**SPIRES INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Principal’s report March - June 2020 (June meeting)**

Following on from our last Governor meeting on Tuesday 17 March, I will outline the school’s response and events to date.

**Teaching & Learning**

* Pupils received Learning Packs on Friday 13 March for two weeks.
* Pupils received Learning Packs on Friday 20 March for April & May.
* I collated revision packs for those P6 children who are considering completing the Transfer Test. These were made available for collection during Easter Week on 16 & 17 April.
* Online Learning was available from 20 April (after the Easter holidays), in addition to the Learning Packs.
* Support documents and activities regarding the transition to post primary were put online for the P7 pupils. In addition, the PDMU pack which focuses on changes was also uploaded and activities were made available.
* Pupils in KS2 were given access to Study Ladder – an online learning site which covers a number of curricular areas from the end of April.
* Teachers and CAs were in school this w/c 18 & 25 May on a rota basis to create the Learning Packs for June and to collate pupils’ work so that it could be given to parents at the time of collection.
* Pupils received Learning Packs on Friday 29 May for June.
* All pupils were given access codes to SEESAW App on Wednesday 10 June. Teachers have put a welcome video here and an introductory activity centred on how to use the tools. A teaching video will be put online from each teacher on Wednesday 17 June.
* Our P4 pupils were to make their First Communion on Saturday 30 May so Fr Gates requested that principals and staff attend mass on that day, to address their class and create a display of photos of those children for the chapel. A mass was held that morning to mark the occasion and was streamed live on the webcam. A similar mass was held for P7 children who were due to receive their Confirmation on Sunday 7 June. My thanks to Mrs Henry and Mrs Kearney for attending and helping with the preparation of this. They also spoke very well, providing a special means of communicating with the children.
* A small number of pupils engaged in the Virtual Sports Day activities that we signed up to.
* We will have a virtual P7 Leavers’ Assembly via zoom on Wednesday 17 June at 11.00am. Leavers’ Hoodies have been purchased for the P7 pupils and new school ties ordered. Staff have compiled a memories video of P7 pupils and are currently collating video clips sent in by P7 pupils, both of which will go on our website.

**Leadership & CPD**

* All staff attended school on 23 March, where I outlined the information I had been given. I asked them to stay until break time (to minimise risk of spreading/catching virus), they removed classroom displays and cleaned toys with bleach etc
* I arranged for a ‘Learning at Home section’ to be added to our website. Overviews were uploaded on 17 April and staff then put weekly information on it, which included links to tutorials on You tube, Power points, activities and video messages. The Learning Area on the website provides two-way communication, where comments and work from both pupils and staff can be posted. This is very similar to Seesaw. As a school it was essential to provide this online opportunity for the pupils as well as the packs, but in these times, families should not feel under pressure to access them and should be mindful of their children's mental health. I also assume the weather has created opportunities for lots of outdoor learning.
* I led weekly Zoom meetings for teaching staff during April/May and two for nonteaching staff. We reviewed work given to pupils and the online facility to communicate with pupils on the website. We discussed policies, reports and planning. The primary aim of these meetings was to provide a forum where everyone could meet and talk about how they are feeling and how their family members are keeping and to ensure the pastoral needs of staff are being met.
* Throughout this time teachers; researched websites linked to their themes in order to provide additional learning opportunities for the children; provided weekly overviews and activities for their classes; reviewed the policies for which they were responsible; completed pupil Annual Reports; completed their class and subject area requisition; engaged with weekly zoom meetings; prepared and copied Learning Packs for pupils and attended the Hub School on a rotational basis. In addition to this and in line with our SDP, other teachers asked staff to complete audits and review different areas of learning.
* I asked teachers and CAs to return 2 days in June as I felt it was essential to meet and review where we left off regarding Teaching & Learning in March, to plan for August/September, including risk assessments and to look at the number of pupils we can facilitate daily. A lot of work was completed in these days. The Leadership Team then met on an additional day to monitor and review pupil work in Literacy & Numeracy.
* One of the above staff days was used to upskill teachers in the use of SEESAW, this was led by our job share teacher, Rachel Mc Coy. This provided an invaluable learning opportunity for teachers and Rachel was on hand to lead us through the practical element of the training.
* Teachers participated in online training webinars on 9th and 10th June, which provided an overview of other online platforms.
* NICIE led a Zoom meeting 24 April for principals (APTIS), around 8 of us participated, however this became a weekly occurrence with more than 30 participants. It has been invaluable as it we each can share issues and concerns. Communicating with this group has resulted in the sharing of information and has given us an opportunity to forward our views to DENI/EA as a group.
* I attended a Blended Learning online session on 5 June, which was quite informative, there were over 350 participants.
* Mrs Mc Keown, Mrs Griggs, Mrs Bates and I have had telephone conversations and/or email correspondence with some families during this period.

