Monday 20th April 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Welcome back!! I hope you have had a nice break and that you are all keeping well and safe.

Over the holidays work has continued on developing our communication links and I am delighted to let you all know all class teachers now have the Class DoJo set up. Staff are now in a position to communicate directly with parents. All parents who supplied contact e-mails should have received a notification to join the DoJo from your child’s class teacher. I understand from staff the majority of parents have joined and are finding the system efficient and effective. There are some parents you have not activated the app. I will be contacting you to assist you over the coming days.

Since we last communicated, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has announced that current restrictions, including school closures, have been extended until the 5th of May. The instructions from the Department of Education are that teaching and learning for pupils should continue. Hence staff have the following procedures in place to facilitate their teaching and to support your child’s learning.

Going forward:

1. All class teachers are going to use Class DoJo to communicate with parents and parents can communicate with teachers using this medium.
2. At present support teachers are working with class teachers but they soon will be able to use the Class DoJo
3. Staff will upload homework to the DoJo on a Friday afternoon for the following week and I am very thankful to them for the work they are putting into this.
4. In so far as possible staff will use the school books familiar to pupils and parents but may supplement this with other online material.
5. All work should be completed in copies/on paper and retained as you will need to give us their work when we return to school.
6. As children do not have all their books at home with them teachers will provide the relevant links to access the electronic versions of our text books for all subjects. I know many parents would like to have the physical school books home. I did organise all the books with the help of the PTA just before we were advised to all stay at home. I am seeking clarification on this matter with the DES/HSE and hope to come back to you shortly on this.
7. There is no pressure on parents to complete all the work but we do encourage you to try your best. It is very important for the children that they have a routine to their day and this should, in so far as it is possible, include a set time engaged with learning and completing their tasks for their teacher. It is not necessary that you sit beside your child while they complete tasks. Obviously, the younger your child is the more supervision may be required but it is important too to remember that one of the key skills children are taught in school is responsibility for doing their work independently. In school the teacher does not sit beside them all the time. The task is explained and they then sit and do it. Older children should be able to work away independently once you have gone through the requirements with them. Remember it is for them to do not for you to do!! If your child cannot complete a task it is important you inform their teacher. If they get something wrong, so be it. That’s how they learn.
8. Your child’s teacher may request you to upload specific pieces of work for correction.
9. Parents who have any concerns or encounter any problems or need support should contact Ms McDonagh by e-mail at allennsprincipal@gmail.com who will come back to you as soon as possible.

These are the steps we have taken to support you and your child. They are not written in stone, we are on a learning curve ourselves! We are happy to tweak and improve them as we roll them out. Please feel free to send feedback to Ms McDonagh on how you are finding things.

While we want you to make an effort, we don’t want to put undue pressure on parents or make them feel guilty. You know best what you are able to do taking into account your circumstances and these may vary from week to week. School work can be particularly challenging for parents with a number of children or for parents who have to work from home or outside the home. We’ve seen some of the videos on-line of distressed parents!! Remember many of us are ourselves distressed parents!!! We want you to enjoy this time with your children. If the school work causes upset in your house, then leave it for a while, get outside, go for a walk or take ‘time-out’ and come back to it at another time. It is important that the children experience learning as a positive activity. If you are going to get cross with the children while they are doing school work, it is better to leave it. Sometimes we think our children aren’t concentrating or trying, when genuinely they are doing their best. Truth is, if a child knows how to do something they will gladly let you know that they can do it. If they can’t do it, accept that they can’t and move to something different or send their teacher a message or email Ms McDonagh about the fact that your child is finding the work challenging. Praise goes a long way. Any of the on-line activities we recommend, support your child’s learning and are worthwhile. However, balance is important. Use this time to get outside with your children. The weather so far has been great and teachers are going to try to include some nature work and PE exercises for all the family in their programmes. I advise you to sit down with your children and come up with a time-table that suits everyone. For positive mental health for both adults and children, it is important that during these difficult times that routines are in place. It may seem easier sometimes to stay in our pyjamas and watch the TV but this is not good for us. It is also important to keep up a healthy eating routine.

The staff and parents in our school community have always worked together in the best interest of our pupils and I know we will continue to do so now. Just do your best. Do not worry your child will fall behind. Every parent and every pupil in the country is in the same boat. We are all front line workers in education now and by working together we can instil a sense of pride and achievement in the children that they are doing their piece in this ‘Covid 19 Challenge’. I have written to the pupils separately on this issue. When school reopens we will be taking stock of where we are all at and we will be picking up the children and taking them forward. No one will miss out or be left behind.

Please check our school website [www.allennationalschool.com](http://www.allennationalschool.com) and twitter regularly for updates and news items. The PTA have also been very kindly reposting messages on their Facebook page to ensure maximum opportunity for parents to receive information and keep up to date.

Can I take this opportunity to thank you all again – both parents and staff - for your cooperation and support at this time.

Do not forget I am just an e-mail away if you need anything.

Stay safe - stay apart ……. and we will soon be back together

Ms McDonagh