

Coláiste Pobail na Mainistreach
Bóthar na Mainistreach An Port Mór Portlárige X91 PC91
Príomhoide: Michelle Ní Sheafraidh
Leas-Phríomhoide: Colm de Rís
Leas-Phríomhoide: Helen Ní Chonchubhair
Leas-Phríomhoide: Laura Ní Ghiolla Fhídraig

Abbey Community College
Abbey Road Ferrybank Waterford X91 PC91
Principal: Michelle Jefford
Deputy Principal: Colm Rice
Deputy Principal: Helen O'Connor
Deputy Principal: Laura Fitzpatrick



3rd April 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students of Abbey Community College,

We want to take this opportunity to wish you all a restful Easter break. Undoubtedly, it has been a very challenging few weeks for everyone (parents, teachers and students alike) since our school closure on March 12th 2020. During these last few weeks, all of us have had to make significant adjustments to our lives in general and our daily routines.

We have witnessed the migration of all school activities to online platforms and kitchen tables around the country have become a hive of activity for students of all ages as they are being transformed into classrooms between meal-times! Well done to everyone on adapting to these changes, you are all doing great work.

New Challenges

We are aware that our staff, students and their families are facing a wide variety of challenges in these unprecedented times e.g.:

- You or family members may be self-isolating
- Family members may be ill
- Limited WiFi access/access to electronic devices
- Family members working on the front line
- Job losses/financial strain
- Baby-sitting younger siblings
- Looking after elderly relatives and friends that are cocooning

Your teachers and their families have similar challenges. Each of us understands the challenges that collectively we face. Keeping our country safe and well requires the very best of all of us at this tough time.

You may be facing some personal circumstances that we are not aware of? If appropriate, please consider letting a teacher know about these circumstances (via private message on Teams or email), as there may be some way that your teacher or someone else on staff can help. **If we don't know, we can't help!**

Students in Exam Years

We understand that the lack of certainty around school closures and state exams may be causing anxiety for some of our students and indeed their families.

We were glad to hear the Taoiseach, Mr. Leo Varadkar, telling us at yesterday's press conference that plans are being drawn up to ensure both the Leaving Certificate exams and Junior Certificate exams will go ahead this year. The Minister for Education & Skills, Mr. Joe McHugh and the State Examinations Commission are drawing up options to allow the State exams to be held. The Taoiseach said there are a "*number of options*" and Minister McHugh is working to ensure that "*by hook or by crook*" the exams take place.

Easter Holidays

Today Friday 3rd April 2020, you begin your Easter Holidays. After the last few weeks, we know that you, your family and all of your teachers will need this break to re-charge the batteries.

Some of your teachers may be setting you work to complete during the Easter holidays but neither you nor they will be in school (this includes distant teaching and learning) during the two-week holiday.

Contacting the School

As all staff are now working from home, school telephone lines are no longer being answered, therefore the only contact to use is info@abbeycommunitycollege.com

Keep Active and Connected

On the last page of this letter there is *An Active Coping Calendar for April 2020* published by Action for Happiness, which you might find useful.

As a school, we understand that the lack of certainty around school closures and state exams may be causing anxiety for some of our students, and indeed their families. We advise all our students and their families in the coming weeks to look after your mental health. There are two keep ways to help with that:

keep active



keep connected



Over the last three weeks and indeed during our Wellbeing Week, our teachers have been promoting many opportunities and ideas on-line for keeping **active** and **connected**.

You are also reminded to keep **connected** to your family and friends. You can stay apart but still stay connected.

Remember to include members of your year group that might not have as big a circle of friends as you have.

We all look forward to returning to our school with normal classes and exam preparations as soon as we can.

You will, these last few weeks, have realised that, although technology is a wonderful thing, there is no substitute for personal human interaction and face-to-face contact. We believe when this crisis passes, we will all cherish even more than before our 'real world' relationships with family and friends.

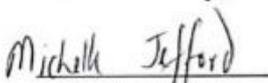
Please take care of yourself and those closest to you and be assured of the continued support of all the staff here for you, our students, parents and guardians.

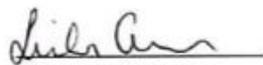
On Monday 30th March 2020, the President of Ireland, Mr. Michael D. Higgins said:

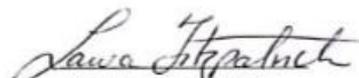
"The days ahead will be difficult, for all of us, but what a memory it will be when the virus has passed, to know that we gave of our best. Let us not forget ever that we are not travelling through the darkness alone, but that we are on this journey together."

To all who are working on the front line, including members of our community of Abbey Community College, we want to say thank you for all that you are doing.

Yours sincerely,


Michelle Jefford


Linda Cummins


Laura Fitzpatrick


Colm Rice



ACTIVE COPING CALENDAR: APRIL 2020



SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

"Everything can be taken from us but one thing: the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances" ~ Viktor Frankl

5 Get active. Even if you're stuck indoors, move & stretch

6 Contact a neighbour or friend and offer to help them

7 Share what you are feeling and be willing to ask for help

8 Take five minutes to sit still and breathe. Repeat regularly

9 Call a loved one to catch up and really listen to them

10 Get good sleep. No screens before bed or when waking up

11 Notice five things that are beautiful in the world around you

12 Immerse yourself in a new book, TV show or podcast

13 Respond positively to everyone you interact with

14 Play a game that you enjoyed when you were younger

15 Make some progress on a project that matters to you

16 Rediscover your favourite music that really lifts your spirits

17 Learn something new or do something creative

18 Find a fun way to do an extra 15 minutes of physical activity

19 Do three acts of kindness to help others, however small

20 Make time for self-care. Do something kind for yourself

21 Send a letter or message to someone you can't be with

22 Find positive stories in the news and share these with others

23 Have a tech-free day. Stop scrolling and turn off the news

24 Put your worries into perspective and try to let them go

25 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths

26 Take a small step towards an important goal

27 Thank three people you're grateful to and tell them why

28 Make a plan to meet up with others again later in the year

29 Connect with nature. Breathe and notice life continuing

30 Remember that all feelings and situations pass in time



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS



www.actionforhappiness.org

30 actions to look after ourselves and each other as we face this global crisis together

Keep Calm - Stay Wise - Be Kind