



St. Joseph's Grammar School

Scoil Ghramadaí Naomh Iósaef

Principal: Mrs Geraldine Donnelly, BA, PGCE, PQH

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26 February 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

I am aware that there is understandable concern and indeed some confusion regarding the Coronavirus and the advice being given to schools on dealing with a potential or confirmed outbreak. This letter is to assure you that we are as well prepared as possible to deal with any situation that might arise in the coming weeks.

All schools are being advised in relation to the Coronavirus by the Department of Education in conjunction with the Public Health Agency. This advice is being updated as and when necessary in light of any new information that the Department of Health becomes aware of.

As of today, the advice we have been given is that there is a “low risk” of an outbreak in Northern Ireland. However, the information given on the website does go on to detail how schools should manage a suspected or confirmed case of the Coronavirus and we will be guided by health experts if we are confronted with such a scenario.

PLEASE NOTE, the clear advice for someone who presents with the common symptoms of this virus (cough, fever, shortness of breath) is NOT to attend the GP or hospital but to telephone the GP for advice.

I would encourage you to use the link below to source the most recent advice for schools for your own information and would emphasise that this is a very fluid situation and thus the advice may change frequently.

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus#situation-in-northern-ireland>

I also want to reassure parents that those pupils who returned from the ski trip in Italy on Saturday 18 January 2020 are not deemed to be at any risk based on the advice directly from the Public Health Agency.

In the mean time in school, we are taking all reasonable precautions to prevent the spread of any viruses or bugs and included in this letter is the advice given to our pupils about hand and respiratory hygiene. We have augmented the number of hand sanitisers throughout the school and all classrooms have ample supplies of tissues. Our cleaning staff are disinfecting door handles, keyboards etc daily in addition to their normal cleaning routines.

I am also engaging with the exam boards in relation to contingency planning for public exams should this prove necessary, and I will keep you abreast of any changes that are required of exam centres by the exams regulator, JCQ. Our teaching staff are availing of additional training this week to ensure that they can maintain electronic contact with exam pupils should there be a period of enforced school closure.

It is worth emphasising again that the current advice is that there is a “low risk” of an outbreak in Northern Ireland but I want to assure all parents, carers and pupils that we are vigilant and will act in the best interests of our pupils at all times.

If you have any concerns in relation to this matter, please do not hesitate to telephone the school on 028 87761227.

As always, I appreciate your support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Geraldine Donnelly'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'G' and a long, sweeping underline.

Geraldine Donnelly
Principal