



Dear parent,

I would like to begin by sharing my thanks to you all on behalf of everyone in school. Your support and words of encouragement to staff helped galvanise us as we endeavoured to balance our own professional and personal lives in response to societal difficulties. In addition, as our provision evolved, we were so pleased to receive numerous examples of children's work which demonstrated your commitment and determination to progress their learning during our partial-absence. Whilst this frustrated us greatly, the communication we had with many of you and the support we were able to provide throughout this time has helped redress the learning gap to some degree, as we look ahead to next term.

Even though I have only been part of this school community for a relatively short time, it was unsurprising to see the vast amount of effort being poured into your children as you took to addressing the enhanced amount of home learning since March. However, even beyond that, how pupils engaged in the weekly challenges provided by staff and friends of the school; sharing what you were most proud of, for consideration for a Principal's Award; participation in our replacement to our usual Sports Day; sharing the musical talent we are blessed with in school, by combining it into a Virtual Music Concert; showing consideration for the more vulnerable in our community by utilising art skills to paint rocks for mental health and donating to our food bank initiative.

It is safe to say that the holiday we will have over July and into August will be well-received by everyone but I would encourage you, perhaps more than ever before, to revisit and consolidate the concepts your child has studied in school and at home this academic year. *

This will be critical in establishing a stronger starting point for when we return and allow us to move forward with positivity and a sense of pride in what we have accomplished during incredibly challenging circumstances.

**The Home Learning Hub content will remain 'live' over the next few months.*

In order to address the changing needs of our school and maximise the educational impact from our school resources there will be some minor changes to staffing for next year.

In Primary One we are all very sad to be saying goodbye to Mrs Langley after a long, successful career serving the families of Newtownards. Mrs Langley is one of those few teachers who remains ageless and truly unforgettable in the memories of those who have been fortunate to be taught by or work alongside her. A true lady, a matriarch of the Model, one who inspires those around her, who supports colleagues, pupils and parents alike and does it all with a smile and an infectious laugh. She will officially retire after 38 years at the end of August but will always be welcome back to the Model.

We thank Pamela for her dedicated service and wish her a long and happy retirement with her husband Nick.

Message from Mrs Langley:

I would just like to take this opportunity to say goodbye to all my Newtownards Model family. I am retiring after teaching here for 38 years. I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching all my lovely P1s through the years and I know I will miss everyone but I am looking forward to some nice holidays when life returns to normal. Have a great summer everyone and keep safe.

***Lots of love
Mrs Langley xx***

We are delighted to be able to move one of our most experienced teachers, Mrs McCulloch, from her post in P3 to P1 to work alongside Mrs Gould and support our very youngest learners from August.

In Primary Two we are also very pleased to see Mrs Hopkins return from a career break to re-join our staff. Mrs Hopkins has taught at the Model for many years and has a wealth of experience teaching in the Foundation Stage and managing Areas of Learning. Her knowledge and skills will be combined with that of Mrs Raphael to form a strong job-share arrangement. To support both teachers getting to know every pupil's abilities across the full curriculum, a rolling week on, week off will operate between these members of staff.

We are also welcoming back Mrs Ryan to teach full-time in the other P2 class. Mrs Ryan boasts many years of teaching experience and also adds great value to the music provision within the school.

In Primary Three, Mrs Warke will take on the role of teaching full-time alongside Miss Beattie & Miss Ferguson in the other P3 class. Mrs Warke will be in post until a permanent, full-time replacement is appointed through a phase of recruitment.

A message from Mrs Warke:

Hello everyone, I'm Mrs. Warke and I'm delighted to be joining the team at The Model Primary School, Newtownards.

I love to have fun in the classroom and make learning enjoyable. As a qualified Apple Teacher, I like to use technology as much as possible and my iPad is never too far away!

Outside of school, I enjoy spending time with my family, day trips away and not forgetting a regular trip to the cinema! I'm also very involved in my local church.

I hope you have a restful summer and I'm looking forward to meeting you all soon.



We are very happy to report that Mrs Matchett will now move to a critical role within our Learning Support Team. We have considered additional measures which we can provide to support our pupils in addressing the learning gap as a consequence of the forced closure in March. Mrs Matchett will recommence the previous learning support role she carried out in the autumn & spring terms, working under the leadership of Mrs Ringland and alongside Miss Smyth.

