## ST. JOSEPH’S PRIMARY SCHOOL

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| **Principal: Mrs I Porter BEd MEd CCET**  **E mail:** [**iporter336@c2kni.net**](mailto:iporter336@c2kni.net)  **Telephone: 02844 841546** | **45 BALLYCRUTTLE RD, Downpatrick, BT30 7EL** |  | **DOWNPATRICK**  **CO. DOWN**  **BT30 7EL** |

1st September 2022

Dear Parents,

This year as you know, may end up being our final year depending on how the Area Planning Consultation goes throughout the year and the decision which the Minister for Education will make at the end of the process. We as a school are still hopeful that the decision will be to remain open but we understand that the chances of the decision going our way is quite low due to the fall in our numbers this year.

However, it is our plan to make this a year full of fun and learning. Each morning we will meet in the dinner hall for a catch up assembly, focusing on the children’s well being and social skills, giving them a chance to speak to each other and form relationships with other children who are not in their class group. We will take the school role, say our morning prayers and perhaps enjoy a song or two. We will also talk about our focus for the week for example ‘Kindness week’ and then meet together again on a Friday to see how well we have achieved our goal for that week.

We will be focussing as normal on our Literacy, Numeracy, Spelling and Reading each morning and will come together in the afternoons for some World Around Us, joint P.E, Art and Music lessons so that the children have the opportunity to learn in a larger group session and to enhance their social skills.

We have also decided to ‘spoil’ our pupils this year and have included weekly outdoor trips into our school calendar where fantastic outdoor learning opportunities will be utilised which wouldn’t normally be available to large school and class groups. We will be using the facilities and country parks in our local area to enhance the children’s learning experiences and their well being this year. These outdoor educational trips will normally take place on Thursdays or Fridays and will be matched to the curriculum. In order to be able to access these outdoor learning experiences we would like to ask permission from our parents to be able to transport the children to these venues using the staff cars who all have Business Insurance for this purpose. Please sign the permission slip attached to this letter. (Some parents in KS1 may need to provide booster seats on these days.) To begin with we have planned a nature walk on Ballyhornan beach on Friday morning. The children should bring a rain coat, snack, drink and could even bring along their wellie boots. They will be back in school for lunch. On 8th September we would like to bring them out again to a local park but this is still in the process of being organised. Once organised we will come back with the information.

On Thursday 15th September, we have organised a trip to Strangford, where we will go for a walk and get an ice cream before returning to school. The children should bring a rain coat and can wear wellies if they wish.

In relation to the children and staff’s well being, we have organised a full school trip for P1-7 children to Delamont Country Park for an outdoor learning experience. The P5-7 children enjoyed it so much in June that we thought we would send the whole school in September. We don’t have the itinerary yet but once we do it will be sent out to everyone. However, an outdoor educational trip like this is expensive and is priced at £27.50 per pupil and per staff member. Therefore, we would like to start the year off with a Fundraising Afternoon tea and raffle on Friday 9th September. Any funds raised will go towards paying for this trip. This afternoon tea party will be open to all ages and everyone in the Community. We will host it in the school dinner hall at 1.30pm to suit home time at 2pm. If you can donate anything for the raffle that would be greatly appreciated or if you know of a business or work in a business that would like to send in a donation that would be fantastic. We can make up some hampers with all donations received. Tickets will be priced at £1 a strip and will go on sale next week. All proceeds will go towards helping with the cost of this trip and any surplus will be used for future trips.

We are continuing our link with the Education Authority’s REACH for Resilience Programme and Aoife has managed to get us some fantastic outdoor education support starting on Friday 23rd September at 10.30am. The coordinator is planning the activities at present but they may provide the children with some team games, possibly some cycling and may even include an off site water based activity for the older children. This programme will be based on helping build the children’s resilience and well being and will go on for 5/6 weeks. Details will follow once the coordinator has the programme finalised.

On Monday 3rd October we have organised a visit to Downpatrick Library at 10am and will call into Mabel’s in Downpatrick afterwards for an ice cream treat. The children should bring a raincoat along.

On Tuesday 4th October we have the yearly Flu Vaccine visit at 9am. The school nurse will probably drop in letters with regards to this closer to the time of the visit.

We are lucky to have received a slot for P4-7 swimming this year for the entire year so we are delighted to be back to normal. The swimming slot is 11.15am-11.45am every Wednesday starting Wednesday 7th September until 28th June. We normally get a bus to swimming but this may be too expensive when there are so little pupils but we are currently looking into this and will come back to you with regards to transport arrangements once finalised. We may be able to transport the children in staff cars but may need to add a small amount to the price for petrol/diesel costs. The swimming information letter received from Down Leisure Centre states that any child who is not participating in swimming must remain at the school. Attached to this letter will be a permission slip for swimming, please complete and send this into school as soon as possible. If some of the children from P4-7 decide not to go swimming, we will most likely have to pull out of the programme for this year which would be a great loss to the school as Swimming forms part of the N.I. Curriculum for P.E. If you have any concerns with regards to swimming please contact Mrs Porter on [iporter336@c2kni.net](mailto:iporter336@c2kni.net) or by phoning the school.

If you have any questions in relation to anything included in this letter, please email Mrs Porter on: iporter336@c2kni.net or call the school office and make an appointment.

Kind regards

Imelda Porter

Principal

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I *(Parents name)* ………………………………………. give permission for my child/ren (*child/ren’s name/s*)……………………………….. to receive a lift in the teacher’s cars to and from school outings/swimming from September 2022 to the end of June 2023 when required. I will provide a booster seat (if required) for each outing.

Signed………………………………………. Date………………………………………….

*………………………………………………………………………………………………*

Permission Slip to be completed.

Name of child/ren (P.4-7)……………………………….. Class………………

I (Parent Name)…………………………………. give my child/ren permission to attend swimming lessons in Down Leisure Centre this 2022/23 school year. I agree to pay upfront for each batch of lessons. I understand that a child who isn’t swimming must stay behind at school.

Signed………………………………… Date:…………………………..