



Information Letter for Academic Year 2023/2024

Dear Parent/ Carer,

I hope that you and your families are well and that you have had a wonderful summer break. The weeks have flown in but everyone in school is busy preparing to welcome the children back and we are looking forward to seeing everyone again. School isn't the same without the children!

Please find below some information regarding the return to school. As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

It is important that we retain a degree of flexibility within our planning so that we can best meet any issues that may arise as we return to school. As a school we are trying to keep the information as clear as possible. Please read all the information below carefully. This information will also be shared with staff.

1. Key Dates

Wednesday 30th August – P1 and P7 children attend school until 12.00pm. (No school meals will be available).

Thursday 31st August – All children attend school until 12.00pm. (No school meals are available but breakfast club is available).

Friday 1st September - All children attend school. P1 will finish at 12.00pm, P2 finish at 2.15pm and P3 – 7 finish at 3.15pm. The canteen will be open for break and lunch and the menu will follow shortly on Seesaw. Breakfast club is also available.

From **Monday 8th – Friday 8th September** P1 pupils will finish at 12.00pm daily.

From **Monday 11th – Friday 15th September** P1 children will stay for lunch so their day will be 9.00am – 1.00pm for that week.

From **Monday 18th** P1 children will attend school daily from 9am to 2.15pm.

As a reminder, P2 finish daily at 2.15pm, P3 finish at 3.15pm Monday, Tuesday and Friday and 2.15pm on Wednesday and Thursday.

P4 - 7 finish daily at 3.15pm. HOP club is available for P2 - 3 pupils from Monday 4th September. Afterschool clubs for P4 - 7 pupils begin on 18th September.

2. School Day

The school day will continue to be the same this year. Everyone's start time will be 9.00am and the finish time for P1 and 2 will be 2.15pm. For P3, class will finish two days (Wednesday and Thursday) at 2.15pm while the other days, class will finish for them at 3.15pm. For all P4 – 7 children school will finish daily at 3.15pm.

Clubs will be available and more information will follow when school starts. HOP Club is available from 4th September and pupils in P1 and 2 can attend daily from 2.15 – 3.15pm. P1 have a phased start to school so they can avail of HOP when they are staying in school for full days (until 2.15pm). P3 children can avail of HOP on Wednesday and Thursday and on the days they stay late, P3 are welcome to join P4 – 7 afterschool clubs. They have been organised with this in mind. Please make all bookings through our school app. Afterschool clubs for P4 – 7 children will begin on 18th September.

Breaks and lunch are available from the canteen from 1st September as usual and all bookings including children in receipt of free school meals should be made through the school app. A video is available to view on our school website as a reminder about how to download and make bookings using the app. The menu will be published on seesaw and also our website.

With the daily 3.15pm finish, there will be a well-being day once per month (last Tuesday of each month). This has been in place for the past two years and has proved to be very popular with the children. On this day there will be no school uniform and no formal lessons. All activities will relate to well-being whether it is in the form of being active, being creative, completing challenges and working together, an activity based in the community etc. The extra 15 minutes daily when totalled ensures that our children don't miss out in any learning time as a result. Learning is important but we also realise having an opportunity to switch off, have fun and take part in other activities with friends is equally important and beneficial to the well-being of all pupils. Classroom assistants and sub teachers will assist on these days.

3. Start times/ Drop Off and Pick Up

School begins at 9.00am for all pupils. Breakfast club continues to be available from 8.00am – 8.40am and any children not attending breakfast club can be dropped off in school from 8.40am. At this time children go outside to play in morning before lessons start at 9.00am. The same designated areas (collection points) exist so parents know where to drop off and pick up at each entrance. If using the back entrance, the collection point is at the school gate and if using the front entrance, the collection point is outside the playground gate.

Please see the times below.