The remainder of our staff quota will remain unchanged for the next academic year and it is our hope and prayer that we will all remain healthy and well so as to maintain consistency and continuity for your children and our pupils.

Mrs Dornan will also be leaving us in August to take up a new post in Grange Park Primary in Bangor. Mrs Dornan has spent many years in the Model supporting staff, pupils and parents in a very busy school office. We will most certainly miss her friendship, her care, and her extensive experience in solving admin problems each day. Mrs Dornan played a particularly important role within our school's first aid provision. She always offered a calm, reassuring voice as she applied ice packs, wiped noses or fixed plasters. We wish Mrs Dornan well in her new post. At this stage we do not have a replacement.

Plan for August return

On Friday 19th June we received guidance from the Department of Education (DE) in relation to the restart of schools. Even subject to the guidance provided, there are many challenges which require clarification ahead of our return in August.

Throughout our school's response to this crisis, our overriding priority has been to ensure the safety of our children, parents, staff and the school community. The decisions made relating to 'Restart' must consider this as a continuing priority.

As I write this, I remain optimistic about reopening when I watch press coverage of the different regions within the UK and the responses from within various education sectors. It was published on 25th June that England would be scrapping social distancing in their schools and instead opt for 'protective bubbles'. Scotland too are aiming for a return in August which is in-line with their normal school calendar.

Whilst I am hopeful for a full return for full days, it would be foolish for me not to have developed a plan together with my staff and give you all as much advanced notice as possible.

The DE advocates a minimum of 40% face-to-face teaching to be used in conjunction with home learning. Our plan for return will utilise all of the available space within our school building and will increase the level of contact with the teacher well above this minimum requirement. We feel strongly about the need for continuity and regular face-to-face contact with pupils as they return to the learning environment again. We are also cognisant of the need to support you by placing a focus on the core areas of learning of literacy and numeracy during your child's time in school with us.

As with any arrangement, it will have its cons, however on balance, considering the guidance from DE, staffing, finances, cleaning requirements, building layout and community needs, I feel the plan detailed below is the best course of action to adopt if social distancing measures are still in operation in NI in mid-August.

This plan is made possible through the reconfiguration of classroom furniture but it also provides teachers with some flexibility about which larger spaces they would prefer to use to deliver a reduced curriculum. It also necessitates the suspension of large gatherings of people in shared areas such as the Assembly/ Dining Hall etc.

I will be reviewing the situation throughout July and August and you will receive further updated communication (including various timings) via email regarding our school plans before we return.

The School Day

Utilising 'protective bubbles' AND a 1 metre social distancing rule between children to minimise contact outside of a designated group which includes your child, their classmates, their teacher and classroom assistant (where available).

Primary 7 pupils will return on Monday 24th August, Tuesday 25th & Wednesday 26th for THREE FULL DAYS ONLY with a packed lunch. Staggered drop-off and staggered dismissal times will be in operation.

Primary 1 – 2 pupils will return (as per school calendar 2020-21) on Thursday 27th August and will be grouped into BUBBLE 1 or BUBBLE 2. This is due to the age of the pupils and the greater need for sensitivity when reintroducing them into the learning environment.

BUBBLE 1 will be in school from 9.00am to 11.00am & BUBBLE 2 from 11.30am to 1.30pm. (these times are approximate as staggered drop-off and pick-up is required).

Primary 3 – 7 pupils will return (as per school calendar 2020-21) on Thursday 27th August from 8.45am to 1.00pm (these times are approximate as staggered drop-off and pick-up are required).

Pupils WILL NOT be having lunch on-site initially.

Key points (some require confirmation in August)

From September those pupils eligible for free school meals will be sent home with a sandwich lunch each day.

A morning snack is required for P3-P7. In order to maximise learning time in P1 and P2, a snack will not be required initially.

School uniform should be worn each day. For P2-P7, pupils can alternate between the main school uniform and the school P.E uniform/ tracksuit to allow time for laundering.

In P3- P7 only pupils (NO ADULTS) should enter the main building in the morning at drop-off times. This restriction is in place to reduce the numbers on site and is part of our approach to risk management. *A temporary alternative arrangement is being devised for P1 – P2 pupils.*

Telephone appointments can be made with teachers through the school office, if required.

Home learning will continue via the use of two apps. Seesaw in P1-2 and Google Classroom in P3-7.

