

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope that this correspondence finds you safe and well.

Unfortunately as we prepare to reopen our doors tomorrow staffing the school has become a major issue for us. We awaited direction from the DES as to how to manage the reopening but as of yet they have failed to give adequate advice to school management. At present we have 19 staff members unable to attend for work due to Covid 19 isolation restrictions. This makes it impossible to fully reopen the school and provide essential supervision let alone teaching.

The Department of Education states that there is no public health risk to opening schools. Our concern at present is Health & Safety (non Covid related). With 19 staff members unavailable for work, it makes it impossible to ensure adequate supervision of students let alone teaching. We were instructed to contact the DES with our individual school concerns and I have been trying to do this since 9am this morning, but to no avail. I cannot get anybody in any government department to talk to me and provide me with the promised support and guidance on opening the school safely tomorrow.

As we had anticipated that this may be the case we started on a contingency plan yesterday. It is important to note that we will do everything in our power to keep the school open for as many students as possible in the coming weeks when we expect that absenteeism will peak due to the restrictions attached with being a close contact and the rate of infection in the community.

Tomorrow, **Thursday 6th** the school will be open to all students except Transition Years. We are sorry to do this but the teachers who should be teaching TY tomorrow will be needed to supervise other year groups. TY students should continue their work experience on Friday and if there are any issues with this students should ensure that they contact their employers and should also email cdwane@cbshighschoolclonmel.ie as usual to let her know.

No classes for Transition Year students on Thursday 6th January 2022

We will then have to reassess tomorrow evening our ability to maintain this situation on Friday 7th January.

Monday 10th January is a pre-planned Cluster Day for teachers and there were no classes scheduled on the calendar. This is a Junior Cycle training day for subject teachers in the Tipperary vicinity so all second level schools in Clonmel are closed to students. From then on we will have to take every day as it comes. I would ask you to be mindful that we are doing everything we can to keep the school open and to maintain a safe environment for all but it will not be safe if we do not have the staff to supervise the students.

No classes for students on Mon 10th January- JCT Training Day

In terms of teaching, we will continue to do our best and where possible, teachers will stream into classrooms or work through Google Classroom but despite what the DES would have you

believe, no school has adequate infrastructure to support this on a scale that this current challenge demands. I believe that we have done very well as a school supporting our students both academically and personally over the last two years and we will continue to do the very best we can for the remainder of this school year.

I know that exam class students may be worrying and all I can say is that your teachers will continue to do everything in their power to support you through the remainder of your journey. The mock exams will go ahead in February so any 'free class' you have now should be utilised for revision. Teachers will continue to supply work to their classes when they are absent unless illness prevents them from doing so. I would advise that students bring in as many notes/revision copies or books etc. as they can manage over the next few days as absent teachers will have set work for you and these materials may be useful.

Finally, please, please ensure that your son has his mask (and spares) and his antibacterial wipes with him tomorrow morning. The vast majority of our students have been wonderful in this regard to date and we thank you for that. HEPA filters have been ordered for classrooms and are expected to be delivered in the coming weeks. This will allow us to have windows partially open. As the weather will be cold in the coming weeks students should layer as much as possible and common sense will prevail in terms of wearing jackets etc in classrooms. Heating will be on throughout the day ensuring that the building is as warm as possible. We would ask that you remind your son that cooperation on all levels is expected on their return as the school deals with this unprecedented challenge.

Once again we thank you for your continued support this year and we hope that we will see an end to this current situation in the coming months. I would ask that if your son is going to be absent from school that you would use the absence request section on VShare as this will allow us to account for numbers attending school. Furthermore please be reminded that students should not attend school if they show any symptoms of Covid 19.

Kind regards,

Karen Steenson Principal
TJ. Kinsella Chairperson BOM