



St. Joseph's Grammar School

Scoil Ghramadaí Naomh Iósaef

Principal: Mrs Geraldine Donnelly, BA, PGCE, PQH

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25th March 2020

Dear Families of St Joseph's/Scoil Iósaef,

It is with a very heavy heart that I write to inform you that our school site will close from today for an indefinite period of time.

Last night, the Minister for Education Peter Weir, tweeted that, with the exception of those schools which remain open for the supervision of key workers' children, all other schools are to instruct their staff to work from home so as to observe the latest government directives. A skeleton staff had remained in school over the last two weeks to answer your queries by telephone and to undertake other duties, but that will have to cease from today.

I am very grateful that all of our parents were able to make the appropriate childcare arrangements for their children over the last week and more, and I know that sheltering your children in the heart of your families is the best place for them to be at this frightening time if at all possible.

We will of course keep our school closure under review and will be directed by the Department regarding this measure. I will contact you again if there is any change to the position as of today.

I want to take the opportunity to record my deep gratitude to all of our staff. Over the last four weeks, as we became more aware of what was likely to happen here, our staff have worked tirelessly to train in new remote methods of teaching, to share our resources with one another, to produce new learning materials and to provide the best pastoral care for all our pupils. We have supported one another in many practical ways and I have witnessed countless acts of kindness, both large and small, in recent weeks.

In the midst of all this, we have continued to hammer heaven's door with prayers for all of your families and our own. As we do every day in school, we will continue to pray the Angelus at noon in our own homes and we invite you to join us daily for that and to pray to the late Daughters of the Cross to intercede on behalf of us all.

Going forward, the school will remain open for business in the virtual sense and you have been provided with a list of direct emails for all our staff, so please don't hesitate to ask for any help that you or your child need. We will continue to send information to you via the App and also to post on our social media platforms as appropriate.

I want to finish with this message to your children, our pupils. I know that school is so much more to you than merely a place where you come to learn and I suspect many of you will be surprised at how much you are missing the normal routine of school! For you, school is a place where you connect with your friends and where you feel a sense of belonging and security.

School closure is usually a cause for celebration as it signals the end of a school term or a school year and the start of a holiday. This closure is clearly different and I know that many of you will have concerns about exam results and about how you will move on the next phase of your studies. Be assured that school Principals across NI are liaising with the exam boards to ensure that only the fairest methods will be used to predict grades. I will contact you again when I know more about the outcome of this.

I know too that many of you will feel robbed of all the rites of passage that come with leaving school and completing exams and so I want to reassure you that when we all come through this, we will celebrate these together with you with full and happy hearts.

I am confident that we will all come back together again soon and in the meantime your most important job is to support your family, attend to a bit of learning each day and stay put at home to help save lives.

Parents, on behalf of the Board of Governors and staff of the school, may I thank you all for your unwavering support during such difficult times and I look forward to seeing you all again in person in the times ahead.

Go dtuga Dia cuidiú duinn agus go gcuire sé ar ár leas muid.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Geraldine Donnelly
Principal