



Dear Parent/Carer,

As the school year begins we are really pleased to be welcoming all of our pupils, parents and carers back to the start of what we are sure will be another busy and enjoyable school year. Thank you for making a great start so far. As we settle back into routine we have a number of reminders and updates that we'd like to share with you:

School Meals & Milk

School Meals cost £2.60 per day or £13.00 per week. Parents entitled to Free School Meals (earning under £16190 per year) should ask for a form from the office and get registered with the Education Authority even if you do not intend to use the school meals service all the time. The number of families registered for Free School Meals has an impact on our funding. Dinner money will be collected on Monday of each week. **Please ensure that the correct amount is sent in as we do not hold money in school and cannot provide change.** Children absent due to illness can pay for school meals on a Tuesday. Please note that no monies will be accepted on alternate days. A letter has gone out regarding school milk and the deadline for requesting school milk is Tuesday 18th September.

Breakfast Club

Is open each morning and details regarding prices and booking are online and available through the office. High demand means we can no longer accept additional pupils on an ad hoc basis and advance booking is essential. Please contact the school office at the latest on the day before you intend to use the club to check for availability.

Medical Info & Up to Date Contact Details

If your child has a new or existing medical condition such as an allergy, asthma, diabetes or any other condition that may affect them during their time in school we need to know about it. It is also vital that we have up to date emergency contact details for all parents and at least two alternative contacts in case parents are out of reach. If you have changed your phone numbers or your childcare arrangements, please check that we are aware of the new details. Over the course of the next few days we will be sending home a Data Collection Form with your child. It is very important that you complete and return this form as soon as possible.

Nut Free School

We have a nut free policy in school and we ask parents to be aware of the need to avoid sending products containing nuts into school.

To avoid confusion and disappointment we will not accept cakes or buns (either home-made or shop-bought) sent into school as treats or for birthday cakes etc. We have an anaphylaxis policy which is viewable on the documents section of the website.

Permissions & Consents

A separate form regarding parental consent on a number of day to day issues such as the use of photographs, changing for hygiene and educational testing has already gone out. Please complete and return this form as soon as possible so that we can refresh our records and get things running as smoothly as possible. The school has policies on Data Protection which, along with a Privacy Statement, are published on our website.

Driving on School Grounds

Our grounds and the grounds of our neighbouring school, Wellington College, become congested at peak times. Driver behaviour is key in ensuring the grounds are as safe as possible. We do not have a parking space for everyone and we encourage anyone who can to use alternative means of transport to school if possible.

- Please drive slowly.
- Please enter the Wellington College/Forge Campus via Carolan Road and exit via Rosetta Avenue.
- Observe the directional signage and park only in parking spaces – fly parking reduces visibility for other drivers and increases risk.
- When on foot stay on footpaths and encourage children to do the same.
- Drop children off in the designated drop off zone so that they can alight straight onto footpaths and avoid negotiating vehicle traffic.
- Avoid confrontation – aggressive and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated and persons behaving in such a manner will be banned from the grounds.
- Co-operate with school staff if they ask you to move because you are parked or stationary in a place that is not appropriate.
- We are very proud of the significant numbers of parents and children who walk and cycle to school and this year we begin a three-year partnership with Sustrans to promote sustainable and safe travel. There will be a number of educational opportunities throughout the year supported by Sustrans – listen out for details from your children.
- It is not permissible to park on school grounds and leave cars all day.

Open Door Policy

- We encourage parents whose children are becoming more independent to send them to class independently to help reduce the number of people in the building and reduce congestion on site. We particularly point out that as children get older there is no need for parents to come into the classroom daily.
- Our open door policy does not mean every parent has an automatic entitlement or need to speak to their child's teacher every morning as this is simply unworkable. Issues that need a conversation beyond a few seconds, or that are of a personal or emotive nature should be dealt with by way of an appointment through the school office.
- Parents seeking an appointment with the Principal should do so through the school office. It is not realistic to expect to see him by calling in without prior appointment.
- It is important that we have the school clear of parents by 9.00am so the school day can begin. Please respect this.
- Copies of our Open Door Policy are available from the office and on our website in PDF form. Our routines in this respect are under review and we will keep you informed of any significant changes.

Lost Property – Names on Personal Belongings

Please make sure you put your child's name on every item of clothing, lunchboxes etc. We recommend using iron on or sewn on labels or a good quality indelible marker. Initials written on with a biro will wash off. We very quickly amass a huge bundle of lost property and tracing owners can be difficult. This year we will be offloading unclaimed lost property to local charity shops on a monthly basis. A number of local shops including Marks & Spencer have a label printing service and personal labels can also be ordered on line inexpensively from a variety of suppliers online.

Punctuality

Punctuality is very important both in the mornings *and when collecting children in the afternoons*. Many P1, P2 and P3 teachers whose classes finish at 2pm teach other classes immediately afterwards and being held up disrupts this. We know that anyone can be held up and be late occasionally but persistent lateness is something that must be addressed.