**The Hub School**

* George Buckley (principal of Magherafelt PS) and I met on 27 March to agree a way forward for the children of key workers in both our schools, we were then joined by Lesley Whiteside (principal of Magherafelt Nursery). We agreed to become a Hub School for this area, based in Magherafelt PS, therefore any of our pupils who required childcare would receive it. It also meant that our staff would be working from there. By joining school staff and creating this Hub, it meant less working days for staff, hence minimising their contact with others. The majority of staff made themselves available for the Hub rota, except for those with vulnerable people at home or if they themselves were vulnerable. The setting up of the Hub, arranging the rota on a monthly basis, meeting with other principals and continuous communication with EA and DE was extremely time consuming. During the Easter week, the Hub was based at Spires so that the building supervisor and cleaning staff of Magherafelt PS were able to have a break. Following the Easter period there was an upsurge in requests for pupils to attend the Hub and w/e 29 May we had to inform EA that we were at full capacity and could accept no further children. By that stage we were catering for children from the following schools; Magherafelt PS, Magherafelt NS, Spires IPS, Gaelscoil, New Row PS, Maghera PS, Sperrin IC, Holy Family PS, Anahorish PS, Derrychrin PS, Woods PS and Magherafelt HS. The majority of the principals of those schools’ named, joined our rota and/or added their staff to the rota.

**The School & wider Community**

* We created a school Facebook page that went live in May as another method of communicating with our school and the wider community.
* As you are aware, I attended a zoom meeting of our Mid Ulster Primary Principals’ Group regarding the Transfer test, with our main concern being the health and welfare of our pupils. Having consulted with Governors and parents, my name and school was added to the letters, one to St Mary’s and the other to Rainey EGS.
* I have been working on an updated DP for the Nursery Unit, my link officer has now said that everything will be put on hold from the end of June.

**Finance**

* Peter Weir stated during the webinar that there was no additional funding to assist schools during this pandemic. However, EA has stated that they are going to provide schools with cleaning materials etc., NICIE is to follow up on this to ensure it includes GMI schools. We already have purchased a number of cleaning and hygiene items as I am concerned the demand will be higher in August hence the supply may be low.

**Premises**

* I met with Roy and completed a risk assessment of sanitary needs, from which dispensers for each classroom and toilet blocks and paper towels were purchased. We are currently looking at purchasing some hand sanitiser units for a few specific areas of the school.

**The Way Forward**

* What has been made very clear is that schools will not be returning to a ‘normal’ school day and that learning will encompass blended Learning in the form of classroom and online teaching and learning. This is why I deemed it to be essential that staff and pupils become familiar with SEESAW now, so that we can resume this at the beginning of the new term. Whilst SEESAW provides most of the facilities that our website learning section has, it also has the additional feature of voice feedback from teachers, voice messages from pupils, instant responses and the teacher will see immediately those who have accessed the tasks and those who haven’t. Currently there has been a mixed level of response to our online learning and because of the Learning Packs issued and the well-being of our pupils, this has been acceptable. However, moving forward, pupils will be expected to engage in online activities daily as part of their learning as this will be part of the delivery of the curriculum. SEESAW also provides a forum for teachers to demonstrate and ‘teach’ aspects of the curriculum. On Wednesday 17 June, all teachers will put a video on SEESAW of them delivering a short teaching clip.
* The message from DENI and other groups is to hold back until further details are issued by DENI.

Finally, just to reiterate, this has been an extremely challenging time for our whole school community, with more to follow in August/September. As always, the safety and well-being of our pupils and staff will be at the forefront of all decision making. It is inevitable that we will have to revise decisions on a daily basis from the first day of term one and indeed what we plan may not work effectively in practice. The language being used amongst all school leaders currently is ‘trial and error’ and every school will be different. I thank you as always for your continued support and as a team I am confident that we will face all challenges ahead in the best interests of the children.