



The Wee Friday Note

Friday 1st September 2023



Well, after a fairly soggy summer the children are back, settled, and happy and the new term has begun! Like all schools across Northern Ireland, Cregagh Primary School faces many challenges as we head into this new academic year. Changing demographics in our area and a fall in birth-rate across Northern Ireland have led to a decline in our school enrolment. We have 30 fewer pupils in our school today than we had 7 years ago. The best advertising for any school is word-of-mouth from parents. Please help spread the good news of our lovely school by encouraging other families to come and join us. I know with full certainty that there isn't a local primary school that works harder for its children than we do: for their welfare, for their progress, attainment and for brighter futures than we do.

Every year, the school staff adopt a new motto for the year ahead. This year our motto is, "Be the change you want to see." I would invite all parents in joining with us in living out this motto over the next 12 months: being the best, doing our best and giving of our best for the children. In return, we should have high expectations of the children. All available evidence shows that where low expectations exist, in schools or in homes, what tends to result are low outcomes and behaviours. Let us do our part as teachers and parents, and let's push the children to do theirs. Let's have (sensibly) high expectations of our children. Let's push and support them at the same time and empower them to go on to do great things!

Best wishes to you all, Mr D Heggarty, PRINCIPAL

- 1. RSE (Relationship & Sexuality Education)** – RSE has been part of the NI Curriculum for many years. Recently, the NI Secretary of State (Chris Heaton-Harris, MP) declared that he wanted to bring RSE teaching in NI schools in-line with English and Welsh schools. While there are **no changes to RSE in primary schools at this time**, there are some significant changes planned for secondary schools. It is good for parents to be vigilant and carefully follow any changes that government proposes to such important, moral areas of learning in schools. However, some of the campaigns that have sprung up to challenge the Secretary of State's plans are inaccurate and some may be even misleading (perhaps unintentionally) providing some but not all of the facts: see: <https://factcheckni.org/?s=rse>

Anything that I or the school governors see as harmful to our pupils' childhoods, wellbeing and happiness will always be 'Red Flagged' with parents and resisted. In my 24 years at Cregagh Primary, this has not changed.

- 2. Morning drop-off time** – we have now finished our first week back of school. Parents of children who enter school by the rear school gate must drop their children off at the yellow gates and not come into the playground area which is to be kept clear for children to play. Once on school grounds, children are safe: providing any adults who are not school staff have left the school premises. School staff are on duty every morning. **From Monday 4th September only P1 parents will be able to walk across the playground area.** Speak to your child's class teacher if unsure.
- 3. Meet the Teacher Afternoon** - On Wednesday 6th September at 2pm, all P2-P7 parents and carers are invited to come to school to meet their child's new classroom teacher and find out about the year ahead including: the topics your child will learn about, what is expected from them regarding homework, school trips and visits, etc. Parents with more than one child attending school may choose which class teacher's meeting they wish to attend (they will also receive a copy of any written information given out by their other child's class teacher. All P2-P7 pupils will be supervised by school staff from 2pm onwards. More details will be sent home at the start of next week. Please plan to come along.

4. **Breakfast Club** – before the summer, I explained in several Friday Notes that school would have to increase the cost of Breakfast Club from September to cover the rising costs of providing this service. School not only has to cover the cost of ingredients but cover the cost of two supervising classroom assistants. **Breakfast Club now costs £2 per child per day.** Doors open at 8:15am. Children coming to Breakfast Club should not arrive at school earlier than 8:15am as they will not be supervised & this is unsafe. Places must be pre-booked & paid online. Speak to Miss Murphy our school secretary (90 401246) if you need help doing this.
5. **Two-to-Three Waiting Club (P1-P3 only) and After School Clubs** – we plan to start this week beginning Monday 11th September. Cost per day will remain at the 2022/23 rate of £2.50 per day.
6. **Attendance target for all pupils 2023-24** – The Department of Education (NI) states that a child with an attendance record of 95% is only just “satisfactory”, as 95% means that 9 days of learning have been lost. As a school, we want to see all children in school every day and on time. Missing days of school or being late for reasons that could easily be avoided sends a message to children that school and education “doesn’t really matter”. Children only get one shot at school; help them make the most of their opportunity. Attendance less than 95% is seen as a Red Flag by the Education Authority that they expect school to provide reasons for.
7. **Punctuality** – children need to be in school on time each day. Of course, there will be the odd occasion when something unexpected happens and keeps a family late – but these occasions should be far and few between. Teaching your child that it’s OK to be late for school/work only stores up trouble for the future. *“Be in school – on time – every day – ready to learn!”* (Department of Education, NI)
8. **School Fund** – Most school staff are parents themselves or aunts or uncles and understand that money doesn’t grow on trees – especially at the moment! However, without school fund contributions the boys and girls would miss out on a lot of things. The amount remains at £20 *per family* per school year. This can be paid through our online payment system School Money in either one or several instalments. Speak to Miss Murphy our school secretary (90 401246) if you need help doing this.
9. **Healthy breaks, no nuts & water only** – Our school has a Healthy Break Policy: only healthy break foods can be eaten Monday-Thursday. On Fridays, children can bring a ‘sweet treat’ to school if they so choose. Children may only bring water to school to drink for break and lunch (no diluted juice). Visit our school website for some healthy break ideas. CPS pupils’ tooth decay was among the worst in East Belfast 20 years ago, now it’s among the best. Lastly, please remember we are a ‘nut free’ school due to some children and staff having allergies.



SCHOOL HOLIDAY LIST FOR PUPILS 2023-24

Autumn Term (2023)

New Term Commences:	Tuesday 29th August (12 noon finish all pupils)
Wednesday 30th August:	12 noon finish all pupils
Thursday 31st August:	12 noon finish all pupils
Friday 1st September:	First full school day
Hallowe'en Holidays:	Monday 30th October – Friday 3rd November (5 school days)
Staff Development Day:	Monday 6th November
Autumn Term Ends:	Wednesday 20th December (12 noon finish all pupils)
Christmas Holidays:	Thursday 21st December-Wednesday 3rd January (10 school days)

Spring Term 2024

New Term Commences:	Thursday 4th January
Half-Term Holidays:	Thursday 15th - Friday 16th February (2 school days)
Staff Development Day:	Monday 19th February
St Patrick's Day Holiday:	Monday 18th March
Spring Term Ends:	Friday 22nd March (12 noon finish all pupils)
Easter Holidays:	Monday 25th March – Friday 5th April (10 school days)
Staff Development Day:	Monday 8th April

Summer Term 2024

New Term Commences:	Tuesday 9th April
Early May Bank Holiday:	Monday 6th May
Spring Bank Holiday:	Monday 27th May
Staff Development Day:	Tuesday 28th May
Term Ends:	Friday 28th June (12 noon finish for all pupils)

