

April 20th 2020 – Letter & Update Covid 19 - Parents & Students

Dear Parent/Guardian

I write to you in acknowledgement of the extraordinary circumstances that we find ourselves in and I do hope you and your family are well and that everything is going ok at home having had a pleasant Easter break and that you are all continue keeping safe and well in these challenging times. It has been a very strange period for both staff and students and working from home is a big adjustment for all families. I am pleased to have had an update on your current family situation and the many challenges you face, having spoken with many of you in recent days. Myself and the teaching staff are really proud of our students and their dedication to their studies to date. It is imperative that the circumstances we face do not impede our student's academic progression and that you continue to make excellent progress at home as you would in school.

We appreciate how challenging the current Covid-19 crisis has been for families, over 1.5 billion children around the world as well as 63 million teachers are now engaged in teaching and learning from home. We are working hard to support all students and parents/guardians in our school community as the crisis evolves. We know from feedback to our school survey's and staff engagement with students, that all are missing the normality of school life as we now adjust to new routines. **I appreciate that this time can be lonely for those separated from family and friends but** we are all in this together, we are still a strong community both in school and surrounding area, so remember to stay connected and continue to stay home and safe. The past few weeks have presented many challenges, but the collective effort of our entire school community in adapting to these new ways of working with remote learning is truly admirable. Everyone who is part of this school community has embraced 'Distance Learning' in an effort to engage with a continuity of learning. All of our teaching staff are working hard to ensure that learning continues, as we start the Summer term we are once again appealing for the engagement of all of our students in this remote learning process; your support as parents and guardians in monitoring student engagement is very important.

What supports are available in your community?

When things were at their worst, we as a school community reached out to offer assistance to the wider Belturbet community and these small acts of kindness have meant so much to many

of you a temporary support when suddenly hit with unemployment or illness over the past weeks. These short term interventions were beneficial and a lifeline to the elderly in rural isolation who are so important to support at times like this. As you are probably aware from National media, this has gone County wide. I very much appreciate the support of colleagues who have gone above and beyond to assist as volunteers outside of their teaching hours to becoming Essential Workers with Cavan Food Hub. To the parents who were phenomenal in identifying where supports were necessary and indeed volunteering your services, thanks so much. Many of you both parents and students, have nominated worthy recipients of hampers to date which was a lovely gesture and our student voice in action. Your kindness in sending messages of appreciation to the team at CCLD was very much appreciated and respected. The St Bricin's College Alumni, many of whom are entrepreneurs and supporting us with supplies or services, having really emerged as the local heroes and we trust their businesses will be supported by the community when we return to normality. Over 400 hampers are going out weekly but due to increasing demands as result of illness in homes of frontline workers, it has become necessary to extend the service to add Meals on Wheels for elderly, disabled or illness as an emergency response with applications open from this week by **Cavan County Local Development on 049 4331029 or email info@cclld.ie**

Cavan County Council HELPLINE: If you need help with food/medicine deliveries, transport to medical appointments, or social supports – please call the freephone #Covid19 Community Call Helpline for County Cavan on **1800 300 404 or email covidsupport@cavancoco.ie. Lines open 8am -8pm, 7 days per week.**

As you are aware, schools have remained closed to students since 13 March 2020. The current health advice is that all **schools will remain closed to students until Tuesday, 5 May 2020** (after the May Bank Holiday weekend).

We have listened carefully to feedback from students, staff and parents prior to Easter. We want to ensure to continue with our efforts for the next two weeks with a focus on teaching, learning and the provision of effective feedback to students.

To facilitate the implementation of a coherent teaching plan for the weeks ahead, we held on-line **staff meeting and subject planning meetings from today Monday, 20 April 2020.**

This time will facilitate planning at teacher level, department level and facilitate school wide

planning that is critical to the success of this term. Students are asked to revise subjects as per their regular timetable for this term as of today Monday, 20 April 2020.

Guidance for Students in Leaving Cert (6th Year) & Junior Cert (3rdYear)

Our Leaving Certificate students are understandably worried about their exams but realistically we must keep this in perspective and it will all work out fine over the coming weeks if we keep on task to get revision and classwork balanced and on target, as if we were in the classrooms. We are especially mindful of the decision that affects students in Sixth Year and Third Year regarding the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate examinations. Leaving Certificate has been postponed to late July/early August. The key priority for us as a school is that we will continue to help, guide and support Leaving Certificate students during this demanding time. Our student support team will continue to regularly engage and assist our students through our pastoral supports over the weeks and months ahead in these uncertain times.

Information on exam and assessment schedules, including the **Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)** and the **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** is available on the State Examinations Commission website: www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/BI-SE-67826275.pdf

Please also note that **Junior Certificate examinations** have also been postponed to September and are now replaced with school-based exams and assessments early in the new school year. The Department of Education and Skills and the State Examinations Commission are making every effort to support all students through this challenging time.

Students facing examinations have been asked to keep focused and to keep working in preparation for the exams which are now scheduled for July. More details will be forthcoming in the near future regarding the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate examinations and we will bring this information to your attention without delay.

What supports are available from the school?

The support of our school Leadership team, Mr Pauric Hanlon DP, Mr Stephen Smith, Guidance Counsellor/ Home School Community Liaison and State Examinations Coordinator, Ms Sinead Clerkin, Special Education Needs Coordinator, Mr David Brady,

Programmes coordinator and Ms Annemarie Fay, Leader of Teaching & Learning with all the subject teachers are available online for all 6th Year students now preparing for examinations in the weeks ahead. They can be contacted on Microsoft Teams by individual student requesting a call back via a parent/guardian or at info@stbricinscollege.ie

Our counselling and interagency supports will continue via online or telephone contact. Mr Smith will be in contact with families again during this term.

Transition Year and 5th Year Option Subjects?

Following on from the Parents information evening, I wish to thank you all for the large attendance and we are proceeding with the assignment of students to options as per the data collected following that meeting and subsequent completion of the online documentation. As always, please be assured that we are working as hard as we can to ensure continuity of quality education and systems of support for our students. If you have queries, suggestions or have any issues that we can assist you with please do not hesitate to contact us.

How can parents support their child?

Parents should continue to play a part in the current situation by establishing a routine, supporting student learning and reinforcing the importance of social distancing. If your child has additional educational needs and you wish to support their learning, you may find some useful resources available for both Primary and Post Primary students on following link:

<https://ncse.ie/online-resources-for-parents>

Please let your own family situation dictate how much work your child gets completed and should you have any suggestions please email me at info@stbricinscollege.ie. Keep up to date with DES or school announcements by visiting our school website:
www.stbricinscollege.ie

Thanking you for your continued support and resilience, Remain positive and Stay Safe,

Mary Sheridan

Principal

