



September 2017

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians,

Our first term is now well underway and we hope that your daughter is settling in and getting into a healthy work routine. As Principal of the school I look forward to working with all parents throughout the year to make sure that each girl reaches her full academic potential under my leadership. Academic achievement is a central part of our Mission Statement at St. Mary's and we work to ensure that each girl is supported in being the best student that she can be. We cannot do this alone and we greatly urge your support in the journey.

Calendar

Please find attached a calendar outlining key dates for the year ahead. Included you will see the dates for school holidays/closures as well as the dates for parent teacher meetings. We ask that no student arranges holidays outside the designated official holidays as provided by the Department of Education and Science. There may be a small number of additional closure to facilitate staff training for Junior Cycle but we have not been issued with these dates as yet. We will keep you informed as soon as we know.

Extra Curricular

Please find attached a schedule of extra-curricular activities offered in St. Mary's. We are committed to the holistic development of all our students and encourage students to get actively involved in school activities.

State Examination Results 2017

Congratulations to all our Leaving and Junior Certificate students 2017 on their excellent results in the State Examinations. A huge thanks to their teachers on the preparation they put in to ensuring that each girl maximised her achievement as a student at St. Mary's. We are happy to report a substantial increase in the number of students progressing to third level education with almost all girls securing a place in college. We wish them every success and fulfilment in their chosen course of study. We thank our Guidance Department for all the work they do to provide information and advice to students in the broad range of options available to students progressing from St. Mary's.

Attendance

I cannot adequately stress the importance of a full attendance in school. Every class missed can impact on your daughter's performance in school and we greatly discourage any absences that are not absolutely necessary.

In line with our policy, all appointments that your daughter might require should be made **out of school hours.**

We ask that you support us by not expecting to withdraw your daughter at short notice. This is highly disruptive and in breach of our procedures. Please also ensure that your daughter arrives to school on time.

Healthy eating

Please help us to promote healthy eating by encouraging your daughter not to bring high sugary drinks to school and to avoid crisps and other unhealthy snacks. We have an excellent canteen facility which is available to all students. A small number of students are continuing to eat very unhealthy food en route to school which we discourage strongly. We also have reports of students disposing of their litter on the roads and in

Breakfast Club

Our Breakfast club operates each day from 8.30am -8.50am. Tea, toast, fruit, smoothies and other healthy options are available to students using their .60c voucher. This is an excellent facility and we would encourage all students to use the breakfast club daily.

Supervised Study

Supervised Study is available to all students at a cost of €140 per year. We encourage **ALL** students to participate as this leads to better results.

Junior Cycle

As you may be aware we are in a transition period in respect of changes to Junior Cycle. All year groups at Junior Cycle now are involved in some elements of the new curriculum.

Subject	Introduced to 1st Year Students in:	First recorded on JCPA in:
English	2014	Autumn 2017
Business and Science	2016	Autumn 2019
Irish	September 2017	Autumn 2020
Modern Languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian)	September 2017	Autumn 2020
Visual Art	September 2017	Autumn 2020
Looking forward		
Mathematics	September 2018	Autumn 2021
Home Economics	September 2018	Autumn 2021
Music	September 2018	Autumn 2021
History	September 2018	Autumn 2021
Geography	September 2018	Autumn 2021

In addition to the above subjects the new area of learning entitled Wellbeing will be introduced for First Years from September 2017. Key components of this area of learning will include the following subjects/specifications: Physical Education, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) (including Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)) and Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE). Students' achievements in the area of Wellbeing will be recorded for the first time on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) in Autumn 2020.

Our current first year girls will be certified for two short courses: PE and CSPE

One hour class

To facilitate the type of learning best suited to the requirements of Junior Cycle the school now operates a one-hour class structure in all year groups.

Social Media

We are active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to communicate news items and to celebrate the success of our students in the different areas of school life. We are advised that photography greatly enhances the reach of Facebook posts and we would ask your agreement to post pictures which promote our students and the school in a positive way. Please let us know in writing if you have any particular issue with this and please 'like' and 'share' our pages.

Communication

Parents should contact the school office if they wish to speak to a Teacher, Year Head, Principal or Deputy Principal. Opening times are 8.30am - 8.50am, 11am-11; 1.15pm - 1.45pm

Open Evening

Our Open Night was held on September 19th. Thanks to all the parents and students who helped on the night. If you have a daughter or relative who intends to register at St. Mary's please collect an application for the form as soon as possible.

Vaccinations – 1st year girls

The HSE will be in the school on October 9th to make vaccinations available to girls with parental consent.

Phones

For a range of health and safety reasons we have a strict mobile phone policy. This policy was led and developed by the parents of the school to facilitate students who may have to contact home after school to make arrangements for collection. Mobile phones are **NOT** permitted to be used inside the school building ***unless with the permission of a teacher for teaching and learning purposes.**

Students who wish to contact home in the course of the school day can of course do so via the main office in the school. Students found using a phone will have it confiscated. The phone will be returned only when collected by a parent/guardian at the end of the school day. We really don't want to confiscate anyone's phone and we would urge cooperation with our policy.

Rainbows

Rainbows is a support group for those students who have been bereaved by the death or separation of a loved one. We have trained facilitators on our team who work in a supportive capacity with these students. New students are always welcome. Please contact us if

New Roof

We are grateful that the Department of Education has provided substantial funding for the replacement of the flat roof on our building. The works will begin on October 2nd

Property

Please assist us in ensuring that every item of property: books, uniforms, tracksuits etc. is clearly labelled with your daughter's name. In the event of an item being lost or misplaced it is much easier for us to source it when a name has been marked clearly. Please also be advised not to bring

expensive technology such as iphones, ipods and ipads to school as no responsibility can be taken in the event of one of these items being lost or stolen.

Parents' Association

Thanks to all the parents who attended our Parents Association Meeting on September 5th, if any other parent wishes to get involved please let us know and we would be delighted to have your help and support

Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a major priority at the school and we employ a multifaceted approach to supporting the wellbeing of all our girls. We have a wellbeing curriculum in first year, a pastoral care structure, an active student leadership team, regular policy review and a positive classroom climate which supports each girl to engage fully with their learning and to have a sense of wellbeing in school where they spend 6 hours of each day.

As Principal of the school your daughter's academic progress and happiness in school is my priority. May I invite you to make an appointment to discuss with us at any time any concerns or questions you might have so that any issues can be resolved immediately.

Jubilee Celebration

Thanks to everyone who participated in and contributed to our Jubilee celebrations at St. Mary's. We are grateful to the Arch bishop and Minister for Education who joined us for some of the events and to everyone in the St. Mary's community who helped make our 50th year very special. We look forward to the next 50 years with pride and great enthusiasm.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn McLoughlin
Acting Principal