

St Mary's C.B.S.
Boris Road,
Portlaoise,
Co Laois



Phone: 057 8635041

Principal: Ms Maura Murphy
Deputy Principal: Mr Brian Thompson
Deputy Principal: Mr Cyril Mulligan

14th June 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Firstly, I want to thank all of you, on behalf of myself, our DP's Mr. Mulligan and Mr. Thompson, the Board of Management, Office Staff and Teaching Staff for your support and resilience during these past 15 months. The spirit of cooperation was always obvious. It made the hard days so much easier. A small bit of patience and a smile went very far when we had close contact calls to make, Public Health risk assessments and just the daily grind of mask wearing and hand sanitisers at every turn. Your sons were great. They just got on with it. And the many 6th years attending each day for their LC Exams are still doing just that. You can be proud of them.

Unfortunately, Covid is not gone away entirely. Due to this, we are planning for the August/September return to school with most of the same guidelines and practices in place, until we are told otherwise, hopefully later in the school year. What will school look like on August 26th when the 1st years first attend?

- There will still be 2 lunch breaks and 2 morning breaks.
- Windows and doors in classrooms will be open every day.
- Student lockers are still in container storage, and the 2nd – 6th years will continue to bring / carry their textbooks. New 1st years WILL have upstairs lockers.
- New classes in 1st year are being kept smaller than past years so as to avoid overflow lessons in the Library.
- The Library overflow room will remain for students in classes over 24 at any given time.
- iPads will be provided to those students who are sent there for their use – the class they came from will be live-streamed for them to follow on their iPad– using only their own earphones. The devices will be returned at the end of the class to the Library Supervisor.
- Larger senior classes will be prioritized for the 6 largest classrooms in the school, as we did last year, to avoid having sending students to the Library overflow.
- The Dept of Education are promising us carbon dioxide meters for September, to check our classrooms regularly for high levels of CO2. The purpose of this is to keep open not just windows but also doors, where possible.
- This is where the **SCHOOL JACKET** and a new **PE UNIFORM** comes in. Last year, due to Covid-19, our uniform became almost a casual affair. Guidelines prevented us using changing rooms and we adapted by allowing students wear black track suit bottoms and tops on PE days. We also allowed students to wear any black jacket in the classroom. But this year we want to reinforce the wearing of the CBS uniform all day, every day, for every class.

- PE, which is twice weekly for most students, and more often for those who have chosen LCPE as a 5th year option, may not have changing room access again this year. We have a new O'Neill's **CBS half zip and black track suit bottoms**, available in SHAWS, which is to be worn by all students on the day of their PE classes.
- This year, the only jacket to be worn inside the school is the **CBS School Jacket**, available in SHAWS, price €60. When students need a jacket in class due to windows/doors being open, they must wear the school jacket, only. No names will be sewn into them, as in past years, so when you purchase, you will take it home with you.
- We acknowledge that parents/guardians may not be happy to learn of this new expense, however, the price of the popular trendy brands, to be changed on a weekly basis by style conscious teenagers, is far more expensive over the school year. The half zip is €44 (not in stock until the first week of August) and the bottoms (in stock soon) are €25. Any size under 12-13 will be €20. We are asking you to work with us on this. Uniform is a small detail, but it does contribute to a mindset that 'this is school'. Wearing whatever happens to be there in the morning, and not being proud of the uniform they wear and identify with it, is a negative contribution to the mindset required to do their best in school. We ask for and appreciate your full support.
- The continued use of our Microsoft Teams platform for school teaching, learning and communication is certain. If your son has a device, such as a tablet, laptop or PC at home, we encourage you to have it ready to go for his homework and home study from September. If you have an iPad at home, which does not have the Wriggle Management Profile on it, your son cannot use it in school. It will only be for home use. He will need his texts in school.
- Again, we encourage the purchase of the Wriggle managed iPad, to avoid the weighty bags, allow the students to have ready access to their files on MS Teams not just in the evening, but during class under the teacher's instruction. Teachers will usually allow students to use their phones under their direction on a certain App, but those screens are quite small and tiresome over a school day. As you are aware, none of us, in any walk of life or business, can do our work/study without the use of screens, online files, communicating, etc. This is the new normal. We cannot have non-managed devices in school, it brings problems. If it is possible, please do consider an iPad, if you haven't already.
- Please submit the [Re-Admission form via the School App](#) in the coming week. It is for the organization of classes, which must be completed soon.
- We want to thank all the parents/guardians who have paid the Voluntary Contribution so far. Your contribution is very much appreciated. We would also ask those who haven't yet done so, to please consider paying (it on the App). It will allow us to continue providing the many extra services we have in place for both parents/guardians and students, including this App.
- The School Office will close on Friday June 25th and reopen on August 9th. All contact should be made on the school email or if urgent to my Principal's email.
- During the summer months, information for the Principal should be emailed directly to mmurphy@portlaoise.com. I will reply if it's urgent, otherwise I will take July off from school business. But I will check it each day. Information which can be dealt with on my return after the August Weekend, will be replied to and dealt with then. This includes any requests for subject changes which can easily wait until August. Thank you for your understanding.
- Please note that school's new email is stmarys@portlaoisecbs.com. It had to be changed last winter as the original one was no longer working properly.
- All payments are now online via the School App/ Shop.
- All subject payments which were previously given to the class teacher in September, will now be made online, via the App.
- All announcements will be made on the School App/ Notifications so please look at least once a week to see if there is something to read over the summer.

- The School Calendar is currently up on VShare and will put up this week. This includes the parent teacher meetings, days off, what day your son returns to school, holiday breaks, etc. They will all be there by the end of this week. We are not sending out a paper calendar. They are already on the website, under Parents Tab/School Year Calendar.
- Booklists are in Allbooks Shop, on the website, and on this App under Shop / Bookstore
- The App company Unique have worked closely with Allbooks Portlaoise to develop an online bookshop purchase and delivery system for parents this year. It is only new this week. If interested, please check it out under the 3 lines / Shop / Bookstore. It may save you a few hours in town someday when you could be doing something nicer!
- Book Rental for 2nd years must first be paid for online – this is €75 for 2nd year and there will be no further fee or book exchange in 3rd year. These books (English, Maths, Irish, some language, and others) will be distributed when students return to school – but only after full payment. The Irish and Maths texts will not be distributed until the levels of the students are determined in early September. These decisions are mainly based on the 1st year Reports and advice from their class teachers.
- Those students going into 3rd year who have Book Rental do nothing, just keep the books you had in 2nd year for 3rd year.
- Parents purchasing texts for 2nd years should not buy the Irish or Maths books until their son is settled in either higher or ordinary level in September.
- Parents whose sons want ebooks for their device, are also meant to purchase the textbook and use the code inside the cover – and they should also wait until mid-September before purchasing these 2 subjects of Maths and Irish.
- There is no Book Rental for 5th years.
- All Reports have been made available through VShare, which you can easily access through the school App.

I think I have covered most topics which people want to know about each year. All changes will be put up as Notifications on the App. Please check it throughout the summer, especially in August.

I wish you all a relaxing summer ahead, one where we reclaim something of our old 'normal' lives, families and friends. Take care.

Kind regards,



Maura Murphy
Principal