

28th February 2022

Dear Parents/Guardians,

COVID Protocols:

As we return to school all remaining COVID restrictions as they apply to schools have been removed. The DES Information Note is available for viewing on our school website. We are delighted to welcome students and staff back to school where the wearing of masks is a personal choice and where the removal of social distancing requirements means all in our school community can engage more freely. We look forward to expanding our pedagogy to once again include group work and pair work.

It is important that we all recognize that there will be some who prefer to retain their mask or for whom the prospect of groupwork/pair work is a source of anxiety or stress. Our school community is one where people can be ‘themselves’. Let us continue to respect personal choice and to understand that we have all experienced the past two years in our own way and that shapes how we will journey forward individually.

COVID protocols brought many challenges for our school community, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all in our community who embraced those challenges and complied so willingly to keep us all safe.

Parents/guardians, you should be very proud of your young people – we all remember how challenging the teenage years can be; our students have had that challenge intensified by the restrictions of COVID. We would like our students to know how much we appreciate how well they adapted to the many changes in school life, how supportive they were of our school staff and one another and how much we admire their fortitude and resilience.

I would like to add my thanks to our wonderful school staff who had to evolve and deliver quality teaching and learning in the midst of COVID. I would like to pay tribute to their unwavering commitment to our students and to their willingness to adapt and change with each new challenge.

As restrictions are lifted there is the temptation to believe it is all over, that COVID is now gone. We know it’s not; we know we still must be mindful of one another and that we need to continue to act and respond appropriately to keep one another safe.

We are midway through the academic year, although restrictions are easing it is not possible for us to respond to all alleviations with immediate effect. As a result, we will continue with Teaghlach based classrooms for the remainder of this academic year – it is logistically impossible for us to return to teacher-based classrooms until September 2022. We will continue with staggered breaks at the small break in the interim. We will review our supervision arrangements with a view to opening our doors earlier for students. We will continue with separate entrances by year groups as this gives a nice opportunity for Year Heads to engage with students in their year group every morning.

VSware Communications APP:

The COVID experience has taught us many lessons – we relied heavily on text messaging to parents as an immediate and effective communication tool. However, text messaging is expensive and has limitations. As a result, we have invested in a new Communication Tool within VSware, our school administration system. **All parents /guardians are asked to download the VSware App:**

- For Android devices: Visit the **Google Play Store** on your device and search for '**VSware**'
- For iOS devices (Apple): Visit the **App Store** on your device and search for '**VSware**'
- Tap '**Install**'.

You then use your VSware log in details to access the APP.

This Communication Tool will allow us to send emails to all parents/guardians directly through the App; letters such as this will be emailed instead which will save on printing and posting costs as well as promoting our Green School's philosophy. This will be a two-way communication tool – parents/guardians will be able to email Year Heads directly with absence notes or with any concerns or queries. Please visit our school website where we have dedicated a page with links and tutorials for parents/guardians to follow. The App will have the same functionality as accessing VSware directly but should facilitate greater communication between home and school. Parents/guardians can also visit the VSware Help Centre to access tutorials and user guides: <https://support.vsware.ie/en/parent-app-overview>

The Comp Counts – Weekly Fundraiser:

During the midterm break we launched our new weekly fundraising initiative – The Comp Counts <https://www.stpatrickscprehensive.ie/the-comp-counts.html>

This is an online draw with the jackpot starting at €500, increasing by €50 each week to a maximum of €5000.

We appreciate that there are many demands on everyone at the moment and that there are many good causes looking for your support. If you can, we'd really appreciate your support; our school website will have regular updates on our targets – our first target is to replace data projectors, some of which are between 10 & 15 years old. This will have a real impact on the teaching and learning experience for our students and staff however it requires significant investment. Your participation in The Comp Counts can help to make that happen – if you can please follow this link to play: https://play.clubforce.com/play_newa.asp?ll_id=3175#Anchor

Study Skills Seminars:

We are delighted to announce that we have devised Comp specific Study Skills Workshops with Nicola Culloty B.Ed. M.A. CBT of Full Circle CBT. Nicola will work with our 6th & 3rd year students across two workshops - the workshops will explore how thinking and behaviour patterns have an impact on stress levels and results during exam time. Students will be introduced to Cognitive Behavioural techniques which will reduce stress, increase motivation and improve information retention. Students will become familiar with how the brain learns, how to plan for effective study and how to use strategies to retrieve information.

The school is subsidizing the cost of the workshops substantially. However, we do need to charge students to help cover some of the cost - a charge of €5 will be assigned to 3rd & 6th year students through Way2Pay.

We have also asked Nicola to deliver her online seminar for parents – this will be open to all parents and a booking link will be sent via text message and through the VShare App. Parents are asked to contribute €5 to attend the seminar; parents who register for the seminar will be charged through Way2Pay.

Key Dates:

DATE	ACTIVITY
14 th March	Study Skills Workshop 1 for 3 rd & 6 th years
15 th March	Information Evening for Transition Year 2022/23; 5 th year LCE & LCA 2022/23
17 th & 18 th March	Bank Holidays
24 th March	Online Study Skills Seminar for parents 7:30 – 8:30 pm
25 th March	Deadline for receipt of TY; 5 th Year LCE & LCA 2022/23 Applications
29 th March	Study Skills Workshop 2 for 3 rd & 6 th years
31 st March	Induction Evening for 1 st years 2022/23
11 th – 22 nd April	Easter Holidays Leaving Cert Orals & Music Practicals
25 th April	Staff Inservice Day – students remain at home
25 th April – 6 th May	JC Home Economics Practicals – dates will be confirmed and notified to students asap.
26 th – 28 th April	LC Engineering Practicals – dates will be confirmed and notified to students asap.
2 nd May	Bank Holiday
3 rd May	School Holiday
4 th May	6 th Year LCVP Written Exam
4 th – 6 th May	LC Construction Practicals – dates will be confirmed and notified to students asap.
9 th – 20 th May	JC Music Practicals – dates will be confirmed and notified to students asap.

Kind regards,

Mary Costello, Principal