Tuesday 26 May 2020

Dear Parent / Guardian

I hope that you and your family are keeping well, having enjoyed a lovely Bank Holiday weekend together. I must applaud everyone in our school community in adapting to their new ways of working. You have been terrific and we thank you for the keen interest you have shown in your child’s work and for encouraging your child to keep on top of the work set by their teachers. Now, with a slight relaxation on restrictions, you may still be working from home or perhaps getting back into a routine of travelling to your place of work again. The last nine weeks have been an immense challenge for all of us, but we must continue to observe social distancing and hygiene for as long as it takes.

Previously, I had alluded that the College is already planning for a phased return of pupils in August/September. This is a huge task, particularly with the 2m rule re social distancing, and especially when the whole school may be expected to return. However, we will inform you of arrangements as soon as we can, keeping in mind, that the primary purpose is always to ensure a safe return for pupils and staff.

Two events which we were not able to follow through properly this year, were the Year 12 and Year 14 End of Year Celebration Masses. But I believe we did the next best thing, by live streaming both events last Wednesday 20th May. I hope you were able to join us for each of the ceremonies. I was so proud of each cohort of students who presented the Liturgy to you, alongside the staff and Fr Boyle. Like all of our school community, both Year Groups were dealt a most unfortunate blow which was out of their or anyone else’s control, and their time in the College was cut short. Whilst we hope that many of the Year 12 cohort will return to Sixth Form, Year 14 are starting on another new journey and one which I know, they will have the confidence to embrace, to the best of their ability. I wish both Year Groups every success for the future.

This is the final week to ensure that all GCSE and A Level assessment grades have been calculated appropriately for Years 12 and 14 before submission to the various Examination Boards. Whilst this has been a huge task for all staff, please be assured that we will be checking every result to ensure that each student receives the appropriate grades, and which are a true reflection of his/her ability during their time in the College.

Regrettably, due to delivery issues, neither the Leavers’ Tops for Years 12 and 14, or the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Guidance Booklets for Year 12 have arrived to the College. We appreciate that many of you have emailed requesting an EMA booklet; your name has been recorded for postage purposes when the booklets arrive. Year 12 students intending to progress to Post 16 for September, should also complete a revised Post 16 application which is now available on the College Website. Details re admission to Post 16 will be forwarded to you at a later date.

I am extremely proud of how well all our pupils are coping with remote learning and equally delighted, to see the range of excellent work being emailed to their teachers. I hope you have found the work to be accessible and manageable, whether it be online or via the learning resource pack. We intend to post a visual display of work every Friday, so please continue to take photographs of your child learning from home and the work they are producing. We know they are working hard; let’s celebrate their efforts; and share their work on an ongoing basis. The Maths Department also continue to nominate pupils on a weekly basis, who are demonstrating terrific progress via Hegarty Maths. Whilst technology is no substitute for classroom teaching, Hegarty Maths is a brilliant software programme with many resources, enabling staff to monitor the progress of every pupil and provide feedback.

We are currently preparing collaborative work across a number of subject areas for Years 8, 9 and 10, whilst students in Years 11 and 13 should continue with subject work. All pupils are expected to continue with assigned work during the period of 1st - 19th June.

I very much welcome, a letter received on Friday past, from the Minister for Education re lending of digital devices to those pupils who would benefit most in terms of supporting their learning. We are currently prioritizing those pupils in Years 11 and 13 who fall into the relevant categories, and will be in contact re distribution of available laptops and I-Pads as soon as possible. The current priority groupings are:

1. Current Year 11 pupils who are in receipt of Free School Meals and SEN or Newcomer or LAC or vulnerable
2. Current Year 13 pupils who are in receipt of Free School Meals and SEN or Newcomer or LAC or vulnerable

This support is very much appreciated, but I also hope the Department for Education will consider extending the Criteria and upgrading internet connectivity, as I am aware that this is a concern from many of our parents as well.

As always, we encourage all pupils to **log on to their C2k Email daily** and submit the work set by their teachers, be it online or via the learning resource packs. The School Counselling Service continues to be available via the College email or alternatively, students can self-refer by emailing <https://familyworksni.com/>. This is a confidential service.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the College by email on info@holytrinityc.cookstown.ni.sch.uk and we will endeavour to respond to you as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your continued support. Please continue to remain safe, look after each other and take care during this difficult time.

God Bless

Isabel Russell
Principal