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| **Principal: Mrs I Porter BEd MEd CCET****E mail:** **iporter336@c2kni.net****Telephone: 02844 841546** |  |  **Saint Joseph’s P.S.****45 BALLYCRUTTLE RD DOWNPATRICK****CO. DOWN****BT30 7EL** |

23rd March 2020

I***mportant Update***

Dear Parents / Carers,

 **Ref: Supporting Children of Key Workers and vulnerable children**

 As Principal I am acutely aware of the current crisis everyone is facing and will endeavour to do all in my power to help ensure the health and safety of the pupils and staff in our settings and wider communities. I am pastorally keen to support the Minister’s request re the availability of childcare facilities for key workers and vulnerable children in this crisis. However, this has been initiated with such haste, that we must consider carefully the potential implications of such an extensive list and ensure that appropriate steps are put in place to manage this request effectively.

It is worth bearing in mind that we have been instructed to close to minimise the risk of infection transfer at a time of national and global crisis. It is essential, therefore, that we are still able to comply with this ultimate reason for closure. Please remember that the safest place for your child is at home and you should only request a place if all other options have been exhausted. The N.I. Executive have also asked parents to keep their children at home wherever possible. The fewer children in school, the lower the risk that the virus will spread and infect the vulnerable individuals in our society.

***Currently the school cannot open this week*** due to the fact that we cannot guarantee the health and safety of the children due to staff shortages at this time. There was also no demand for this supervision in our school community this week. The staff however are currently continuing to work from home preparing and uploading distance learning through the school website.

***The school may open in the future*** but this will depend on the availability of staff as well as the demand for places. We need to be able to guarantee the health and safety of both staff and pupils to be able to open.

A further update will follow on Friday which will investigate the demand for places for next week. This will happen on a weekly basis unless further guidance is received from the Dept. of Education, Education Authority, CCMS or from the Minister for Education.

These are challenging times and we greatly value the work that everyone is doing to limit the long term impact of this potentially devastating virus. This situation is continually developing and we will endeavour to keep you informed of any future changes as promptly as possible. We keep you all in our thoughts and prayers.

Yours sincerely,

Imelda Porter Principal