



Coláiste Dún an Rí

Kingscourt, Co.Cavan

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Dear Parents and Students,

I would like to wish you all a Happy New Year and I hope that you were able to enjoy the Christmas break in as much as possible given the circumstances that have surrounded us. Unfortunately, we find ourselves back in the same situation we had to deal with last March and the Minister for Education has announced that schools will remain closed for the duration of January with 'remote learning' taking place. This is not what any of us wanted, it places huge stress and challenges on each and every one of us. It is, however, a situation that is necessary and if there is any consolation it's the fact that we are in this together and we are, hopefully, better prepared to deal with it than we were last springtime. I need all parents and students to realise that 'remote learning' is not ideal and it is a remedial substitute for in-school teaching and learning.

I have placed some information on the website for you to access and I hope that this will answer as many queries as possible. In addition to this letter you will find the school's Remote Learning Policy and a video clip with information about what we hope to do to get through this period. Below I have detailed some of the questions you may have.

When will remote learning start?

Remote learning will commence on Monday 11 January. The teacher training scheduled for Monday 11 January has been postponed until Thursday 21 January.

What will the day structure look like?

Students will use Teams to attend class at their normal class times. All students are in a Team for each subject. In the case of a 'live' class the teacher will schedule a Team appointment for each student to join at the time of their class or will assign work to be completed and submitted via Teams at that time.

How will lessons be delivered?

The delivery of lessons may take a number of forms.

In some cases, teachers may present live lessons and give students instructions as per the classroom setting. In some cases, parts of the lesson may be pre-recorded by the teacher e.g. a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher online instruction part of the lesson may last for part of the normal 58-minute period. This will be to allow students complete work assigned and allow the teacher to interact individually with students if this is necessary.

In other cases, teachers may assign work for students to do for the class period. This work may be written work, research work, learning work and so on. Some teachers may not have access to broadband and this method is necessary in these circumstances.

The general model developing for remote teaching and learning is a 50/50 with 'live' interaction taking place 50% of the time.

Will all lessons be 'live'?

Not all lessons will be live. This is because some teachers may not have access to reliable broadband and also, in the circumstances, some teachers will have to balance family care matters. I'm thinking particularly in the case where teachers have young children at home and will have to care for and school them during this time.

Can classes be recorded by students?

No. It is illegal to make a recording of classes or the teacher without the express permission of the teacher.

Will students be able to use the camera function on Teams?

No. As part of CMETB policy this function has been disabled on student Teams.

Will any special arrangements be made for exam classes?

Teachers will continue to teach the specifications outlined for the Junior and Senior Cycle. As part of the Junior Cycle programme Classroom Based Assessments are required, these will still take place, but we will be given guidance on how to conduct these assessments. Once we get this guidance, we will inform students on the process.

How will students with Special Education Needs be supported?

In so far as practical and feasible SEN students will continue to be supported under the model for SEN provision. Students will get in class support and differentiation. Student who get small class support of team-teaching support will continue to receive the same. This will be done through Teams in the same way as the timetabled classes are set up. In some cases, separate Teams classes will be set up to meet with students to give them support.

If parents have any queries, they should contact mariamcevov@colaistedunanri.ie

Can students who have Special Education Needs come in to school?

No. Initially the Minister directed that students enrolled in ASD classes would attend school. This decision has now been reversed.

What will students do where practical classwork is required?

In subjects like Engineering and Science for example practical work is required. Teachers will work to engage students with some practical engagement e.g. Home Ec cooking and crafts. This is a challenge, but we will endeavour to work around it. In many cases teachers will focus on the theory elements required for each subject.

What if I can't get logged in or can't access a class?

Let the teacher know via email that you can't get in and we will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible. In the meantime, continue on with work assigned by the teacher or related to the subject area.

What if the teacher is 'absent'?

In some cases, teachers may not be able to take a class or assign work due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances. While we will do our very best to have a substitute teacher in place it may not be possible to do this given the circumstances. If we have a situation where we do not have a teacher for a class, we will let students know in advance where possible.

I have left books/equipment in school, what do I do?

