

21 April, 2020

Dear all,

I extend a warm welcome 'back' to our final term of 2019/20, only 6 weeks remaining.

I am conscious that many are experiencing high levels of anxiety at present; in these regular messages I hope to allay some of those fears regarding matters related to Crescent, including, but not limited to student learning and exams.

As of today there is no official notice of when schools might reopen, however I believe it's best if we proceed insofar as possible as we might in normal circumstances. Yesterday teachers and students will have reengaged online with school work, having enjoyed a break over Easter, even if we didn't get to celebrate with extended family or attend Easter services as normal.

To date we have had just over 3 weeks of remote teaching and learning. A massive effort was undertaken by teachers, students and other support staff to allow this happen successfully. The adjustment required was not insignificant and now we have to 'raise ourselves' again for a further six weeks, as it is unlikely, that a normal resumption will happen this academic year.

So it is vital that we pay attention to our emotional and mental health, students, staff and our families. Our Wellbeing and Year Head teams continue to meet, remotely for now, where consideration is given to how we remain connected to our students and support them with their work.

I don't think it is helpful to speculate here about proposals for a partial return in July, or LC exams in August, as there is still so much outside our control. Everything will depend on how the country is managing the public health emergency at that time. I encourage our sixth years to 'keep on keeping on' until there is further clarity. Decisions about your graduation will be made in due course and you will be notified.

Instead we can only deal with the usual elements of term 3. Again our priority will be supporting teaching and learning and the wellbeing of students and staff. To this end our DPs are finalising a framework for this term which will issue separately. As outlined in previous messages, we use Microsoft teams as our platform for online engagement and it appears to be working well. This does not preclude individual teachers using other modes of communication for classes where these are appropriate to the subject matter and where confidentiality and online safety are guaranteed. Our ICT committee meets regularly to review and plan.

It is always beneficial to respect first principles of course and most students will find it useful to stick to a regular school day schedule; breaking every 40 minutes or so, and for 10-15 minutes at 11am, taking a regular lunch break, and finishing around 4pm. Marking the end of the official 'school day' in this way will provide energy for 'homework' or study which can then be undertaken before and after an evening meal. Naturally, this will vary according to the year the student is in, and their workload, and everyone should factor in exercise and fresh air each day.

A schedule for Summer exams has been drawn up and will be reviewed by staff in the coming days and then circulated. Today the DES announced that there will be no state certified JC exams. We hope this will relieve stress for our 3rd years and we will notify you soon about alternative 'in-house' arrangements to assess the work you have done over three years and to mark the end of your Junior

Cycle education. Third years who have applied for TY 20/21 will be offered a place in the coming weeks.

At this time of year, we normally ask parents to begin making payments towards the next academic year, be that sports fees, 1st year trip to Petersburg, voluntary contribution for example. The current economic conditions are resulting in significant financial consequences for many members of our Crescent family and so in an effort to alleviate some of these pressures the school has decided not to request these payments at this time. We are also issuing refunds for supervised study, the TY Achill, trip which has had to be cancelled due to Covid-19, and refunds for the Lake Garda trip are also being processed. These refunds should issue in the coming days.

I remind you that the next scheduled meeting of the Board is Wednesday, 13 May.

I am encouraged by the reports I receive about student and teacher engagement and so I commend you all and encourage you all to keep up the good work and stay safe.

God bless,

Karin Fleming