

<b>Inside this issue:</b>	
Frequently Asked Questions	
<i>Wellbeing</i>	1
<i>State Exams</i>	2
<i>Teaching and Learning</i>	3
<i>Feedback</i>	3
Reminders	3
PPE	4



**Welcome...** to our eighth bulletin for parents/guardians for 2019/2020.

This bulletin will be issued monthly with all the upcoming events and happenings at Sancta Maria College. Should you have any questions or areas you would like us to cover in this newsletter please just contact [info@sanctamaria.ie](mailto:info@sanctamaria.ie)

We hope all members of our school community are keeping safe and well at this time. We wish to offer our sincere condolences to all of you who have experienced the loss of much loved family members during this difficult time.

In this issue we will try to answer questions, concerns and issues raised during this unforeseen period of school closures and distance learning. Please understand that we do not have all the solutions at this time as we too have a lot of unanswered questions.

It has been a steep learning curve for students, parents and schools navigating planning, supporting and online teaching and learning. There is no perfect solution to the difficulties our education system is facing as a result of school closures and the impact of measures to stem the spread of Covid-19. We hope that some of the information here might address some of your questions.

## Wellbeing

The health and wellbeing of our students has always been our top priority. We know that this is a time of real stress and worry for our students, parents and our entire school community. The lack of the known structure of school and the uncertainty of the future can be a cause of anxiety. This coupled with juggling the demands of every day life, caring for young children, caring for cocooning or ill parents or grandparents, supporting teenagers with their study and with the physical isolation from their peers, sharing of devices for students school work and parents/siblings working from home (not to mention ongoing Wi-Fi issues) can cause a lot of tension and worry. We do understand this as all staff members are experiencing the very same at this time.

If your child seems upset, worried or anxious, encourage them to talk about what they are thinking and how they are feeling. Help them to understand that it is ok for them to be experiencing a range of thoughts and feelings. It is important to understand their point of view and to work together to create a different, positive way to look at the situation. Give them extra attention and time, to talk about their concerns, fears and questions. Remember they do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk. Encourage them to share their school work concerns with their teachers.

If you are concerned about your son/daughter we are here to help. Just contact the pastoral care team [pastoralcare@sanctamaria.ie](mailto:pastoralcare@sanctamaria.ie) and one of the team will get in touch with you or your son/daughter.



## State Exams 2020

The Coronavirus continues to cause unprecedented levels of disruption and chaos across the Irish education system and this disruption is being felt across the board by students, teachers, school leaders and parents, but most critically, by our students in exam years.

### What advice would you give to Leaving Certificate students at this time?

We advise students to continue to prepare for examinations by engaging in the teaching and learning arrangements that have been put in place by the school. We know that this is a really stressful and challenging time, so we also recommend that you stay in touch and connected with your friends, classmates and your teachers online and with your family for support.

### When will the new timetable be available?

Other than advising that the rescheduled Leaving Certificate examinations will commence in on July 29<sup>th</sup>, the examinations timetable is not yet available. The public health situation remains fluid and so decisions in respect of the details of running the examinations can only be made closer to the commencement date. The SEC plans to issue these detailed arrangements to schools in early June.

### Why are the Junior Cycle examinations postponed?

In line with public health restrictions, it is not possible to run both sets of examinations in schools simultaneously and the decision reflects the priority given to running the Leaving Certificate examinations so that students can transition to the next stage of their lives. Retaining all of the examination halls but halving the number of candidates by not running the Junior Cycle means that it will be possible to safely run the Leaving Certificate examinations in line with the current public health guidelines.

### When will the Junior Cycle examinations be held?

**In the past few hours we have been notified of the following changes to the assessment of Junior Cycle 2020.**

- Students in Irish schools completing their third year of Junior Cycle in 2020 have experienced a very disrupted period of learning in 2019/20 because of the unprecedented nature of the Covid-19 crisis.
- Teachers and schools have used a wide range of approaches to mitigate the effects of this disrupted schooling, but the learning experience of students has varied across schools and students for a range of reasons over which schools and students have had no control.
- In these circumstances, it is not possible for students to undertake the Junior Cycle final examinations normally organised by the State Examinations Commission.

In 2020, the Junior Cycle learning achievement of students will be recognised through a specific form of certification designed to meet the current, exceptional circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

For each student, certification will involve two elements:

- A State Certificate of completion of Junior Cycle from the Department of Education and Skills. Students should receive a State Certification that they have completed three years of Junior Cycle education in a number of subjects/priority learning units. 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 should receive a written report on the broad range of learning that they have achieved in each subject, short course and/or priority learning unit at the end of Junior Cycle. This assessment of their learning will be provided by their teachers. Schools will have autonomy to choose the most appropriate form of school-based assessments to put in place for the third-year cohort of 2019/20.
- **Sancta Maria College will now devise an assessment system in the best interests of all our students taking into account this disrupted period of learning.** Decisions will be made with the best interests of students and their families in mind.
- **The board of the school will communicate with parents/guardians and students in relation to the proposed actions that the school intends to take in relation to assessments as soon as is possible.**

## Learning and Teaching

### What teaching platforms are being used?

The main teaching platform used by Sancta Maria College is Google Classroom for the following reasons:

- Security - we are happy with its security features as we have full control over the domain, user must sign in with dedicated school email accounts.
- Familiarity—we have been using this system with students throughout the year which enabled a smooth transition to online learning for both the student and teacher.
- Training—teachers and students have received training on this system.
- We have a video conferencing function within the platform in Google Meet.

