4 June 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you are all safe and well and continuing to manage the challenging conditions which currently surround us. It is so hard to believe that we are entering our twelfth week of home learning and our thirteenth week since being together at school. Yet despite this, you as parents and our whole school team are working incredibly hard to provide the best learning experiences for all the children at home. Our focus, as always has been to enhance our children's wellbeing and provide meaningful learning opportunities in equal measure. The tremendous feedback from our parents during recent telephone calls has been extremely encouraging and adds much needed momentum to our team effort. Everyone deserves huge credit for the contributions they are making — it is great to see our wider school community supporting each other in so many ways.

It has now been confirmed that we will not be returning to school before the end of June. Indeed, there is much speculation about when exactly we will return and how a return to school will look when it does happen. The Department of Education and The Education Authority are working on how that will be organised and we await their guidance and support in ensuring a safe return to school. One suggestion is that it might be in phases which would allow us to learn from what we experience before introducing other year groups. Whatever it looks like – whenever that may be — the St Paul’s school community will work hard to ensure our best for everyone.

As a school community we are acutely aware that our Year 7 pupils will not have the opportunity to gather together again to celebrate the end of their time at St Paul’s. We are so disappointed that they will not have the opportunity to perform their P7 performance, gather together for their Leavers’ Breakfast and celebrate their Leavers’ Mass together. These are just some of the events which make Term 3 so special and memorable for our Year 7 pupils and the wider school community. However, please be assured that we will not simply let our Year 7 pupils slip away unnoticed. When restrictions permit, and it is safe to do so, I will make arrangements for all our Year 7 children to be together again to celebrate and give thanks for all they have achieved here in school — there is so much to be thankful for and such wonderful memories to treasure.

The community response during the current crisis has increased availability of access to technology, resources and sources of support. Such developments include The Department of Education "Safer Schools" digital safeguarding app, which is now available for the first time to children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Children and Young people will be able to access advice on a range of digital issues, including safeguarding on social media platforms and bullying. The Safer Schools App was previously only made available to all adults.

This app is very useful to ensure parents and children have all the knowledge they need to keep themselves safe online. If you have not already done so, it may be beneficial to download this App for yourself and your children

[**https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/safer-schools-app-launched-children-and-young-people**](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/news/safer-schools-app-launched-children-and-young-people).

The Parenting NI App has also been made available free on android and IOS. This app provides tips on topics such as children’s emotional wellbeing and managing behaviour, it explores parenting styles and includes interactive games you can play with your children. Search ‘Parenting NI’ in the app store of your device to download.

The Education Authority is also releasing a laptop loan scheme for use by priority children and families. If you feel you could benefit from loan of a device, please email me on **smcnamee381@c2kni.net** and I will contact you to gather any necessary details. Any information gathered will be held in the strictest of confidence and shared only for the purposes of accessing the loan scheme. I will do my best to assist with any queries and support application to the scheme.

Please remember, if you have a concern or a query, do not hesitate to contact your child’s class teacher via the email addresses on the school website or you can email me if you prefer at **smcnamee381@c2kni.net** or Mrs McCotter at **gmccotter747@c2kni.net** .

We will continue to keep you updated in the days ahead and as plans develop.

Yours in good faith,

Sean McNamee

PRINCIPAL