Children should sanitise their hands at their designated entry point each day. Regular hand-washing procedures will become part of general classroom practice.

As far as possible, siblings within families will be considered in 'Bubble' groupings and the planning of drop-off and pick-up timings.

Children will remain in their 'protective bubble' for their reduced school day until further easing of measures is possible based on the public health situation. This will include a morning break for outdoor play.

Whole school events and gatherings will be paused temporarily.

The provision of services from outside agencies e.g. the music service, club providers, behaviour support is under review.

Children are not permitted to use the outdoor gym or activity centre before, during or after school hours.

The above arrangements will significantly contribute to managing the perceived risk and they are designed to minimise the potential spread of the virus. They also increase the ability of the school community to support the delivery of the Department of Health's Covid-19, Test Trace and Protect Strategy.

Equipment for next year

To reduce risk and avoid cross-contamination from sharing resources, the items your child will need from August are detailed below. These items should be brought into school on their first day where they will remain and only be used by your child. They should also be replenished once they run out.

ALL ITEMS MUST BE LABELLED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME AND BE PLACED INSIDE A SEE-THROUGH POCKET (polypocket):

Key Stage 2 - (incl P5, P6, P7)	Hand sanitiser Packet of tissues 2 pencils 1 sharpener (which collects sharpenings) Pack of 12 coloured pencils/ twistables Dictionary	Eraser 30cm ruler Glue Stick 2 whiteboard markers Blue biro pen
Key Stage 1 - (incl P3, P4)	2 Black and yellow HB pencils 1 sharpener (which collects sharpenings) Pack of 12 coloured twistables (P3 only) Packet of tissues Eraser Wipeable pencil case (nothing furry, plain plastic that's easy to clean) Children's Oxford Dictionary (P4 only) Pack of 12 coloured pencils (P4 only) 2 A4 Zip wallets (two different colours P4 only)	Glue Stick (not coloured) Whiteboard marker & eraser Hand sanitiser A4 Zip wallet Safety scissors 30cm ruler (P4 only) Crayons (P4 only)
Primary 2 -	Pack of 12 coloured pencils/ twistables Glue Stick (not coloured)	1 whiteboard marker
Primary 1 -	Resources will be provided and managed by the P1 staff.	

Thank you to our team @ The Model

The continuing arrangements for the supervision of children of key workers families will now become the responsibility of the NI Executive. I would like to thank all of the teaching staff and classroom assistants who demonstrated their commitment to the continued operation of this valuable provision since March. Without their willingness to do this, in addition to their delivery of remote learning, communicating/ supporting parents and providing feedback to pupils on their work, we would have been unable to sustain this service for our key worker parents.

Thanks also to our team of classroom assistants who have worked in the background supporting the on-going work and diversifying to take on additional duties and responsibilities.

To Glenn Johnston of Scrabo Hall for his regular contact with school and taking time to come in and spend time with our children of key worker families.

To our wonderful cleaning team of Mr Rollo, Mrs McClean, Mrs Stanczyk and Miss Craig who have ensured that we could remain open to support our families, they have not faltered in their commitment to their role. In particular, we are indebted to Mr Rollo for the dedication he has shown in helping me manage our school building and enhanced cleaning schedule.

My thanks also to Mrs Dornan who has worked diligently in school or from home each day carrying on with school critical duties and the many additional administrative tasks required to help keep us operational.

My final thanks, on behalf of our families, to Mrs Simpson for her commitment to keeping in regular contact with our more vulnerable pupils and their families. She has been continually liaising with our safeguarding partners in the community to make sure our pupils have everything they need during these difficult days.

We are indebted to everyone who helped in whatever way they could during this crisis, a crisis of which no-one was immune. Whilst our priority was to ensure that education continued in homes in our community, many of our staff also balanced home schooling of their own children, caring for their relatives or even battled with ongoing health concerns of their own.

In closing, whilst I appreciate that the unknown elements will continue to make it extremely difficult for parents and carers to plan for the new school year, I would ask for your patience while we await further updates regarding 'Restart'.

Teachers will be unavailable for contact from tomorrow until 17th August. However, should you need to contact me I will continue to monitor my emails sporadically throughout July and more frequently in August ahead of our return.

May I wish all of our families a restful and enjoyable summer holiday,

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graham Bennett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.