



**Loreto Secondary School,
Pembroke Hill,
Ballynagee,
Wexford.**

**Telephone: (053) 9146162
E-mail: principal@loretowexford.com
Website: www.loretowexford.com**

Office hours: 7.45 a.m. to 4.15 p.m., Monday to Friday

Friday, 17 April 2020

Dear parents/guardians and students,

I write to you by way of setting the scene for the final six week term that begins next Monday and runs until Friday, 29 May.

The backdrop to this final term is one of considerable uncertainty and worry over increasing Covid-19 cases and death toll. The necessary restrictions on our daily lives are certainly difficult, particularly for our young people and cocooning elderly citizens.

But yet, we have to look for positive signs to help us through these dark days. The reproduction rate of the virus continues to fall and will stay on this path as long as we all do what we are told. Some of our European neighbours have taken the first steps towards easing restrictions as they plot a path to a new type of normality. Hopefully, we might be able to do the same in the next few weeks. All around us we see evidence of wonderful community bonding and togetherness even though we have to stay apart – people going the extra mile for each other in times of adversity. It really is uplifting. Scientists around the world are co-operating like never before to develop a viable and safe vaccine to finally end this scourge. And, along the way, there have been wonderfully inspiring moments to lift the spirits. My favourite was Andrea Bocelli's emotional but uplifting "Music for Hope" performance both inside and outside the Duomo Cathedral in Milan last Sunday evening, free to watch on Youtube.

And so, let's have a look at how we hope to manage our school business in the coming weeks.

1. As of today, no date has been set for the re-opening of schools. If it is deemed unsafe to have students in the school doing State examinations in June, it is difficult to see how it would be safe to have any number of students in the building prior to that. Time will reveal all.

2. Teachers will resume remote teaching and direction of learning from next Monday using a variety of platforms.
3. It is essential that students check their school emails on a daily basis to receive communications from their teachers. Please remember that remote working will only be effective if both teachers and students engage in a regular and meaningful manner. Students experiencing any log-in difficulties should contact Mr. McGinnity (Deputy Principal) at deputymcginnity@loretowexford.com.
4. We must all appreciate at this difficult time that it may not be possible for everyone to discharge their full responsibilities, especially if dealing with personal or family illness.
5. Should there be any difficulties regarding the amount of work and direction being given by teachers, it is important that they be discussed initially with individual teachers in respectful emails. Any ongoing and unresolved issues may be brought to my attention.
6. 6th year students, you find yourselves in a very demanding and stressful situation with the announcement on Good Friday that the Leaving Certificate examinations will not take place until late July or early August. This announcement raised many more questions than it answered. A lot of detailed discussions will take place in the coming weeks regarding the arrangements for these examinations. I encourage each of you to liaise closely with your teachers until 29 May. When the summer arrangements are more certain, I shall keep everyone fully informed of what is planned. Until then, we proceed as normal as best we can. Guidance Counsellors continue to be available to those of you who might need particular support through this difficult time. I ask you to remember that these measures are in response to a major public health emergency and that a wide range of very committed people in the State Examinations Commission, Department of Education and Skills, teacher unions, school management bodies, HSE, your school and your family will make this journey with you in the coming months. You will not be on your own. I have every confidence in your ability to rise to this further challenge that has been placed before you.
7. 3rd year students, you, too, face uncertainty. Whilst we now know that you will not be facing State examinations in June, there is a proposal for you to undertake school-based tests and assessments in September. There is no clarity at this stage as to their format. It will hardly be the start to Transition Year that you were expecting. I ask you now to engage as fully as possible with your teachers to ensure that courses are completed and revision undertaken so that you will be in a good position for whatever emerges in September. As more detailed information comes to hand, including that pertaining to the payment of the examination fee, I shall keep you fully informed. In addition, Mr. McGinnity (Deputy Principal) will shortly advise teachers of the procedures to follow in relation to remaining CBAs.
8. I also have great concern for those of you in 5th year. You have often heard me say that the foundation to a good Leaving Certificate is laid whilst in 5th year. This makes it all the more important that you engage fully with your teachers over the coming six weeks so that you can cover as much material as possible prior to the commencement of your final year. Please be assured that your teachers recognise your particular position and that they will do all that they can to ensure that you will be fully prepared for Leaving Certificate 2021.
9. I have asked teachers to engage fully with those of you in 4th year also. You have truly been denied the benefits of a full calendar of events for this final term. You might like to focus

on the core subjects that you will be continuing with in 5th year. In line with normal procedure, I shall let you know the outcome of the subject choice process in mid-May.

10. I ask our 300 students in 1st and 2nd years to engage fully with teachers over the coming six weeks. I know that remote teaching and learning is not the same as being with the teacher and your colleagues in the classroom and that there can be difficulties in working from home. Please, do your best and aim to finish the year on 29 May in a positive manner. As for 3rd years, clarification in relation to remaining CBAs will be provided shortly by Mr. McGinnity (Deputy Principal).
11. We will soon be having discussions at school level as to how best to prepare Summer Reports for 1st, 2nd and 5th years, as well as certification for 4th year students.
12. It is highly improbable that events that take place in May each year - Annual Prizegiving, 6th Year Graduation Service and Reception and 4th Year Graduation – will proceed.
13. Booklists, details of the Free Books Scheme and the calendar for 2020/2021 will be finalised by mid-May and will be placed on the school website as normal at that stage.
14. Ms. O' Reilly, Mr. McGinnity (Deputy Principals) and I continue to be available to assist all members of the school community in any way that we can. We will be using a conference call facility to speak in person to different groupings of staff, students and parents for the remainder of the enforced closure. Your views are very important to us so please feel free to express them.

By way of conclusion, I bow to the wisdom of Greek philosopher, Aristotle - "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light."

Yours faithfully,

Billy O' Shea,
Principal.