While we did say to students to bring everything home before Christmas this may not have been possible for every student. If a student has left books or equipment in school, then they can contact the school and make an appointment to call in and get the books. Alternatively, they can ask teachers to scan the required pages and forward them to the student. Students or parents may not call to the school without an appointment. We can only admit one person to the school at any one time.

I have no or poor broadband at home and can't access classes, what do I do?

This is a major challenge for students and the school. The only solution we have is to try and forward work to students as best we can either through email. If any student has this problem they should let their Class Tutor know via email (classtutorname@colaistedunanri.ie) or their teacher know and we will try to do our best. In some cases students may have Xbox or Play Station devices and Teams can be accessed there (see <https://youtu.be/CiNzN8QxIRI>). For completing and returning work students can take photos and forward the completed work to their teacher. In some cases, students travel to a point once a day where they can assess wireless broadband and complete their downloads and uploads at that time.

I haven't been added to a Team for my class, what do I do?

All students should be added to their subject Team. If a student sees that they are not in a Team for a particular subject they should let their teacher know immediately by email and we will try to address the matter (teachername@colaistedunanri.ie).

What do I do if my Team is not working properly or I can't log in?

Contact the school immediately or email your Class Tutor to let them know.

What do I do if I don't have access to a device?

Teams can be accessed on any digital device (including Xbox or Playstation – see this link <https://youtu.be/CiNzN8QxIRI>). In many cases there might be no device or only one device in a home where a number of users need access. There is little the school can do in this circumstance other than ask you to let us know via Class Tutors. The only thing we can suggest is that students try and keep up with the material being covered and keep in communication with teachers. We may have a limited number of devices that we can loan to students and if we are in a position to do this then we will try our best.

There's too much going on at home for me to concentrate or attend classes, what can I do?

If there is a home circumstance (illness, assisting with child care) that means that students can't get work done at home we ask parents to let us know by contacting your child's Year Head (yearheadname@colaistedunanri.ie)

As a parent, how do I communicate with the school?

Where possible the school admin office will be open so you can phone or email as usual if you have a concern. If you need to talk to a Class Tutor or Year Head, then you can either call the school or email the Class Tutor or Year Head requesting a call back. We kindly ask that any communication takes place before 4pm.

As a student, how do I communicate with the school/teachers?

We encourage all students to keep in communication with teachers. The best way to do that is by email.

How will the school communicate with home?

There will be daily communication via Teams. For information updates and points of note we will contact parents via text messages and notifications on the Website (www.colaistedunanri.ie). We will also endeavour to keep in contact with parents via phone calls from our Tutors and Year Heads.

I am worried about exams and schoolwork, what do I do?

It is natural to be worried about exams and schoolwork. At this point in time there is no need for any of our students to be unduly worried about exams. We will advise and inform students and parents as necessary when we have more information with regard to exams. If you are finding the schoolwork overwhelming, then let your teacher or Class Tutor know and we can take a look at things. It's important to remember that every student in the country is in the same situation.

What do I do if I am finding it difficult to cope with the whole situation?

If you are finding it difficult to cope with things, the best advice is to talk. Talk to your parents, teacher, Class Tutor or the Guidance Counsellor, Ms Cumiskey (sharoncumiskey@colaistedunanri.ie). It is hugely important that you look after your physical and mental health during this time,

I know that you will still have many questions that are unanswered, but this is the best we can do for now. Remote teaching and learning is not the same as the real thing, but we will do our best. There will be teething problems, that's understandable.

This situation places additional responsibility on students to be present and engaged with the work and undertake independent learning. The important thing is that students engage in the work as much as possible.

As many of our teachers, myself included, are parents of young children who will also be missing the school environment and will need constant supervision and school support at home, I understand completely the challenges and stresses that this presents as we also try to do our jobs and keep going. We will do our best and I know that you understand that we are doing our best in the circumstances. If you have queries or concerns, please let us know and we will try to resolve any issues. In the meantime, I encourage everyone to follow the COVID 19 regulations and hope that we all come through this safely.

Thank you once again for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fergal Boyle', written over a horizontal line.

Fergal Boyle
Principal