



22 December 2020

Dear Parent /Guardian,

I would like to wish all of our pupils, parents, and staff a safe and happy Christmas.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of staff, parents and pupils to the successful return to school earlier this year. Walt Disney once said ‘You can dream, create, design and build the most wonderful ideas in the world, but it requires people to make the dream a reality’. This is certainly true. The reality is that the learning experiences that have taken place, and indeed the school remaining fully open, could not have happened without huge commitment and support from the staff, parents and pupils.

There has never been a time when school life has been more challenging. 'Bubbles' and 'Pods' are words we now use daily. Greetings have become waves and nods. Hand-washing and sanitising are regular routines. Meetings are held remotely. Lunch breaks are quieter. Fun activities, teams and after-school activities are cancelled. The natural order and routine of school life is different this year. Despite all of this, I must compliment all our pupils who demonstrated amazing strength and resilience as they adapted to our new routines. Our pupils are incredibly happy which is a testament to both the care of their parents, and the dedication of our staff.

I wish to thank the staff for their energy, passion and enthusiasm. In addition to the new routines, they have embraced the rewards and challenges of our online platforms (Seesaw and Google Classroom) and implemented them with positivity and enthusiasm. Many thanks to pupils and parents for embracing this also!

I would like to thank the Parents' Association who have given their time, in big ways and small, to contribute to the work of the school through the many activities they have organised during the year. The input of the P.A makes a significant contribution to the vibrant character and atmosphere of our school.

I would also like to acknowledge the support and work of the school's Board of Management and thank them for their enormous commitment. The Board of Management members give generously of their time and expertise to support and enhance the essential work of the school. Without such committed volunteers the development and completion of school projects such as the new classroom would not be possible.

Thankfully, during these challenging times, our school continues to have a warm and happy atmosphere . Last Friday, December 18th, was Christmas Jumper Day. St Vincent de Paul was the charity chosen by An Chomhairle Scoile/ Student Council. We received €774 from your generous donations. What a fantastic response. Thank you all most sincerely. Following Santa's surprise visit to the Junior classes last week, we also made a donation to the Peter McVerry Trust. Due to the restrictions on singing indoors, we were unable to have the usual Carol service and Nativity play this year but every class worked on alternative Christmas projects , including poems, art, plays, outdoor singing, narrations, dance and a school magazine. Well done to all the pupils, and their teachers for their alternative and creative ideas, and we hoped you enjoyed viewing them. Everyone enjoyed the Helix Panto “The Sword in The Stone”, and classes have enjoyed school bingo and a Christmas Quiz remotely. Our Cribs, Christmas Trees, Christmas art and even some elves on shelves have been seen throughout the school ; these are some of the norms within the school which we have enjoyed over the past few weeks. Some photos of these activities are posted on the school website and Twitter.

Christmas is an incredibly special time as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is also a special time for all of us to spend time with our families. It is a time when we remember those who we have loved and lost along with those who are ill or struggling. We hope that the New Year brings hope to all.

While we look forward to this Christmas break, we recognise that this year will be different in a lot of ways . Please adhere to the public health guidelines. Personal responsibility will be the key for a safe collective return in January.

Any pupils who need to travel abroad over the Christmas period can only return to school when the quarantine period is complete. Please see the following links relating to travelling to Ireland. This is the latest information on travel and like all things relating to Covid 19 is subject to change. We would recommend referring to these sites for further updates:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b4020-travelling-to-ireland-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/#post-arrival-testing-of-passengers>

<https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/general-covid-19-travel-advisory/>

Please also check the Healthy Ireland site [here](#) with further resources and information on the Keep Well campaign.

Wishing all our school community a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi Mhaise daoibh go léir.

Ms. Natasha Bassett

(Principal)



Dear Parents,

Through the hard work of you, your family, teachers and people all across the community, Ireland has managed to suppress COVID-19 to the lowest incidence levels in the EU in recent weeks. We collectively have managed to slow the spread of the virus and protect each other throughout this pandemic. Schools continue to be safe places, and this is due to the collective effort of the entire school community.

However, as we enter the Christmas season, we should remember that this highly contagious virus is still circulating. We need to continue to protect ourselves and our loved ones by washing our hands regularly, covering our coughs and sneezes, physically distancing, wearing face coverings and avoiding crowds.

Please consider making a plan for Christmas and the New Year period and consider especially whether you will be meeting loved ones who are medically vulnerable. We know that the incubation period for COVID-19 can be up to 14 days and people can be infectious even if they have no symptoms.

Given that we are less than 14 days from Christmas Day, if you know you and your family will be meeting loved ones who are older or who are medically vulnerable over Christmas, plan to restrict your social interactions and minimise the number of people you meet from now.

Please avoid all non-essential domestic and international travel. Anyone who does travel internationally must restrict their movements for 14 days on arrival into Ireland.

Alternatively, travellers may take a PCR test on day 5 after arrival and should continue to restrict their movements until they receive a 'not detected' result.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to note that the children's flu vaccination programme is now extended to include all children between the ages of 2-17 years to further protect our families and community. The children's flu vaccine is given as a nasal spray through participating GP practices and pharmacies and only takes a few minutes. More information is available at [www.hse.ie/flu](http://www.hse.ie/flu).

We are actively planning to begin vaccinating people for COVID-19 in early 2021. We cannot afford to drop our guard now. When attending the workplace or school, please be vigilant and remind your children to follow all the hygiene and safety measures that have been put in place to prevent and control COVID-19 infection that have proved to be very successful since schools reopened.

Wishing you and your family a safe and peaceful Christmas.

Yours,

Dr Tony Holohan Chief Medical Officer

Dear Students,

As we approach the end of term I want to say ‘comhghairdeas agus míle buíochas’ – congratulations and thank you – to you all.

There have been huge challenges in returning to school and in keeping our schools running safely during this whole term. I am very appreciative of the keen sense of responsibility you have shown over the last number of months.

You have adapted brilliantly to the changes that have been necessary and you have shown great resilience in the face of all the challenges the year has brought.

This has been a really difficult year for so many of you. I know that the closure of school buildings in March and learning remotely was an enormous challenge. It was daunting also to return to school after many months and become familiar with new ways of doing things.

I want to say just how much I admire the work that you have all done, to keep learning, to keep the spirit and heart of your schools alive and to enjoy your time in school.

I know many of your favourite activities have been postponed or changed due to the restrictions that have been necessary. I promise that we will continue to work with Public Health to ensure that your ability to work and learn can continue as normally as possible and that as the country's vaccination plans progress we will be able to adapt further.

To anyone who has been having a difficult time, please remember there is always someone to talk to in school, so that you can reach out to talk about how you are feeling. It is important to stress that you are not in this alone. In your schools there is always a teacher or guidance counsellor who will listen to and help you. More information on wellbeing is available on [gov.ie/schools](https://www.gov.ie/schools), so please feel free to draw upon this resource also.

I'm so proud of all your efforts. I know that you will listen to all the good advice out there and take a well-deserved break over the holidays.

I also wish to acknowledge the hundreds of cards, drawings and letters that arrived to my office over the past number of weeks. I now have the most beautiful, festive display in my office. They keep my spirits up no matter what task I face and prove that creativity and imagination will always thrive, even in the most difficult of situations.

Mind yourselves, and each other. Enjoy your holiday as much as you can whilst keeping each other safe. I wish you and your families a happy and peaceful Christmas. I look forward to a time in 2021 when I can visit more of your schools, meet many of you in person and see your creativity, your innovation and your enthusiasm up close.

Nollaig shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir.

Norma Foley TD

Minister for Education

