



Scoil phobail beal Acha h-Ambhnaís

BALLYHAUNIS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

David McDonagh *Principal*

Orla Macken *Deputy Principal*

Dear Parent/Guardian/Student,

I hope you are keeping well.

Last evening we received confirmation of the phased return to school starting with Leaving Certificate Students on March 1st. While this news is very welcome it is absolutely essential that we all follow closely the public health guidelines that are in place. This is necessary to ensure the safety of all stakeholders.

It is also important to remember that we are returning to a different situation than what pertained before Christmas. The arrival of new variants which are proving to be more transmissible requires us all to be even more careful than we were previously. To ensure everyone's Health & Safety the following guidelines must be observed:

Students/Staff should not attend school in the event of the following:

- if they or any member of the household display any signs or symptoms of Covid-19. In situations such as this you are advised to self-isolate and contact your GP
- if they are identified by the HSE as a close contact of a confirmed case of Covid-19
- if they have travelled outside of Ireland recently

Staff and students are expected to co-operate with any public health officials and the school for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice in the event of a case or outbreak in the school.

We will also continue to implement the safety measures introduced last September. Students and staff are required to:

- Maintain regular hand hygiene;
- Maintain physical distancing;
- Apply appropriate respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette; and
- Maintain environmental hygiene.

As before students will be required to wear face coverings.

It is a requirement that teachers, staff and students attending post primary schools wear a face covering when a physical distance of 2m from other staff or students cannot be maintained. This applies both indoors and outdoors.

All students on the post primary transport scheme should wear face coverings unless there is a good reason not to do so.

Wearing a face covering or mask does not negate the need to stay at home if symptomatic.

Face coverings should be changed and refreshed regularly.

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Leaving certificate 2021

The announcement by Minister Foley last week in relation to the Leaving Certificate 2021 brought much needed certainty for students. However, the detail in what this means in relation to Oral/Practical Exams has yet to filter down to schools. We will bring this to you as soon as it arrives.

Mock Exams

We are in the process of making arrangements for the holding of the Mock Exams. It is felt that these exams are a necessary part of preparation for students opting to sit the exams in June. It must be remembered that it has been three years since some of our LC students have sat State Exams. Exposure to State Exam style conditions will be a serious asset to students who wish to sit some or all of their exams in the summer.

Students opting for accredited grades will not be obliged to sit mock exams.

As time is of the essence these exams will begin on March 12th. A Timetable for these exams will issue early next week.

We understand that this has been an exceptionally stressful time for many. We will do everything we can to assist and support our students in the next number of weeks. To that end please do not hesitate to contact us if your circumstances have changed in recent weeks.

We look forward to having our students and staff back in school next week. If we work together and follow all guidelines I am confident that it will be a safe and rewarding return for all.

Regards,

David McDonagh