



The Wee Friday Note

Friday 28th January 2022



“The darkest hour is just before the dawn” ~ Thomas Fuller

Oh my goodness – what a week we’ve all had! Numerous staff & children off with Covid & other illnesses. On more than one occasion we came close to having to close a class or two but we managed not to. The fact that parents are regularly testing their children is the reason why so many positive cases have been revealed. If parents had not have tested so diligently, most of these positive cases would have found their way into school & numbers would have been even higher – so thank you for playing your part!

1. SCHOOL ADMISSIONS 2022/23

Applications for P1 places **closes** on the 28th January 2022.

Applications for Post-Primary places **opens** 1st February and **closes** 23rd February 2022.

*It is possible to make a late application in the event of someone missing this closing date.

2. COVID – “Stuck Between a Rock & a Hard Place”

I’ve had a few inquiries this week about parents keeping children off school when there’s a positive case in the household. This week, we have seen around 40 confirmed positive cases among actual pupils - spread throughout all year groups. Today, we have 5 staff off with Covid. Some are not very well at all. Until Omicron numbers start to go down, I am continuing to ask parents to keep their children off until their homes are clear of Covid.

Children going home to a house shared with a positive C19 person greatly increases the likelihood they will contract Covid themselves & bring it into school where it will spread. This will in fact lead to more children missing more days of school & possibly close a class or two down for several days. The whole situation is less than ideal & Covid is to blame.

We are trying to keep school open for the majority of children, even if this means a minority miss some days of school. I sincerely hope we will pass this peak very soon. If your child is a Close Contact, they should isolate for the same length of time as the person who is positive & the child should be test negative with LFTs before returning to school. If parents do send their children into school while there is a confirmed positive case in their house (and this has happened in the past), they must understand & accept some responsibility for knowingly increasing the risk that others in their child’s class & school will contract Covid.

Parents, please remember in normal times, we would not be asking for this to happen but these are not normal times - as we are currently in peak. Hopefully, we are in what will prove to be our 'Darkest Before the Dawn' moments & we will soon turn the corner. Schools in NI have been very much left alone to try & handle the very difficult & stressful situation themselves. So with this in mind, let me say THANK YOU to parents for working with us.

3. COVID – is it Day 5 or Day 6?

This has been a frequent question: “Is the day someone tests positive ‘Day Zero’ or ‘Day One’ of self-isolation?”

I have checked this with both the Education Authority & Public Health Agency, as well as a few GPs, and they have all told me that Day One is the first full day of isolation. Therefore, Day Zero is the day you get tested or begin to show symptoms. So there must be 5 full 24 hour days completed in isolation before any possibility of leaving self-isolation.

- ❖ This means that a person who tests positive **can leave isolation after midnight on day 5** having tested **NEGATIVE** on day 4 and day 5. A person must continue to self-isolate until they get two back-to-back **NEGATIVE** tests. **Pupils return to school the day after their second **NEGATIVE** lateral flow test** (confirmed by PHA 20/1/2022 and again by PHA/EA 27/1/2020).

- ❖ Remember, children who are sick with anything should not be sent to school. This is especially important right now as the Omicron variant of Covid is even more contagious than previous variants. So, the golden rule of “If in doubt, keep them out” is even more important than ever. There are flus & bad colds going around too at the moment.
- ❖ Therefore, I am strongly encouraging parents to keep children off school if they display **any** of the following 5 possible symptoms:
 - Raised temperature above 37.8oC
 - A persistent cough
 - Loss of sense of taste or smell

Add to this list the following additional symptoms often associated with Omicron & reported by many of our parents:

 - Runny nose
 - Headache
 - Vomiting
 - Loss of appetite
- ❖ If your child has any of these 5 symptoms, you should still try and book a PCR test for them - because they have possible symptoms.
- ❖ Until the worst of Omicron’s impact has passed, parents need to help schools stay open by keeping potentially sick kids off; getting them tested when & how appropriately; and keep communicating with school about what’s going on with their children.

4. STAYING WARM WHILE AT SCHOOL

Please remember that although school’s underfloor heating is on it is still cooler than normal in classes for children and staff due to our having to keep our windows open for ventilation. Therefore, please make sure your children have enough layers of clothing on to keep themselves warm. A vest, a t-shirt worn under school polo shirts can make a real difference. Children may also wear a fleece or similar top over their school sweater if needed. No child needs to feel cold.

5. BICYCLES & SCOOTERS

We are keen to see more children cycle or scoot to school (P4-7 only unless accompanied by parent). We look forward to having designated cycle and bike parking spaces as part of our development of outdoor space. In the meantime, bicycles and scooters can be parked at the side of the school building. Electric scooters are not permitted in school.

6. SCHOOL FUND

It would be very much appreciated if any outstanding School Fund could be paid as soon as possible – either in full or in instalments. £20 per family per school year. Thank you so much.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 14 th to Friday 18 th February	Half-term holiday (5 school days)
Thursday 17 th March	St. Patrick’s Day. School closed
Friday 18 th March	School holiday (1 school day)
Friday 8 th April	Spring Term ends. School closes at 12 noon
Monday 11 th April to Friday 22 nd April	Easter holiday (10 school days)
Monday 25 th April	Summer term begins