



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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3rd April, 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

This newsletter is very different from the usual school newsletters I write. Normally, I illustrate the many school events, great achievements of our students and school developments that have taken place. However, given the school closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic instead I will spend some time highlighting its impact on school education and suggesting some ways in which you can support your child.

Unless we hear otherwise from the Department of Education, online learning will continue after the Easter Break on Monday April 20th. There are only 6 weeks in the summer term and it will definitely look and feel very different from our usual summer terms.

Virtual Time-table and Video Conferencing

The school time-timetable will continue to run as normal albeit virtually using the Zoom video conferencing facility. To ensure classes run as smoothly as possible, we will be ensuring that students use their proper names so that they can be identified by the teacher and have their video turned on so that we know they are engaging with the lesson.. If there are technical issues with cameras please notify the school in advance.

ICT Equipment

To participate fully in online learning there is a need to have the required ICT equipment. It would greatly help if parents could ensure that their children have the appropriate technology to participate in classes.

Attendance

Attendance is taken for all classes. On a daily basis, texts are sent to parents about absences during the morning classes. Every week a weekly attendance report is analysed and if necessary parents will be contacted. Please note, attendance is taken at the end of the class, not at the start. In addition, we have noticed there are a small number of students who parents inform us are sitting at their computers but teachers have noticed are not attending classes, hence causing records of absence. If there are circumstances where students cannot attend classes it is important for the parents to let the office (secondary@johnscottus.ie) know and it will be recorded.

Behaviour online

The vast majority of students are engaging in an extremely positive manner with online learning. However, in the situation where there is inappropriate behavior, including posting appropriate content, the student(s) involved will be asked to leave the class or in more serious cases may be restricted from attending a number of classes.

In addition, any student who is found to have deliberately shared class meeting Zoom links with anybody or anywhere will face serious disciplinary action.

Email Accounts

Students are responsible for their own email accounts and all communication from their email account. It is each student's responsibility to have a strong secure password in place. I suggest that all students update their passwords today and continue this practice on a monthly basis.

Google and Microsoft Technology

Each student has been given an account with Google for Education and Microsoft 365 Education. The account name is the email address assigned to them. I would suggest, for ease of you, they use the same password for both Google and Microsoft.

Parental Support

We have noticed that some students find online learning challenging. Any parental support that you can give in help with using technology, organisation, appropriate ICT equipment and punctuality is very much appreciated. If there are any challenges that we can assist with, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Assessment

Normally we have end of year assessments in May. We are now faced with the question of how best we can support assessment in an online learning environment. Teachers are actively considering this issue and if the school closure continues we will inform you of our course of action in this regard.

Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate

All 3rd and 6th years students need to prepare for their exams scheduled for June. I appreciate this may be difficult given the current circumstances but all indications are that the exams will go ahead.

Physical Distancing

I know the Easter break will be hard for our students given the current movement restrictions, however, their discipline in respect of these restriction is a great service to our immediate community and wider society. These movement restrictions bring to mind a quote:

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

Viktor Frankl, Survivor, Auschwitz Concentration Camp

Finally, an enormous thank you and congratulations must be extended to all in our school community, for their dedication, engagement and enthusiasm in such challenging times.

Yours warmly and stay safe,



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