Dear Parent(s)/Guardians,

Good evening and I hope that this message finds you well. The past week and a half has been a worrying time for us all and the staff of Rush National School hope that you and your families are safe and healthy and we look forward to seeing you all again when school resumes.

**Current School Closure**

The school closure on Thursday 12th March was very sudden, with only two hours notice given. Many people were predicting that schools would close for a short period from St. Patrick’s Day onward. However, following the announcement of an immediate school closure, all staff quickly set about compiling a scheme of work that would keep the children in touch with their learning and not cause unnecessary stress or anxiety for children or parents alike. Our intention was to facilitate independent learning, where the child would be able to complete the majority of the assigned work without parental intervention. Feedback has been positive and as a parent of two school going children, I welcome the structure and sense of normality it gives to my children during such an uncertain time in their young lives.

**Extension of Closure**

As of yet, I have received no official confirmation that the current school closure is to be extended beyond the 29th March but I am confident that the closure will continue for some time.

**Distance Learning**

Therefore, the children of our school will continue to engage in ‘Distance Learning’. This is not to be confused with ‘Homeschooling'. I am not asking you to teach the various assigned activities/tasks. I am asking that you facilitate learning. I recognise how difficult this might be, as many of you are already working remotely, there may be younger children at home due to the closure of childcare facilities, and device availability might be an issue also.

**Planning Ahead**

‘Distance Learning’ is not intended to add to an already stressful situation. Our intention is to try and provide interesting activities/tasks that will occupy your child for part of the day. Therefore, myself and the staff have compiled a medium term plan which continues to put your child’s safety and wellbeing, along with the wellbeing of their families, to the forefront at all times.

**Homework Tab**

From the 30th March, activities/tasks will be assigned daily through the homework tab on Aladdin Connect for all classes. This work will be based on the e-books available to you through Edco and C.J. Fallon. These links were communicated previously.

**Differentiation**

It is very difficult to differentiate for your child’s learning when setting work remotely. However, children in receipt of School Support or School Support Plus will receive a differentiated programme, collaboratively designed by both your child’s class teacher and your child’s support teacher.

**Options**

If a prescribed lesson causes any stress or anxiety then please skip the lesson, or select a different activity from the various links/menus of work, already sent to you on Aladdin Connect. As your child’s primary educator, you may decide not to engage with ‘Distance Learning’. Literacy and numeracy are all around us and your child can continue to learn through practical activities/tasks set by and facilitated by you.

**Communication**

One way to alleviate stress, and enhance learning, is to have clear two way communication. In Rush National School, we pride ourselves on how frequently staff and parents communicate. This is normally in the form of a note in the journal, a phone call to the office, a prearranged meeting or a quick word with the class teacher in person in the morning. Now, as we engage in ‘Distance Learning’, parents can communicate with the relevant class teacher/support teacher electronically.

**Junior Infants - 2nd Class**

If clarification is required concerning a set activity/task, parents of children in Junior Infants to 2nd class can communicate with the class teacher/support teacher via the Seesaw app. You will also be able to upload examples of your child’s work through the Seesaw app for teacher comment/feedback. The teacher will indicate when a child’s work is to be uploaded.

**3rd - 6th Class**

If clarification is required concerning a set activity/task, parents of children from 3rd to 6th class can communicate with the class teacher/support teacher through email. Each email address is the relevant teacher’s initial and full surname followed by @rushnationalschool.ie. For example, [mdoran@rushnationalschool.ie](mailto:mdoran@rushnationalschool.ie). On Monday morning, you will receive a notification confirming the correct email address. All teachers from 3rd to 6th class will have Google Classroom set up by the Easter break and this will allow children to upload samples of their work for teacher feedback. The teacher will indicate when a child’s work is to be uploaded. Further details on Google Classroom and its operation will be communicated by the relevant teacher in due course.

**Communication Etiquette**

All staff will endeavour to reply to queries as quickly as possible during school hours. Queries or concerns that do not relate to the assigned activities/tasks should be emailed to either [office@rushnationalschool.ie](mailto:office@rushnationalschool.ie) or to myself at [mdoran@rushnationalschool.ie](mailto:mdoran@rushnationalschool.ie). Any special education queries should be emailed to Ms. McElligott at [nmcelligott@rushnationalschool.ie](mailto:nmcelligott@rushnationalschool.ie). I realise that these are stressful times for us all but I ask that all communication is respectful, as is custom in our school.

**Conclusion**

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that the health, safety and wellbeing of you and your family is the most important thing for us.The activities/tasks prescribed are completely optional. Bear in mind that we are over two-thirds of the way through the 2019/2020 Academic Year and the most important topics per subject have already been taught. When we return to school, we will teach all the topics that you are currently facilitating.

I ask for your continued cooperation and goodwill and I hope to see you all safe and sound in the not too distant future.

Stay safe.