Year Group	School starts	School finishes*	Drop off/ Pickup place
Room 1	9.00am	2.15pm	Back Entrance at collection point
Room 2	9.00am	2.15pm for P2 P3 will stay on Monday, Tuesday and Friday until 3.15pm in class but Wednesday and Thursday will have 2.15pm finish.	Back Entrance at collection point
Room 3	9.00am	2.15pm for P3 or 3.15pm (if staying for HOP) P4 children stay daily	Front Entrance at collection point

		until 3.15pm P3 will stay on Monday, Tuesday and Friday until 3.15pm in class but Wednesday and Thursday will have 2.15pm finish.	
Room 4	9.00am	3.15pm	Front Entrance at collection point
Room 5	9.00am	3.15pm	Front at collection point

- Parents should drop off at school gate (rear for Rooms 1 - 2 and front entrance for Rooms 3 - 5).
- Parents should refrain from walking up to the school door during drop off or pick up times as it is a busy period. Children and staff are there to greet your child in mornings at drop off. At pick up times, using the collection point is less congested for staff members when bringing children to parents and children are more reassured when they can see their parent/ carer clearly. If you want to speak to the class teacher, please advise on seesaw that you would like to make an appointment; this means that you and the teacher have time and privacy to meet.
- If you have two pickups – one at back gate and one at front gate with siblings, please inform the class teacher who can make arrangements about one pick up. Last year some children walked to rear of school or younger children were brought to front of school to help parents in this situation so if you have any concerns or questions, please discuss arrangements with the class teacher.
- For safeguarding reasons, parents should avoid walking from back of school to front or vice versa during drop off or pick up times and please be reminded that dogs should not be on the school property (even on a lead) for health and safety reasons.
- Parents of any P6-7 pupils who are walking home must have notified the class teacher in writing/ via seesaw. Any pupils in P1 - 5 are not permitted to walk home (even with an older sibling in P6/7).

Arrival procedures

- Children attending Breakfast Club should use the hall entrance as usual (8.00 – 8.40am)
- Rooms 1 and 2 children can be dropped off at the rear entrance where members of staff and playground pals will welcome them. The gates will lock at 9.05am sharp at the rear entrance for usual safeguarding reasons.
- Children in Rooms 3, 4 and 5 should be dropped off at front entrance and members of staff will be on duty to welcome children.
- Children will leave their belongings in class and go outside to play as usual in morning.

Pick up procedures

- Parents of Room 1 and 2 children should please wait at the collection point areas and the children will be brought out to parents. Similarly, in Rooms 3, 4 and 5 parents should please wait outside the playground gate and children will be brought out. The member of staff will ensure safe crossing in the car park as usual. To ease congestion, there may be a minute or two delay with Room 3 being released first, then Room 4 and then Room 5. If you need your child out promptly please let the class teacher know.

Drop off lates

- To ensure a steady flow we emphasise the importance of arriving on time to drop off/collect, thank you.
- Staff will be outside on duty from 8.40 – 9.00 and any child arriving late should follow usual procedure and use front entrance.

Pick up lates

- Children will remain in class and parents should pick up from front entrance.
- If a parent knows they will be held up, please let school know via phone call or seesaw message.

School policy continues to be that any pupil in P1-P3 must be collected by a named adult on the School 'Pick Up' Form (Collection Policy) which will be submitted at the beginning of this academic year. If there are any changes to 'normal' collection procedures, please contact the school office. If staff are in any doubt, then we will keep your child in school and contact you.)

*Regardless of the weather, all children will be brought outside by their class teacher at the end of the school day to the collection point. When a staff member sees you, they will send your child to you. *

4. Uniform/ Belongings

- Children will bring their own belongings as usual. **The stationery list was published on seesaw and can be re-sent at parents' request.** These items should be brought to school on the first day and some may be left in school or retained in school bags (whichever the children prefer).
- Coats will be hung in cloakrooms as usual and lunch bags will be placed under child's desk or specified area of classroom.
- School bags may be used to carry all belongings. P1 school bags are supplied by the school.
- The majority of our school uniform is 'generic' and can be purchased from any retail outlets. The 'branded' polo shirts and school jumpers are available to purchase from Select Kidz/ Cuddys. We also understand that some parents will purchase 'plain' white polo shirts to supplement the 'branded' school polo shirt. Please see uniform reminder below which hasn't changed. The only minor change is to allow plain navy leggings for PE days for girls provided they are not see-through/ thin material showing underwear. We know some girls prefer the comfort of leggings and so this concession has been made to uniform to accommodate this. Girls may also wear shorts underneath their skirts/ dresses if they wish.
- PE uniform should only be worn on PE days unless otherwise specified and these days will be communicated by class teachers at the start of term via seesaw.
- ***Please ensure all items of uniform are labelled with your child's name***
- In CPS we seek high standards in all areas of school life- teaching and learning/ behaviour and uniform is important as it ensures that school attire is the same and fair for everyone, that there is consistency and this in itself presents a positive image. It also encourages children to wear their uniform with pride and have a sense of belonging to our school. I know the details outlined are specific but we are aiming for as little variation as possible so uniform is the same for everyone and everyone knows what our uniform entails.
- Parents may contact the class teacher if there is an exception and we are always willing and happy to accommodate as we don't want uniform to be stressful for anyone. The happiness and well-being of our children will always be our top priority.

