**Ballymoney National School,**

**Ballineen,**

**Co. Cork.**

**Phone: 023-8847583**

 **7th January 2022**

**Dear Parents,**

**Welcome Back**

Happy New Year! We are delighted to be back in school despite the high case numbers. It will be a challenge to maintain a full staff. Please help us by keeping your children at home if they have any symptoms. We have done so well so far!

**Extra layers**

It is considerably colder than last term. If the children are feeling cold, they are welcome to wear extra layers or warm hats in the classroom. Last year some of the senior pupils even had small blankets to place over their knees. The heaters are all turned up high and we will give the pupils extra opportunities to exercise between breaks to keep them warm. Please ensure that they have a waterproof coat with them every day so that we can do as many activities outside as possible.

**Maternity Leave**

We are pleased to welcome Mr. Michael O’Sullivan to our staff to cover a maternity leave until the 25th of June. He will be teaching the senior classroom on Fridays.

**Activities this term**

We have lots of activities to look forward to during our Spring term. The whole school will concentrate on healthy eating in January when they participate in the Food Dudes Programme which encourages them to eat more fruit and vegetables. Later in the term they are all going to participate in the ‘Cycle Right Programme’ which teaches them about road safety while cycling. We are continuing to work towards another Active Flag and we are working towards a Green Flag on the theme of water. The senior pupils are busy practising for an online ukulele concert for the pupils of St. Multose NS and Kilgarriffe NS at the beginning of February. We were fortunate to receive a BLAST arts grant which will fund Claire McLaughlin to work with the pupils as a visual artist in residence during the months of February and March.

**Social Media**

We have set up Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages to publicize some of the activities happening in the school. All parents have already signed a photography permission slip on enrolment which gives us permission to use photographs of the pupils on the school website and in local newspapers. We sent a new permission slip home yesterday which also covers social media. Please return the forms to the school. Your child's name will never be printed beside their photograph unless we individually contact you for permission first.

**Water Usage Survey**

We are working towards a Green Flag on the theme of water. A survey has been sent home to survey each family on their current water usage. This is for our Green School Committee to find our starting point at the beginning of the project. A survey will be sent home again at the end of the project to see if we have increased the children's awareness of the need to conserve water.

**Stay Safe Programme**

This term all classes will be following the Stay Safe Programme. The Stay Safe Programme is a primary school based approach to the prevention of child abuse. The aim of the programme is to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying through the provision of a personal safety education programme for children at primary school level. The Stay Safe programme itself is a personal safety skills programme designed for use with primary school children from Junior Infants through to 6th class. The programme seeks to enhance children’s self-protective skills by participation in lessons on safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets, telling and stranger danger. The programme aims to give children the skills necessary to enable them to recognise and resist abuse/victimisation and teaches them that they should always tell (an adult that can help) about any situation which they find unsafe, upsetting, threatening, dangerous or abusive.