



**ST. MARY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL**

HOLY FAITH CONVENT, GLASNEVIN, DUBLIN 11



2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We hope you are all safe and well as we continue to live in lockdown in the knowledge that our efforts are helping to save lives and that the restrictions will soon be eased in a series of five stages, three weeks apart as announced by our Taoiseach Leo Varadkar yesterday evening.

We are aware that this has been a particularly stressful time for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students and their parents and guardians as we awaited clarity from the government about what form the assessment of Junior Cycle would take. The possibility of school-based JC Examinations in the autumn despite the official cancellation which was announced on 10<sup>th</sup> April hung in the air adding to already heightened stress levels while the Advisory Group held discussions over the last two weeks. We were asked by the Minister for Education to wait until these discussions had concluded before announcing local decisions around assessment. A press release was issued on 29<sup>th</sup> April announcing that all assessment of Junior Cycle would be completed by 29<sup>th</sup> May and that there would be no autumn examinations. The decisions arrived at are outlined below.

For each student, certification will involve two elements:

- **A State Certificate of completion of Junior Cycle from the Department of Education and Skills.** Every student will receive State Certification that they have completed three years of Junior Cycle education in a number of subjects and short courses. This certification will be provided by the Department of Education and Skills.
- **A School Report setting out the learning achievements of students in Junior Cycle.** Students will receive a report on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject and short course at the end of Junior Cycle. This assessment of their learning will be provided by their teachers. Schools have been given autonomy in how this assessment is to be arrived at and the format in which the report is to be provided.

We have spent the last few days in consultation on this very important issue and the decisions outlined to students in the email/assembly with Ms Kavanagh yesterday evening are those that we arrived at which are further expanded upon here. In our consultations we followed the advice and guidelines issued by the Advisory Group and our own Management Body the JMB, and our overriding priority was to be fair to every student and to acknowledge all learning that occurred pre and post the school closure date 12<sup>th</sup> March. Department of Education guidelines emphasised that:-

*'to ensure equity, greater weighting should be given to work that was completed by students in advance of the closure of schools on 12 March 2020. Cognisance may be given to work completed after that date, but teachers should have regard to the impact that school closure will have had on students' ability to engage with further learning after 12 March 2020 and their ability to complete any additional assessment tasks'.*

We are delighted with the manner in which our 3<sup>rd</sup> year students have engaged with the remote learning platform but are also aware that it was not possible for every student to participate due to a variety of reasons. With that in mind we have decided to provide a summative assessment of students based on formal tests already completed prior to school closure combined with a formative assessment based on CBAs already completed and teacher feedback derived from continuous assessment and observation over the Junior Cycle. We have decided that there will be no additional assessment tasks.

This **Junior Cycle Achievement Report** will be completed by all teachers over the next few weeks and will be available to parents/guardians via VSware immediately after the 29<sup>th</sup> May deadline.

We plan to also compile a **School-based Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement** which will be presented to all students as soon as is feasible after we return to school. This will include the results contained in the **Junior Cycle Achievement Report** and will be supplemented with reports on **Other Areas of Learning** and the **St Mary's Secondary School Digital Certificate** for students who successfully participated in St Mary's Remote Teaching and Learning Community March – May 2020.

It is our earnest wish that the clarity provided by the government and by ourselves will relieve the stress being felt by you all regarding Junior Cycle Assessment. We would advise and encourage all students to continue to engage with their teachers over the next few weeks and to enjoy the learning opportunities that are being presented to them remotely for which they will receive their Digital Certificate when we return to school safely.

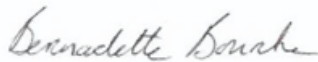
Ms Kavanagh and Ms Devaney would both like to applaud 3<sup>rd</sup> year students for the prompt and mannerly way in which they responded to the call for information regarding TY and 5<sup>th</sup> year. They have been a pleasure to work with remotely during the past seven weeks, and indeed throughout the three years of Junior Cycle, and we look forward to welcoming them back into TY and 5<sup>th</sup> year when the school reopens.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank their Year Head Ms Kavanagh for her constant care and devotion over the last three years and their tutors Ms Cunningham, Mr Farrell, Ms O'Donnellan, Ms O'Doherty and Ms O'Rourke for being staunch advocates for their individual class groups. We would also like to thank all of their teachers for their dedicated attention to the students under their care and for the manner in which they have helped us to resolve these challenging issues over the past few days.

As the month of May begins our thoughts and prayers are, as ever, with you all and especially those who have been impacted negatively by the Coronavirus. We would urge all our students to have a lovely long weekend, to stay safe and to always follow the HSE guidelines.

Finally, we would like to thank you, our parents and guardians, for your patience and understanding during a very trying time.

Yours faithfully,



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**Bernadette Bourke**  
Principal



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**Mary O'Donnell**  
Deputy Principal



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**Frances Devaney**  
Deputy Principal

NB: We will continue to update you as a community through our Website, our school App, our Twitter feed and by text, and individually by phone and email and would like to remind you all that the school can still be contacted through the main line **01-8374413** which has been diverted for the duration of this emergency.

