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Letter to Parents/Guardians December 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

School closed to students:

This **Monday 7th of December** is an official day off as per our school calendar.

On **Monday 18th January 2021**, the school will be closed to students to facilitate new Junior Cycle training (online).

We are now back in school for almost one term and I would like to commend everyone in our school community for the way they have embraced the changes which we made and the efforts they have made to reduce the risk of the spread of COVID 19. We encourage everybody to keep this great work up both in the school and in the community.

We need to stay alert to the spread of the virus and strictly observe the protocols as outlined in the COVID plan and policy and in the health advisories.

While we really encourage students to attend school every day but **students must stay at home**

- if they have any COVID related symptoms.
- If they are told to self-isolate because they are a close contact of a suspect or diagnosed case or have been sent for a test.
- If they are told to restrict their movements.

They must stay at home for the duration required by the HSE.

Please remember if you are in any doubt as to what to do contact your GP or the HSE, it is a free service.

If there is a diagnosed case in the school community, the HSE will contact the principal and carry out a risk assessment and determine the close contacts and will contact those concerned.

The **HSE only** and not the school will determine if a class or group is to be sent home or if the risk is such, that mass testing needs to take place.

I would like to commend our families on their proactiveness around dealing with COVID, illness and isolation. It is not easy, if COVID does visit a family, it is nothing to be ashamed of and we would urge you to inform us of such. Rest assured that any such information will be dealt with the upmost confidentiality.

We have had several cases of COVID among our families and a small number of our students have tested positive, some as recently as this week. These have not posed a risk of spread to others in our school community because Parents/Guardians were very proactive in dealing with the situation and have kept students at home from the earliest possible time.

The HSE guidance is that the risk period of transmission is as follows:

48 hours before the onset of symptoms.

24 hours before a positive test.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The following are the links to COVID related information on the Department of Education and Skills and HSE websites:

[gov.ie - Information for students, parents and families \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

[gov.ie - Symptoms of COVID-19 and how to protect yourself \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Following the COVID Plan in school:

We must very highly commend the vast majority in our school community for upholding and adhering to this plan since the return to school.

Students must always adhere to the following:

- **wear masks correctly. This means that face masks must always cover the nose and mouth. This was communicated with students during tutorial. The wearing of facemasks correctly is important to protect the health of the individual and others they meet.**
- **sanitise their hands regularly during the day. Hand sanitizer which complies with all standards are available outside and inside each classroom.**
- **comply fully with the cleaning regime, this is something which students are doing well.**
- **remain in their allocated areas and not go to other areas. This includes corridors designated to other year groups.**
- **Students must remain in their allocated base rooms and not visit other base rooms at break and lunch. They can meet their friends from other base classes outdoors and at a safe distance.**
- **use their own entrance door, and this should be the only door used.**
- **use their assigned a block of toilets and not use toilets designated to other year groups. (Only two students are permitted to be in each toilet block at the one time)**
- **must always remain 1 metre apart with their masks on.**
- **be in class as timetabled always, because as a school we are accountable for the movement of students (to the HSE for tracking purposes).**

Failure to adhere to any the above will result in students being sent home in accordance with the advice from Department of Education and Skills.

Visits to the school and appointments:

In line with health advice, anybody visiting the school including Parents/Guardians should make an appointment before they visit. If you need to come to the school or speak to a member of school

personnel, please telephone the school first. We will deal with anything we can over the phone to avoid meetings during restrictions.

Exams:

Some of our students and their families are concerned about students missing exams due to COVID related illness or restriction but this year avoiding the risk of the transmission and spread of COVID 19 is more important. We will look at alternative means of assessing progress including class assessments where students miss exams.

Wellbeing and Mental Health:

The teenage years are challenging for all students and families. The current crisis is making it doubly difficult for everybody. It is important that open conversations are held around mental health and wellbeing and that any concerns are followed up on. It helps to talk and encourage conversations around feelings.

Please do not hesitate to contact the relevant year head, principal or deputy principal if you have any concerns. Also, students should be encouraged to speak to someone in school if they need to.

School Uniform

The school is required to keep rooms well ventilated to limit the risk of the spread of the virus, windows and doors will always be kept open. We encourage students to wear additional layers under their uniform and keep warm.

Parents/Guardians and students have told us that they feel under pressure when adhering to the uniform rule when others do not.

The student council at their recent meeting requested that students wear the uniform as fully as possible as it makes it easier for everybody if this happens.

The school jacket must be worn. **Strictly no designer jackets or sports gear.**

The schools PE gear must be worn on PE days. We realise that not every student has PE gear this year but we expect students to wear the PE gear as fully as possible. From next September we will expect all students to wear full PE gear on PE day.

Please see a separate link to a survey would allow an additional hooded sweatshirt to be added to the uniform (to follow).

Student absences:

It is important that if your student is going to be absent for any reason that you use the **app facility** to explain this absence.

The same goes for those who arrive late or need to leave school early for any reason.

If you need support to access the APP, please contact the office at 041 6853554.

Reminder on nuts or nut products:

We have some students in all years with nut allergies. Nuts or nut products are strictly not permitted in school at any time.

Home School Community Liaison Officer:

Ms Patricia Murray is our Home School Community Liaison Officer she is available to support parents on any school related issues. She is available at 087 6340491.

Enrolment for the 2021/2022 school year:

Enrolment for incoming first years closed on Friday 27th of November. If you have any queries in relation to enrolment, please do not hesitate to contact us.

School Reports:

These will issue over the next few weeks starting with the sixth year and 6 LCA reports.

ICT and OneNote on teams

Our Bring Your Own Device Acceptable Use Policy is in place and blended learning is up and running using one note on Microsoft teams.

Each student also has their own e mail account.

There are however some issues are arising with online communication which need addressing.

The online platform and e mail are to be used for communication on subject matter only, there have been a small number of incidences where students have been over casual when contacting their teachers.(emojis and non-subject related questions are not appropriate.)

The chat function are only to be used between the hours of 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday and not during weekends or holiday times.

Students have been informed during tutorial how to communicate appropriately using the chat function.

School transport and buses:

Due to the COVID situation, the Department of Education have put on extra buses to allow for social distancing. We carried out a risk assessment with Bus Eireann and to ensure the safety of students getting on buses, we have designated the through road as a second bus parking bay for the duration of the current situation. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Please use the entrance/exit gates as indicated only.

After School Study:

We are starting a limited after school study facility for **6th year students only** from Tuesday next, it will run up to and including Monday 21st of December.

Parent/Teacher Meetings:

There will be no Parent/Teacher or other meetings until the current emergency is over.