



St. Malachy's College

36 Antrim Road, Belfast BT15 2AE



18 March 2020

Covid-19 update

Dear Parent/Carer

The guidance from the Department of Education still stipulates that “schools will continue to stay open until such time as expert scientific advice changes.” The decision has been taken to move forward another two of our School Development Days which were scheduled for later in this academic year. Therefore, Thursday 19 and Friday 20 March 2020 will now be School Development Days, and so pupils are not to attend school on these days.

It is understandable that parents of GCSE and A-level students are concerned about what is going to happen regarding formal assessments and examinations. CCEA have stated:

“At this time CCEA’s position remains that students should prepare for examinations as usual. In preparation for potential school closure, I (Justin Edwards, CCEA) encourage you to take the following action:

- ***Centres should make all efforts to focus on completing courses of study including controlled assessments as soon as possible.***
- ***Any change to public examinations must be subsequent to any public health decisions with options and advice to the Minister of Education in the first instance. CCEA will continue to adhere to the direction and guidance issued by the Department of Education.***
- ***CCEA will provide regular updates to centres and publish key information via its website.”***

Although teachers have been working hard to complete as much of the courses as possible, there is no way that we can expect all subjects/departments to have completed their courses and controlled assessments at this stage, and before the official deadline. This will have to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that all subject teachers will be available for work now due to the Public Health Organisation’s advice on self-isolation. I am already aware that many of our schools are impacted negatively due to staff having to go into isolation. CCEA and the Minister for Education will again be made aware of this, and also that even now, there will be students who are self-isolating. It is imperative that none of our students are disadvantaged due to these circumstances, and we have been informed that processes will be in place to ensure this does not happen.

In our endeavours to complete as much of the examination courses as possible, our ICT platforms are being used.

As I have already stated in my previous correspondence to you, **KS4 & 5 Google Classroom** has been in use already for the majority of classes and students. In most cases students have signed up and are diligently using the support that it provides. However, some students have not signed up. It is important that all our exam students are now using these resources.

It is essential, if your son has not signed up to Google Classroom that he does so promptly. All instructions for using Google Classroom and accessing c2k email are available on the College website within the student portal. If your son does not have the correct class code to sign up for Google Classroom he should email his subject teacher who will send this to him. On receiving the class code he must sign up within 24 hours. Subject teachers will be contactable during school hours to respond to queries and support students through Google Classroom or c2k email. A list of teachers’ emails can be also found in the student portal within the College website. If any student requires assistance in re-setting his c2k email password please contact the

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College ICT Manager, Mr Kevin O'Kane (kokane550@c2ken.net) or, if he is unavailable, Mrs Stewart, Vice Principal (lstewart776@c2ken.net).

It is emphasized that these School Development Days, and the period of when we will close, should be used most productively by all of us. Teachers and staff will be working during the school hours, and our boys should do likewise. Our Malachians should be disciplined in their approach to life, tending to their needs and those of others. By following a good routine of school work and study there will be less of a temptation to ignore the guidance on social distancing. This cannot be stressed enough – for their own welfare and the health of others within the community! Also, please oversee your son's positive use of the technology and resources available. Thank-you again for your continued support of College life and for maintaining a deep interest in your son's education. We must continue to remain positive and strong as we face the current challenges. We will also continue to keep in our prayers those who have been directly affected by Covid-19 and medical professionals at the forefront of treating those who have this virus.

Please note updated information may be accessed through:

- College website
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter account
- ParentApp

Yours sincerely

Paul McBride
Principal

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