Boys' Uniform

White polo shirt	✓
Grey trousers	✓
Grey shorts to replace grey trousers in warm weather	✓
Red sweatshirt (crew or vneck)	✓
Black shoes	✓
PE Uniform on PE days only	
Navy plain joggers	✓
Trainers (any colour)	✓
Patterned or logo joggers	X
Navy jersey shorts to replace joggers	✓
Football type navy shorts	X

Girls' Uniform

White polo shirt	✓
Grey skirt/ pinafore	✓
Red sweatshirt/ cardigan	✓
White/ grey socks	✓
Summer gingham dress (warm weather)	✓
Black shoes	✓
Grey shorts or skorts	X
PE Uniform on PE days only	
Plain navy joggers or plain navy leggings (must not be see-through)	✓
Trainers (any colour)	✓
Patterned Leggings	X
Navy jersey shorts to replace joggers (must be mid-thigh length)	✓
Football type navy shorts	X



5. Break and Lunch times

Break and lunchtimes are staggered due to the number of children on-site.

Lunchtime: arrangements

- Canteen facility will be available daily for break and lunchtime. All children will eat their break in the classroom and dinner/ packed lunch in the hall.
- Children get 20 – 25 mins to eat and 20 – 25 mins to play. Supervisors are in each playground and playground pals also join in with play to help encourage happy play.
- A copy of the dinner menu will be available on the school website/ seesaw in next few days. School dinners are available to all pupils P2-P7 from Friday 1st September and can be booked through our CPS app.
- If you think you might be entitled to Free School Meals, you need to apply (annually) via the EA website. We would encourage anyone eligible to please apply as soon as possible.
- Pupils having packed lunches should bring their packed lunch in a lunchbox and this will be stored in the classroom.

Break time: arrangements

- We have a healthy breaks policy and encourage eating food items such as fruit, vegetables, bread-based products (sandwich, pancake etc) and drinking water only.
- School snacks can be ordered daily and will be delivered to class before breaktime. This is also booked through the app and choices are below:

Breaks Menu

Day	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4
Monday	Toast	Crackers	Fruit	
Tuesday	Toast	Crackers	½ Baguette	
Wednesday	Toast	Crackers	Scone	
Thursday	Toast	Crackers	Fruit	½ Bagel
Friday	Toast	Crackers	½ Baguette	

Please note your daily choice in the comments section of the checkout page.

- A selection of fruit is also available free of charge for children in every classroom.
- Children should bring their own water bottles too for hydration throughout the day. Water should only be consumed throughout the day for hydration and juice kept for lunchtime.
- It is essential that coats are brought to school by pupils every day. Pupils will always be outside during playtimes as we are aware of the huge benefits of fresh air for concentration and overall wellbeing. Only in extreme weather will children stay inside. If there is a reason you would like your child to stay indoors e.g. severe cough/ cold, please let class teachers know via seesaw.

Playground Equipment

- Playground rota is in place for times and play areas in infant and senior playgrounds.
- Organised games are planned for senior playground e.g. football day, basketball day and both playgrounds enjoy music on Fridays.

6. Office & Communications

- **All bookings for lunch, breaks, clubs or any other monetary requirements should be made through the school app.**
- It is important that school has the most up to date contact information for all our pupils and parents and as such you will be asked to complete an information refresh form upon the resumption of school. We also seek information about any medical or dietary needs. We ask that these are returned to school promptly so that we can update our records accordingly. All communication with parents will be carried out via seesaw and should you wish to speak with your child's teacher, you are very welcome to arrange a time to come in and see them.
- Seesaw will be our main form of communication and school information will be published weekly as well as class information.

7. Events

We will plan events as usual throughout the year and hope to begin with our P1 parent dinner. Some events are already noted in the calendar section of our website and will also be communicated via seesaw in due course.

8. Assemblies

Assemblies are a very important part of school life in CPS and so we plan to continue daily assemblies with Colin Tinsley from Hope for Youth Ministries in our classrooms as well as a weekly assembly every Thursday with local clergy or a staff member/pupils.

