



**ST. MARY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL**  
HOLY FAITH CONVENT, GLASNEVIN, DUBLIN 11



12<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We hope you are all keeping safe and well and that you have enjoyed a well-deserved and restful break with your families after what has been for us all a very anxious and uncertain term. We appreciate that for 6<sup>th</sup> class students and their parents and guardians the impact of school closures might have been particularly unsettling and as the beginning of the school year approaches it is with great pleasure that we are writing to extend a warm welcome to all our incoming first year students and to reassure you about the measures we are putting in place to ensure the safety of our entire school community while being particularly mindful of all of those who are new to the school.

The announcement on March 12<sup>th</sup> of the closure of all schools, colleges etc., marked the beginning of a series of challenges across the education sector as a result of COVID-19. The interests of students and their families, as well as the safety of our staff, have always been paramount as we have worked through these challenges. As we prepare to reopen the school the safety and wellbeing of our school community continues to be our overriding concern. The *Full Return to School Roadmap* was published on 27<sup>th</sup> July and it sets out how schools will reopen for all students from the end of August and what the operation of our schools will look like in a COVID-19 context. The Roadmap has been developed in line with public health advice and follows comprehensive and intensive engagement with all education stakeholders. It also reflects a consideration of approaches adopted in other jurisdictions, which have been finalised in recent weeks.

Following the detailed guidance available to schools we have a team working to prepare the building for the full return of our school community. Our main priority is to ensure that St Mary's is a safe place for all students, staff and visitors.

The purpose of this letter is to highlight some important information about the return to school and we will be in touch again soon with a more detailed schedule for the first day and weeks.

St Mary's will re-open on the 27<sup>th</sup> August and the start date for incoming first years is **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020**. This will be an induction day and there will be no school for first year students on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. Classes for all students will begin on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September and will end at 1.10pm during the first week. To ensure the safety of our incoming first year students we are following government guidelines and placing them in base classrooms for most of their classes. They will move to their practical optional subjects but it is imperative that we minimise movement within the school building. Hand sanitisation stations will be placed in all rooms and at all entrances and exits and education and training in hygiene procedures will be prioritised for all students during the first few weeks as they settle in. The most recent recommendation regarding the wearing of masks/face coverings was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> August and it states that 'teachers, staff and students attending post primary

schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained'. More specific details will be included in our next letter and we will follow the most up to date guidance in relation to this and all other safety issues at all times.

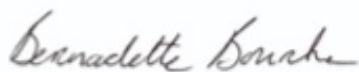
There is one important change which we must highlight in relation to optional subjects for our incoming first years. As you might be aware we normally run a sampling programme which gives students the opportunity to try out all of the five optional subjects before choosing the two they will study for the duration of their junior cycle. Unfortunately, due to the present restrictions, it will not be possible to run the programme this year. Instead we are asking students, with their parents and guardians, to choose their two optional subjects before they start as was the case with their language option. We would ask you to fill out the attached Subject Choice Form and to return it to the school by **Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August** at the latest so that classes can be set up and options confirmed well in advance of the start date.

We would urge all parents/guardians who have not already done so to download the School App in order to receive important daily notifications. All school payments will also be done through the Shop on the School App which can be downloaded by searching for *St. Mary's Holy Faith S.S.* on the App Store or on Google Play (instructions included). Please see our website <https://www.stmaryshfcglasnevin.com/> and <https://www.gov.ie/backtoschool> for return to school updates. We have also included in this pack a letter to parents/guardians from the Minister for Education and Skills Norma Foley.

Some of you might be aware that I am retiring from the position as principal of St Mary's on 31<sup>st</sup> August. I regret that I did not get the chance to inform you of this at our meeting which was scheduled for the 18<sup>th</sup> March and to wish you all well in person. However, I do so now, and wish your daughters happiness, health and success as they embark on their second level journey in St Mary's. It also gives me great pleasure to introduce you to Mr Paul Clarke who will take over as principal at the beginning of the new school year and is already working alongside us to prepare the school for the safe return of our students and staff. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself, Ms O'Donnell, Ms Devaney and the entire school community to welcome Mr Clarke to St Mary's and to wish him every success and happiness as he takes up his new position, and in the years ahead.

We look forward to welcoming your daughter into the community of St Mary's Secondary School, and to working closely with you during the coming months and years.

Yours faithfully,



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Bernadette Bourke  
Principal



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Paul Clarke  
Principal

