about 'catching up.' We are seeing that the attainment levels have not deteriorated quite as much as we had feared and we believe that that is because you engaged so well with us throughout the 'Learning From Home' period. However, there is no doubt that levels are not as high as they would have been so we do really need to focus and work together; school, home and child, to overcome the gap. This is why our teachers are sharing their marking of set pieces of work with you on Seesaw so that you can help to reinforce what your child needs to master in his/her learning.

Another way in which we feel you can help is to ensure that the homework, in its new format, is actually being done. The teachers have been monitoring pupil work on Mathletics and Bug Club and they have seen very clearly that a substantial number of children have not been doing the work or have been engaging in it in a very half-hearted way, others of course have been very committed. It is crucial that parents engage with us on this, we are not sending actual books for homework, but the digital work being set is equally good if it is completed. Typically, the month of December would have seen a 'wind down' of formal school work as classes prepared their Christmas plays. This year we will not be able to do these and will use the time instead for good, solid 'catch up work.' The final week before the holidays will be spent enjoying festive activities, so up until that point we need your help in really forging ahead with formal learning.

Accolade for St Clare's Abbey's Play Based learning in Nursery, P1 & P2.

Our staff in the Early Years classes, have spent a lot of time developing the quality of 'Learning Through Play' and our children are thriving and mastering many, many skills because of this. Our work was referenced in a world-wide digital forum over the Halloween break and the recording is available for viewing on the school website www.stclaresabbeyps.com (I urge you to start at the correct point as it lasts for almost 1 hour and the first 9 minutes do not relate to us) I felt very proud as I watched it and heard the enthusiasm of a wide range of early years' practitioners, as they engaged in the live feed made throughout the presentation. I thank our



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staff sincerely for all their hard work. In the days ahead, the coordinator for Play Based learning will be reaching out to any parents who may have contacts in the construction arena, as we urgently require pipes, planks, coils etc to replenish our outdoor construction area. Please watch this space.

Pupils' clothing.

Can I ask parents to ensure that all children have warm, winter clothes with them EVERY day from this point onwards? We spend a large part of our day outdoors and a lot of the children are not warm enough. I can see how cold it is because I am outside for at least 2 and a half hours each day and as such although it may seem mild in the morning when I am leaving my home I know that I need a hat, scarf, gloves and very warm coat. Lots of our children are being dropped off in a lovely warm car and the coat that they are wearing is fine for that, many are still in light rain coats, but they really do need to layer up, for the prolonged periods of outdoor time. Thank you.

Christmas gift plans.

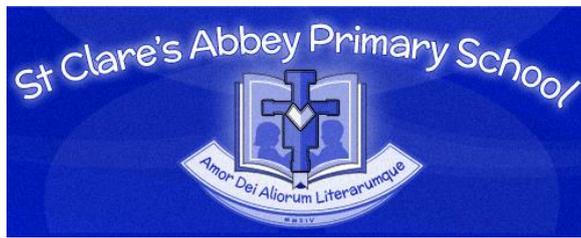
Each year we receive a little bit of assistance which we are able to use to help families who are struggling 'to put Christmas over.' I envisage it being a more complex process this year as we will not be able to handle donated gifts within the school building. Therefore if any family knows that they could do with some help this year, could they please contact me by email on mmonaghan771@c2kni.net (I will reply to your email upon receipt, so if you don't hear from me, please telephone me) or by telephone on 02830262175. I assure you that I will keep your business private.

Request for supplies.

You were so generous to us at the start of the year that we still have lots of soap, tissues, hand sanitiser etc to see us through the months ahead. However, we are 'running out' of kitchen roll as we use it multiple times a day to wipe down surfaces. I would be so appreciative if you could donate more kitchen roll to your child's class teacher next week as we do not wish to relax our safety measures. A pack of two rolls per child/family would be amazing, if at all possible. Sincere thanks.

Changes to holidays.

1. We had a staff day scheduled for Monday 30th November; this will no longer happen so school will be open that day.



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2. We had planned to reopen on Tuesday 13th April 2021 after the Easter holidays, this will now change to Monday 12th April.

I apologise for the changes they are necessary because those days were used as part of our Halloween closure.

To conclude:

Please talk to your children about our prayer focus this month: 'In November we remember---our loved ones who have gone to heaven.'

Your children have been praying and singing for all who have died. It is a privilege to share their prayer requests, they are very loving and respectful.

I wish you and your families a relaxing and healthy weekend,

Mrs Monaghan