From our teacher survey we found that approximately up to 30% of students log in at their usual class time with 70% accessing classwork at a time that suits them best during the day. (We understand that many families have organised a rota for use of devices between students and parents working from home).

While we appreciate that no one method will suit all students we have received very positive feedback from many parents on this system. However as the distance learning appears to be ongoing we are open to trying new systems in the best interests of our students.

Every system will have its benefits and its limitations and we can appreciate that different systems appeal to different students and their learning styles. We are looking into and availing of training in other systems to vary the method of presentation from time to time. Zoom is one system we are looking at and we are availing of training and holding some meetings on this platform. Some teachers are currently trialing it with support classes for 2-3 students combined with parental involvement, others recording presentations. Security issues are also being investigated.

We appreciate any concerns and we will do our best to address any issues raised to support and address all the needs of all our students.

### Feedback

Without the usual school journal and copies with day to day feedback it is difficult for parents to know how their son/daughter is getting on.

Teachers mark work, give comments and grades and communicate directly with students regularly through google classroom. Please feel free to check in on this work with students at any time.

If you have any concerns please just contact the relevant teacher on their school email or feel free to use the general school email [info@sanctamaria.ie](mailto:info@sanctamaria.ie) and your concern will be addressed promptly.

The school will contact you if necessary to encourage student participation and engagement and we thank all those who have identified problems/concerns to us or have helped resolve problems/concerns raised by us.

### Exam Fees Update

Leaving Certificate Fees: The closing date for payment of the Leaving Cert examination fee is being extended until after the exams are complete and the results issued.

Junior Certificate/Cycle Fees: Students will not be required to pay an examination fees to the SEC in relation to the 2020 Junior Cycle examinations, the SEC will be issuing a refund to all students who have already paid. There is no need to contact the State Examinations Commission as refunds will be made automatically. Further details will be sent to all schools in the coming days.

### Important Reminders

Students entering fifth year next year are reminded to return their **subject options** as soon as possible. Late return of subject options may result in a student being unable to get chosen subjects. Please return to:

[richardberkeley@sanctamaria.ie](mailto:richardberkeley@sanctamaria.ie)

A few students have not returned their choice forms to take part in **transition year of fifth year**. Students will be entered in the fifth year programme if forms are not returned or contact made (closing date was March 26th!!) please return to: [michellemcging@sanctamaria.ie](mailto:michellemcging@sanctamaria.ie)

## GO FUND ME to help with cost of materials for PPE

We are very proud of our two staff members Bob Reaney and Liam Murphy who came up with an initiative to help support frontline workers in Mayo in the fight against Covid-19 by the production and supply of personal protective equipment (PPE)

They started their production of visors for healthcare and frontline workers a few weeks ago and they have been inundated with requests for more.



The materials technology teachers came up with the idea as a response to a general plea for PPE. Sancta Maria had the equipment – a laser cutter and 3D printer - lying idle as students were at home, so they decided to make a contribution by producing face visors.

So far they have made 1300+ visor units, which have been distributed to many locations throughout the county, including Mayo University Hospital, The Sacred Heart Hospital,

Louisburgh Order of Malta, Cuan Chaitriaona Nursing Home, Louisburgh Primary Care Centre, Claremorris Primary Care Centre, Claremorris Garda Station, Malvern Medical Centre, Westport Garda Station, McBride Home Westport, Mayo Physiotherapists, Moy Ridge Nursing Home, Hollymount Nursing Home, Cheshire Nursing Home, Castlebar Garda Station, Ballinamore Nursing Home Kiltimagh, Queen of Peace Nursing Home Knock, HSE paramedics and many local pharmacies to date.



Now thanks to support from local agencies/schools they have acquired possession of some extra 3D printers which will speed up production to address the increasing demands. A big THANK YOU to Noel Billington, Bronwyn Harrington and our past student Tom Morrison who have all volunteered to help with the production and to Pauline Moran who continues to secure extra printers and materials. However with the increased demand and increased production the need to finance the corresponding cost of materials is growing fast.

**Sancta Maria is setting up a GoFundMe page in order to allay some of the rising expenses to help address the continued demand for this vital equipment. If you would like to contribute, the link is:**

**[https://www.gofundme.com/f/sancta-maria-material-for-ppe-fund?utm\\_source=customer&utm\\_medium=copy\\_link&utm\\_campaign=p\\_cf+share-flow-1](https://www.gofundme.com/f/sancta-maria-material-for-ppe-fund?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1)**

