



Monday 22nd June, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It's hard to believe that we are in the final week of the school year and that we haven't been together since the 12th of March. When word of the school closures started to filter through it never occurred to me that the children wouldn't have returned for the remainder of the school year. As every day passed, and events such as our annual 5k, Spring assemblies, Family Fridays, Summer fair were postponed, we kept reminding ourselves of the important job that we were doing. Keeping safe.

Yet, as Principal, I knew that while our school building was closed our school certainly wasn't! My job was to make sure that teaching and learning continued to happen, in whatever way possible, and that we maintained our connection to our school community. We needed to reach out to our families, to let the children know that we were still here and to let parents know that our commitment to our pupils was as strong as ever.

Wellbeing and supporting families became our focus. Providing ways for class teachers to directly connect to their pupils while recognising the difficult situation that many families faced. Finding the balance between providing learning activities for families who were in a position to complete them and providing reassurance for families for whom priorities changed overnight. Most importantly, we wanted the children to be able to hear their teacher's voice and even see their face! So, with the help of Seesaw, we tried to embrace the world of remote learning.

To all of the families who are part of our school community I want to say 'Thank you'. Thank you for your never ending support, your patience, your feedback and suggestions. Thank you for keeping in touch and throwing yourself into whatever activities we suggested. Thank you for sending in photos and helping the children to get involved. Thank you for reaching out and allowing us to support you and being honest with us. Most of all thank you for your kind words of encouragement and positivity. You really have no idea the

impact that a message of support can mean to a teacher who is desperately trying to support a class of 32 pupils from home, often with a dodgy internet connection. It really is true that a kind word and a little bit of kindness go a long way.

Which leads me to our wonderful staff. I am always so proud of the team that we have in LETNS but I am in awe of the entire staff since the 12th of March. Without any advanced warning or training they managed to transition an entire school into an online learning environment while keeping our ethos and the needs of the children in their classes to the fore. Anything I asked was met with a reply of 'no problem' and every teacher threw themselves into webinars and on-line courses to learn about remote teaching. Hours were spent on Zoom planning and discussing! Decisions were made and changed with flexibility being key. Teachers shared resources and expertise and those of us with limited IT skills were supported by our colleagues. We checked in on each other when times were difficult and shared the load. Teachers supported families on-line, over the phone and by making doorstep deliveries. To the staff and Board of Management of Letterkenny Educate Together NS thank you, thank you, thank you!

Finally, to the most important people in our school – our pupils. This has been a really tough time for all of you. Overnight, your lives changed! School building closed, after school clubs stopped, playdates were cancelled and even family visits weren't allowed. Throughout it all you knew you were doing an important job helping to keep people safe but that doesn't mean it was easy! Our children should be applauded for their great work since the 12th of March and we are so proud of them. We miss you all so much and can't wait to see you again.

So as this school year draws to a close we look forward to the end of August and the re-opening of schools. Like you, our preferred option is to have everyone back in school as normal on the 27th of August. Myself and the Board of Management will be working on our return to school plan over the summer holidays and like all schools are awaiting guidance from the Department of Education and Skills in this regard.

For now, I wish you all a wonderful summer break. I hope that you all get some time to relax together, enjoy some sunshine and switch off Seesaw!!

Keep safe,

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