



Loreto Secondary School

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your family safe and well. This year saw great changes in how education is delivered and your daughter demonstrated resilience and an admirable commitment to blended learning during this challenging time in Irish education. While the use of G-Suite and Google Classroom allowed teaching and learning to continue at a high level during the pandemic, it also enabled our students to develop skills and confidence in the use of technology to support their learning. We are hugely grateful to you, your daughter and her teachers for embracing this new way of learning.

In addition to our continued use of G-Suite (including Google Classroom) to support student learning, we are delighted this September to launch our new education management tool and app called *Compass*. Information and training on the use of this app will be included for parents and guardians at our Information Nights for Parents (week 13th -17th Sept). All students will also receive training on the use of the Compass school app as well as the continued use of G-Suite applications.

Unfortunately, Covid19 is still prevalent in our society therefore all public health guidelines must be adhered to in order to ensure the safety of all our students. This includes the wearing of face-coverings, physical distancing, cough/sneeze etiquette and regular hand washing which will continue to be part of our school life upon our return to school in late August.

Walking/cycling to school for all our students is encouraged as much as possible. If students are being driven to school, parents/guardians are asked not to drive on to the school premises to drop their daughter off. Student safety is paramount, large volumes of traffic on the school grounds at these busy times can compromise our students' safety. As per public health guidelines we encourage our students to adopt physical-distancing and go outdoors during non-teaching and learning time therefore the students use the school grounds throughout the day.

We pride ourselves on our school uniform. It identifies our students as being part of a Loreto community. Students will be expected to wear full school uniform upon their return, in accordance with our student dress code. (Please refer to the student code of dress in the school journal for guidelines on the wearing of the school uniform, particularly in relation to personal grooming in advance of returning to school in August)

An exception to our mobile phone policy was facilitated during the year 2020/21 as part of our Covid Response Plan. While mobile phones were useful in some instances during online learning, we do not encourage mobile phones exclusively as a learning device while in school.

For the academic year 2021/22 mobile devices are not permitted during break and lunchtimes in Loreto Bray.

The rationale for this change comes from current research which suggests that ;

- Phones can act as a “breeding ground” for cyber-bullying and social media can damage mental health
- Outside the classroom, the use of mobile phones distracts from healthy exercise and face to face interactions
- Research has shown that people who turned to their smartphones at break time and lunchtime ended up feeling worse than those who avoided electronic entertainment
- Mental timeouts are essential for keeping students focused and productive, unlike taking a walk or chatting with friends, scrolling through apps on a smartphone saps cognitive resources rather than restoring them.

Rhee, H., & Kim, S. (2016). Effects of breaks on regaining vitality at work: An empirical comparison of 'conventional' and 'smart phone' breaks. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 57, 160-167. doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.11.056

During the year 2021/22, we will engage with students, parents and staff as stakeholders in Loreto Bray to devise a comprehensive, safe, relevant and workable *Digital Devices Usage Plan*. The new plan will build on our past experience and reflect best practice in the use of technology and digital devices for learning, teaching and wellbeing in Loreto Secondary School, Bray.

In Loreto Bray we acknowledge that our sixth year students are our leaders therefore they enjoy the privilege of leaving the school premises to visit Tesco shopping centre on Vevay Road during lunchtime. This privilege is **only** for the sixth year students.

The booklists for 2021-22 are now posted on our website and we are currently finalising our calendar for 2021-22 and this will be posted on the website in the coming days.

On behalf of the Loreto school community here in Bray, I would like to wish you and your family a safe and joyful summer. We look forward to welcoming all our students back to school in August 2021.

Yours sincerely,



Emma Raughter

Principal