

Principal's Report for Annual General Meeting

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all at the outset of this report. In any other year in September we would have held an Annual General Meeting where we welcome all parents to an evening during which we give a brief report on life in Loreto Balbriggan followed by a speaker on a subject relevant to parents of school going teenagers.

It is also an opportunity for parents to be in the school where their daughter attends every day. During this meeting we invite any parent who wishes to join the parents association to do so. The parents association is a vital part of school life here in Loreto Balbriggan. Parent voice is crucial to what we do as parents are the prime educators of their children. I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all those parents who give of their time to the PA and pay particular thanks to those who finished up last June. Your contribution is very much appreciated. All are welcome to join, simply email gbarnett@loretobalbriggan.ie.

School life continues here under COVID restrictions in a very changed environment. Due to the work of the dedicated, enthusiastic and driven staff and our wonderful student body the environment remains as positive, uplifting and inspirational as ever.

The students have been extraordinary during these challenging times, proving to be courteous, engaged and very supportive in all we do here as we adapt to life under COVID restrictions. Their school experience has changed dramatically but they remain cheerful, compliant and agreeable through it all and are working very hard.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff who are doing their utmost to maintain the high standards whilst operating under very difficult circumstances and consistently working to ensure the very best educational experience for your daughter. We welcome new staff who hopefully someday will see Loreto Balbriggan at its very best.

So, let me just give you some idea of what has been going on in Loreto Balbriggan since the school re-opened its doors in Sept:

Following building work and a re-configuration of school equipment during a busy summer the school was ready in early September. As with every other school we implemented a response plan, following HSE and Department guidelines very carefully to ensure optimum health and safety for all. The list below gives you an idea of some of the steps taken in implementing the plan.

- All lockers and extra furniture have been removed and stored in containers or the gym.
- Students are now classroom based with teachers moving.
- Year groups are designated to specific areas and, where possible, assigned classrooms. Movement however is necessary for option subjects.
- Teacher lockers have been removed from rooms and put on corridors to maximize space.
- All rooms have a maximum of 24 desks, some with as few as 20. Where classes are over 24 students have to be assigned into pods (rotating) and sit on corridors, in social areas, in the hall and the atrium and teachers have to set work. 5th & 6th Years are prioritised in the hall

where chrome books are available and streaming from classrooms is possible. Three more sets of chrome books have been purchased.

- The students leave class on a rotating basis and have to be supervised.
- All desks are numbered and rolls have to be called with exact location of student recorded for contact tracing.
- Staff room is renovated and cleared of all kitchen ware. Seating is halved and no longer allocated.
- Staggered finish at the end of the day starting at 3.50 p.m.
- Significant increase in cleaning hours. Extra cleaners employed for longer hours.
- On return to school all students were given extra tuition during form class on living and coping with Covid 19 and safe hygiene habits.
- Significant increase in supervision for rotating pods and lunch and break time.
- Hand sanitisers and cleaning fluid and tissue made available in abundance throughout the school. Desks are wiped by the students before each class. Students are not permitted to leave their seats. Teacher must remain at the top of the class. Masks must be worn at all times.
- Lunch is eaten outside when possible. All doors and windows are kept open at all times to ensure.

The students have remained cheerful and supportive of all procedures which has made it possible to keep the school environment very safe for all despite some added discomfort as the weather gets colder. This is particularly relevant to those who are at risk or vulnerable. Your support is very much appreciated in this regard.

Academic

- The Leaving Cert results were excellent with the students performing exceptionally well with 2 students reaching 625 marks and eight over 600. The vast majority of the students did their personal best and reached their full potential and we are equally proud of each of them.
- Thanks to all the teachers for their work on calculated grades and congratulations to all students involved.
- There was great success in CAO with the vast majority of students getting a place in their chosen course.
- 7 students sitting the Leaving Cert in November and plans underway at present.
- No parent/teacher meetings this term. Detailed reports will be sent to 6th Year parents with follow on reports at Christmas after exams in November.
- Exam week will be held in November and reports will be with parents/guardians before Christmas.
- Classroom Based Assessments are continuing albeit a revised schedule as directed by the NCCA
- Leaving Certificate syllabus for 20/21 has been adapted to facilitate the 2021 students who have missed out over the past months.

Extra Curricular

- Young Scientist – we are proud to announce that all projects which were submitted to this year's BT Young Scientist Exhibition have been accepted and students are busy doing research and preparing projects. Of course, as with everything else BTYSE will be a virtual event. Well done to all involved – check website for details.
- Extra curricular activities are severely curtailed due to COVID restrictions. Despite this the junior English Debating club continue to meet every Tuesday & Thursday at lunchtime. Thanks to Miss O'Doherty and Miss Byrne. They are preparing for UCD debates which will be held via Zoom.
- Many TY activities continue – they are too detailed to outline here: check the website under extra curricular or TY to get a flavour of events. A link to the Transition Year Newsletter [posted here](#) will give you an idea of all that is happening with the year group this year despite straitened circumstances.
- All sports extra curricular activities are on hold at present due to COVID restrictions but P.E. classes continue as normal as possible while adhering to guidelines.
- This we have been accepted onto the prestigious Yellow Flag programme. The programme celebrates diversity and the school looks forward to working with the Irish Traveller Movement during the coming Year. We are also working on the acquisition of our next green flag.

Admissions

- The admissions process is underway with 240 students getting places in First year in 2021.

Transition Year

- Transition Year is underway albeit with many activities curtailed due to COVID restrictions. Many thanks to Miss McCabe and to the team who are working very hard at ensuring that the Transition Year students have the best experience possible under the circumstances. Please click [here](#) for a full flavour of events and activities which have been happening since the year began.

Student Leadership

- Student council elections have taken place and the council is now up and running. The council meets every Wednesday at 1.20 p.m. Thanks to Miss O'Neill for her continued work in this regard. We place great value on the student voice in working on policies, plans and procedures here in Loreto.
- Sixth Year captains were appointed in an outdoor ceremony before the mid-term. These students, like the Student Council represent the student voice in the school and are role models and important contact points for other students in various aspects of school life.
- 5th Year co-coordinators are in the process of applying for positions and will be appointed before the end of the month.

Pastoral/Spiritual

- The school opening Mass which is a whole school event usually held in the Parish Church, was a virtual event this year. It was streamed to all the classrooms and was a very prayerful

and reflective experience for all. Thanks to the Religion and Music Department for their work in this regard and to all the students who read, sang and played.

- The Ember Ignite team who are the faith leaders in the school were commissioned via zoom by the Loreto Faith Development coordinator and the Dublin Diocesan Advisor.
- The Transition Year Blessing was held for the full year group on the Astro Pitch in September

Before signing off I want to say thanks to you the parent body for your ongoing support in these difficult times, to the staff for their kindness, dedication and commitment to your daughters and finally to the students themselves for making Loreto Balbriggan the special place it is.

Click [here](#) to access a presentation prepared by one of our teachers Mr Niall Cox. In this presentation prepared for this virtual version of the AGM he focusses on parental involvement in supporting senior cycle students and those in and exam class es. He gives very useful tips on how parents can become involved in the student's journey as they negotiate studying for exams and preparing for life after school.

Wishing you and your daughter all the very best for a fruitful and successful year ahead and most importantly good health for you, your family and your friends.

Ann Marie Mc Donough