



# Colaiste Bríde

Templeshannon, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope you and your families are keeping safe and well. It would seem that the reproduction rate of the virus is falling from the extremely high numbers in early January and that it will stay on this path as long as we all continue to follow the government's guidelines. A government announcement is expected on Tuesday in relation to the reopening of schools, however it now seems unlikely that schools will reopen for all students on February 1<sup>st</sup>.

I would like to thank all students and parents/guardians who took the time this week to complete the surveys regarding the operation of remote learning over the last two weeks. Together with a survey completed by our teachers, this information has given us a great insight into our school community's experiences of remote learning. Although remote learning does not replicate the learning that takes place in a classroom, it has allowed us to continue with teaching & learning over the last two weeks. However, it is not without challenges for students, parents or teachers.

To try to improve remote learning we would like to bring the following to your attention:

- From Monday all live classes will be reduced to 30 minutes in length, we are asking parents to encourage their daughters to use the time between classes to turn off the screen that they are using and to take a movement break. This together with the fact that almost all non-exam subjects do not have live classes should give students more periods during the school day when they can take a break from screens.
- To give students an opportunity to catch up on schoolwork, next Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> of January, teachers will not be scheduling any live classes. We also hope that by having the extra day to finish their schoolwork, students will then be able to enjoy a proper weekend break with no homework and plenty of screen free time. This will be an opportunity for students to take a breather, pause and recharge. On Friday our teachers will be conducting planning workshops as part of the development of our school strategic plan 2021-2024.
- Students should have their camera and mic always turned on, unless directed by their teacher to do otherwise. The camera background setting should be set to blurred. When cameras are turned on more interaction and engagement between students and their teacher takes place resulting in more



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effective learning. When cameras are turned off in a live class it is impossible for teachers to monitor engagement and learning. As the Level 5 restrictions continue, it is also important for students to have these opportunities for social interaction with their classmates. Having your camera turned on is a common courtesy that we expect of our students when attending a live class and we would ask you to support your daughter's learning by reminding them of our expectations in relation to this. We understand that for a very small number of students' family circumstances may mean that it is not possible to turn on your camera during a particular class. If this is the case, students should send a private message via Teams chat to their teachers to explain this.

- We would encourage all students to make use of their homework journal to record both their classwork and homework and the scheduling of live classes. Parents, particularly for junior students, should support their daughter's learning by monitoring the work and live classes in the journal. The schedule of live classes is visible in the calendar tab in Teams. We will ask all teachers to give 24 hours notice before scheduling a class, however it is important that students record in their journals when classes will take place and to attend all classes on time.
- From Monday we would encourage you to check attendance and behaviour on VShare. Teachers will keep a record of attendance for each live class and will also add behaviour incidents such as not producing work or not engaging online. If a student misses a live class it will display as yellow or red in the attendance calendar on VShare. Clicking on a day will show the number of live classes for that particular day.
- Our PE department have been posting activities on Teams for students to do in their free time and/or during their double PE classes. We will also post mindfulness activities which will support students to stay mentally healthy. Again, I would ask you to encourage your daughter to engage in both the physical and mindfulness activities as they can help alleviate anxieties that they may be feeling.
- As stated previously it is important to note that remote teaching and learning will only be effective if your daughter engages in a regular and meaningful manner. Your daughters' teachers appreciate at this difficult time that it may not be possible for everyone to keep up with the work, especially if dealing with personal or family illness. It is important for parents to let your daughter's Year Head know and we can provide whatever supports that we can. Should there be any difficulties regarding completing work, the amount of work or the direction being given by teachers, it is important that they be discussed initially with individual teachers in a respectful manner.



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Finally, Sixth Years often experience high levels of worry and anxiety surrounding the State Examinations. The school closure has only added to what is already a stressful time for students. There is a lot of speculation in the media at the moment about exams, however until any decisions have been made by the Department of Education and State Examinations Commission about the Leaving Cert exams we will have to continue to prepare students in the best way possible for the 'traditional' exams in June, part of this preparation are Mock exams. If in the unlikely event that Sixth Years return to school in early February, Leaving Cert Mocks will take place if it is safe to do so, as previously scheduled, over the midterm from February 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>. As outlined at the Sixth Year Assembly, the Mocks are an important part of a student's preparation for the Leaving Cert exams and it is our very strong recommendation that all students should sit their Leaving Cert Mock examinations. However, we will be applying an opt-out provision for Sixth Year students who may be unable to do all or some exams for a variety of reasons. If Leaving Cert students do not return to school before the February midterm the Mocks exams will be postponed or cancelled. While it would be our hope that we could reschedule the Mocks, due to Leaving Cert Orals and Practical Exams it just may not be possible to find an appropriate time to hold these exams after February.

Although our office is closed you can contact the school by phone at 086 0421839 between 10am and 1pm Monday to Friday or by email at [office@colaistebride.ie](mailto:office@colaistebride.ie). Alternatively, you can contact me by email at [kosullivan@colaistebride.ie](mailto:kosullivan@colaistebride.ie), or our Deputy Principals, Rose McConville at [rose.mcconville@colaistebride.ie](mailto:rose.mcconville@colaistebride.ie) or Niall Moynihan, at [niall.moynihan@colaistebride.ie](mailto:niall.moynihan@colaistebride.ie).

Thank you all so much for your understanding, support and lovely comments on what a great job our teachers are doing. I see first-hand their concerns, worries and efforts in doing their best for their students at this time. We endeavour to get your daughter through these next few weeks in an as stress-free but as productive way as is possible.

Yours sincerely,

Kiera O'Sullivan

Principal