

Dear Parents/Guardians of Years 12, 13 and 14

Welcome Back

We are delighted to be welcoming back our examination year groups from Monday 22 March. Seeing each other, talking to each other, re-establishing real time relationships is just what we have all been waiting for. Enjoy.

We will also be doing everything possible to keep ourselves and each other safe. The last thing we want is for anyone to have to self-isolate again. All our COVID safety measures will be in place: sanitising station in the Sports Hall; our one-way system; our 2m distancing for staff; our extra study space; windows open (wear your vest!); 6th form students on individual timetable including home study. You will find our updated Restart document on the 20/21 button on the Shimna website. Remember that if a student develops COVID symptoms, s/he should not come to school, should self-isolate, book a test and follow the Public Health Authority guidelines, which you will also find on the Shimna website.

There will be two additional measures:

- Staff and students will wear their mask at all times. Your support will be much appreciated in reminding your daughter/son to bring at least two masks which s/he is reasonably comfortable wearing – nobody is completely comfortable wearing any mask! And don't forget to wash them every evening;
- Staff and students in years 12-14 will all learn how to take a COVID test, and be provided with test kits to use at home. Getting everyone tested will provide another layer of security for us all.

Getting Down to Work

We know that students have done everything they can to work well in lockdown, and many will have plenty of evidence already for teachers to use to arrive at a grade. Next week will be a chance for students to talk to teachers about the evidence they have in place and what they can still do. Some students have had additional difficulties to deal with: unreliable wifi; sharing a computer; difficulty with understanding a particular piece of learning; anxiety; getting COVID; looking after a family member etc. It is important that students talk to their teachers about what has been going on for them. There will be assessment opportunities in every subject after Easter, and next week is the opportunity for teachers to explain to students what will be happening and how best to prepare. Students should be reassured that the work they have completed during lockdown will count towards their grade.

Careers Interviews for Year 12s

All of our year 12s have now had their invitation to interview, and most students were able to attend on Zoom. Our 6th form careers adviser, Alicia Rooney, will catch up with those students who were unable to attend. Even though we are back in school next week, students should use email wherever possible to ask any questions to teachers about subjects at A level. Our DEL careers adviser Claire Toner will continue to contact year 12 students who need advice about applying to further education, apprenticeships or training placements.

Students Looking After Themselves and Each Other

We have each had very different experiences during lockdown. For some families boredom has been the main issue, and at the other extreme some families have been living through very stressful times indeed. Some families have seen too much of each other and some not enough. Some students have plenty of work under their belt, and some are quite seriously worried about how they will complete the evidence they need. We need to be good to each other, all the while observing social distancing, which is a real challenge. Students are assured that all our support channels are still open. Our counselling service is operating and appointments can be made by emailing Danella at dgoodman939@c2kni.net Remember that our Shimna website includes a wealth of helplines and sources of support under the 20/21 button.

Keep safe and well.

Best regards

Kevin