Absence

If your child is sick and will be unable to attend school, please contact the office and let us know. If a child is absent for other reasons for example medical appointments, we also need to be informed. All pupils must present class teachers with a note when absent from school. NB: Holidays taken during term time **will not** be approved by the school.



Attendance Matters – How do you measure up?

Every single day of school missed is a day's learning lost. Attendance percentages can look a lot better than the raw figures!

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence = 1 Week & 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence = 3 Weeks & 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence = 5 Weeks & 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence = 7 Weeks & 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence = 9 Weeks & 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

First Aid in School

A significant number of our staff have up to date First Aid Training. We remind parents that we cannot administer medicines to pupils without parents having completed a consent form which will, in some cases, require the signature of your family doctor.

For minor cuts and grazes we sometimes use adhesive dressings (plasters) to keep cuts clean during the remainder of the school day. We always ask children if they've used plasters before and if they've had any problems before we apply them. We would ask that you inform us immediately if your child has any allergic reaction to adhesive plasters or to any foods, medicines or other substances. This is important not only in keeping your child away from substances that may provoke a reaction but also to inform health professionals in an emergency situation.

Use of School Toilets

The toilets on school premises are for the use of pupils and staff only. Parents **should not** ask to use the toilets except in an emergency situation such as baby changing etc.

Parental Supervision of Children Before and After the School Day

Please be aware that the supervision of children on school grounds during pick up and drop off periods is important to maintain safety for all. The climbing of trees and fences and moving in the vehicle areas is not allowed and it is the responsibility of parents to control their children's behaviour.

Loitering on School Grounds

Parents are advised that it is not permissible to wait in the rear or front playgrounds after picking children up. There are a number of reasons for this, primarily safeguarding all children and ensuring that children still participating in lessons are not disturbed. Children should not be playing on play equipment after their school day has ended.

Dogs on School Grounds

Dogs are not permitted on school grounds except for Guide Dogs and Assistance Dogs. Please see the Dogs on School Grounds Policy on our Website.

School Swimming

Will begin for Key Stage 2 (P5 & P6 Pupils initially) pupils this week.

Notes Home

We are progressively reducing the number of paper notes we send home. The majority of notes that aren't confidential will be posted on the school website or by email and in most cases through our Facebook, Twitter or Seesaw news feeds. Please keep us up to date with contact numbers and **email addresses**. Notes aimed at a limited audience or require a signature for consent/permission will still go out on paper. All notes will also be available in paper copy to parents who wish to collect them from the school office. Parents who require information in special formats such as large print or alternative languages should let us know.

Forthcoming Events

We are currently arranging some of the events that will take place in school during the forthcoming term and hope to get details on the school website as and when they become available.

- **Parent Information Meetings & Maths Workshops, Monday 1st October 2018 6.30pm**

We have yearly information meetings to give parents an idea what their children will be learning during the year. This is a chance for you to get into your child's classroom, meet the teacher and see the kinds of activities that they will be doing during the year. This year as well as a general info session there will be a focus on how to help your child with maths. The meetings are at 6.30pm in the classrooms.

- **PTA Drop in Meeting and AGM, Monday 1st October 2018 7.30pm**

Our vibrant PTA group will be holding a drop in meeting and their AGM following the Parent Info Sessions on Monday 1st October. This will be a chance to have a cup of tea or coffee, meet existing PTA members and find out a bit about the kind of things the PTA do. The meeting will run in the school hall from 7.30pm and all parents are welcome.

Parent Teacher Interviews

Will be scheduled during the week 22nd – 26th October 2018. This is an early opportunity to have a conversation with your child's teacher about their progress and areas for improvement that we can work together on. Individual appointments will be sent out closer to the time.

Child Protection/Pastoral Care/Health & Safety

We draw your particular attention to our policy and procedures around Safeguarding. The designated teacher is Ms Mahon who teaches P7 and an info leaflet is available in the documents section of our website www.forgeip.co.uk/documents . A paper copy will be issued to all new parents.

The school Safeguarding/Pastoral Care team members are;

Ms D Mahon	Designated Teacher for Child Protection
Mrs G Kerr	Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection
Mr N Watson	Principal

We have a school counsellor, Jenny, who is in school on a weekly basis. The service has two elements: one to one counselling via referral by teachers or parents and also a drop in service. In both instances we will seek parental consent. A letter and consent forms will be sent out to parents shortly.

School Choir

Choir will resume on Tuesday 25th September 2018.

South Belfast Foodbank

We remind parents that we act both as a drop off point for foodbank donations and also a referrer for families who may be experiencing hardship and need support from Foodbank. Donations can be left at the school office. Parents or carers needing Foodbank support can do so through contacting any member of school staff who can inform the Pastoral Care team to arrange a referral.

And after all that.... We are really looking forward to working with you over the course of this school year. We hope that together we can make this a happy and productive year for your child and all of the children at our school.

Yours sincerely



Principal