



12th February, 2021

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

I hope you are all well at this time.

Thank you: We have reached the end of a very busy 5 weeks. The last half term has been unprecedented. I'm very proud of the efforts of management, of staff and of pupils. As a school, we understand explicitly the energy it takes to keep all the balls in the air. Maintaining continuity of learning would not be possible without the support and encouragement of parents/guardians- thank you.

Wellbeing is paramount: As a school we understand the myriad of family contexts some of you are experiencing at present. Some of which may include:

- A poor IT infrastructure
- Poor broadband
- Care of young children
- Care of second and third level students, and stress due to uncertainty around exam arrangements and work placements
- Care and support of elderly relatives and neighbours
- Working from home and needing quiet time to do so
- Living with/being a frontline/essential worker family member
- Experiencing illness or isolation in your home
- Sudden unemployment of family members
- General anxiety and stress around the current unprecedented situation

While school work is important and a level of engagement is expected, it is not the be all and end all. The wellbeing of your family is paramount at this time.

Support is available: Our expectations of our pupils are high but our aim is always to make remote learning as achievable as possible for all. As has been outlined in the past, if you are having difficulty, please do make contact. All teachers have issued and reissued their school email addresses. The purpose of this facility is to answer any questions or queries you may have with regard to your daughter's schooling at present. When emailing please allow time for staff to respond. Please be mindful that staff are committed to supporting you and your daughter at this time but they too are coming from and dealing with the same myriad of contexts outlined above. Your patience and understanding is, as always, very much appreciated.

Remote Learning Hall of Fame: During the last school closure the Remote Learning Hall of Fame was established whereby families were invited to email a photo of their daughter's best/most special/favourite/most fun/most pride inducing piece of work that they have completed during lockdown. It might be a photo of a project completed, an art piece completed, a special cake baked, a letter written etc... Parents/Guardians are invited to do so again this time around by emailing a photo to office@stmarysnscobh.com. By emailing the photo to this address parents/guardians are giving consent for the photo to be shared on the school website. You may choose to have your daughter in the image, you may not, the choice is yours. But you are asked not to have your daughter's name appear in the image



please. Photos will be uploaded to the website each week for the duration of the school closure. The children really enjoyed sharing their work in this way- we look forward to facilitating this for them again.

Staff training: Staff will attend training in the afternoon of Wednesday, 24th February. Staff will be available to answer queries and provide feedback on work submitted up to 1.00pm on this date.

Staffing: Best wishes to Ms. Katie Hallahan who commences maternity leave after the midterm break. We welcome Ms. Eimhear Desmond who will cover Ms. Hallahan's leave for the duration of her absence this school year. Ms. Desmond is very much looking forward to introducing herself to 1st/2nd Class this week and working with 1st/2nd Class after midterm.

In-Person Supplementary Support Programme: Contact has been made with all families for whom their daughter is eligible for this programme. Thank you to those who have responded. I will be in touch with the interested families regarding the sourcing of a Teacher/SNA for this programme.

Midterm break: There's no denying that it's challenging to keep remote learning going- especially when we don't have a date for when schools will re-open. A break is needed for everyone at this stage- especially for children. Midterm break should provide everyone with an opportunity to switch off and re-charge. Staff will be back on 22nd February with continued creativity, commitment and dedication to supporting and facilitating your daughter's learning at this time.

Wishing you all a safe and happy midterm break.

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Fiona O'Callaghan