9. Meetings

Our first parent teacher meetings are scheduled for October/ November and details will follow closer to the time regarding this. Mrs Evans also conducts a P1 baseline meeting in September and it is anticipated that this will be a telephone call. Mrs McCusker will also conduct transfer phone calls in September.

10. Pupil Attendance and Punctuality

It is important that your child attends school and is on time. Research shows that children arriving late to school can suffer from anxiety and children who miss school, miss out. If you are experiencing difficulty with your child attending school, please come and speak to us and we will do everything we can to help and support you.

All children need additional preparation for coming back to school. Additional individual videos from teachers/CAs welcoming them back or a social story preparing them to come back may be used.

Parents will be advised to start talking and preparing their children to transition back to school.

Parents should discuss with the class teacher any worries or concerns and a meeting can be facilitated to help alleviate any concerns about return to school.



For any absence, please inform school (via seesaw or telephone) and complete the absence form on Castledawson Primary School app citing reason on the day of return to school.

It is essential that all children are reminded of the significance of personal hygiene as they return to school, particularly around the importance of regular handwashing.

Children will be reminded by staff to wash their hands before eating food.



11. Curriculum and Classroom

The well-being of our pupils is of primary importance to us and ensuring nurturing approaches are used whole-school. All areas of the curriculum taught are outlined in our *Teaching and Learning Policy* and you will find more information about methods of assessment in our *Assessment Policy*. All policies (some of which may be specific to curriculum areas e.g. literacy, numeracy, PDMU, World Around Us) are available to view on our school website under the parent section. The password for viewing is **CPSPolicies**

Each day there will be a visual timetable displayed in each classroom to help give children a sense of structure and routine.

As already mentioned we plan to have a well-being day monthly as well as continuing to develop other strategies to encourage healthy bodies and minds e.g. TAKE 5 steps to well-being, Bucket Filling, Active Travel etc. as well as using *That Thing I Do* which is a whole school well-being programme which develops resilience.

We will also continue to include revision in daily lessons as we have done for the past two years. We feel this has a long-lasting impact on our pupils' learning as they have opportunity to continually consolidate key areas of learning.

Homework

Homework begins mid-September and will consist of reading, spelling and maths facts. Homework will be facilitated on a weekly basis and these details will be communicated by each individual class via seesaw. Homework will be as reflected in our Homework Policy which is available to view on our school website. Reading books will be sent home as usual but online programmes will also be in place to supplement reading. Reading Eggs, Epic, Myon Reading, Nessy, Mathletics, Spelling Frame and AR as well as numerous websites are available to support learning. If you have any questions regarding homework at any time, please don't hesitate to discuss with the class teacher should it be in reference to quantity, difficulty of tasks set or any other concern.

12. Physical activity

All physical activities will be done outdoors/ in the hall. Healthy Kidz, Mrs Henderson and Community Sports Network will continue to be our PE facilitators this year.

13. Music Provision

For the past ten years we have enjoyed Jackie Glasgow coming into school to teach piano and guitar to our children. Unfortunately, Jackie can no longer provide lessons in school due to her other commitments and so Fiona Donaghy from *The School of Music in Magherafelt* will provide piano and singing lessons in school in the same manner on a one-to-one basis for P3 -7 children. Lessons will take place every Tuesday and will cost £10 for each 20 min lesson; more details will follow directly from Fiona regarding this.

We were very sad to see Jackie go as we know she was a wonderful teacher and our children enjoyed their time with her. If your child attended lessons with Jackie and you wish to continue lessons with her in her music studio in Moneymore, please contact her directly.

The EA also provide music tuition for string and wind instruments for P4 – 7 pupils. Please contact the class teacher or Mrs McCusker mmccusker663@c2kni.net if you would like more information on either.

This is no doubt enough information to get us started in the new school year! We are always excited about seeing everyone again and we trust everyone is happy and well and looking forward to starting back. Staff have been working hard to make everywhere look exciting and they have wonderful things planned in the classroom and also beyond the classroom! If you have any concerns or questions at all about the information provided, please don't hesitate to get in touch. The new school year seesaw logins were sent home with school reports in June but should you need another copy, please let us know. Enjoy your last few days of summer and we'll see everyone next week.

Kind Regards

M McCusker

