

19th June, 2020.

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope this message finds everyone well and healthy in your homes.

What a very bizarre 2019/2020 academic school year we have all experienced. In the true spirit of Coosan National School, we have all done our very best to ensure a level of educational continuity for all our pupils. The pupils themselves were the key players and I wish to thank them for their engagement first and foremost. You, the parents/guardians were also fantastic. You didn't choose to home school! It has been foisted upon you. What you've been doing is crisis schooling. This has not been easy and as a staff, we cannot thank you enough for the way you've supported and motivated your children at this time. Coosan National School is very grateful. Hats off to you on a job well done. Staff have also been amazing and I also wish to thank them. They have worked tirelessly every day from their homes and gone above and beyond the call of duty.

There was a beginning and a middle to our crisis schooling and there now has to be an end. This end is Thursday 25th June for our pupils. Monday is the last day the pupils will formally receive assigned work for completion from their class teacher. I wish to point out that for staff however this does not mark the end of the road. We will be working right through to the end of June and beyond. For a large school to run as efficiently as Coosan National School, the work never ceases. It can't. The wheels have to keep turning. Well done to everybody who plays their part in all this.

The tragic reality of COVID-19 is that families throughout the country have been left sadly grieving for loved ones as a direct result of the corona virus. More locally, families have been unable to hold proper funeral services. I am also mindful of families in our school who may be currently out of work. This is all very distressing news. It is important therefore that we see hope especially in times of trouble such as this. There has been cause for optimism and few could have foreseen the many silver linings that are becoming more apparent with the passage of time. We've all, parents/guardians, pupils and staff alike, had to become more IT savvy. Pupils have developed independent learning skills and we've all had to develop remote routines for getting on with our daily lives. Relationships between school and home have blossomed as direct contact has never been more regular. As parents/guardians, we understand the complex role of the teacher now more than ever before. Pupils have played more outdoors in the lovely weather. We've also all had to slow down and get off the hamster wheel. Pupils have had time and scope possibly for the first time in their lives to resolve their own boredom and be truly creative. Fabulous learning experiences such as gardening, cooking and baking etc. have all been afforded. The list goes on and on. So, let us not wallow in the notion that our primary school pupils have been educationally disadvantaged by the crisis. The opposite might be contended by some and in the fullness of time many more might view this once in a lifetime event similarly.

I really want to assure parents/guardians once again that you are doing enough for your child. Please don't worry about your child in the academic sense. Our teachers will re-engage with the pupils once we re-open. We will work from where your child is at when they return. Don't feel under pressure to have them at a certain level. We will work with the pupils at the stage they are at when they return to school. No child will be left behind.

In Coosan National School, we will be doing everything possible to ensure a safe and pleasant return to school for your children in September. I would ask you not to worry excessively or too soon. I

would never ask a parent/guardian to stop worrying as, being a parent myself, I know that this is our default setting. I would ask you to trust us that we will do everything possible to make sure that the best possible arrangements will be put in place for your children by our school. The actual arrangements for classes and pupil–teacher ratios allowed will become clearer soon and we will look at how we will staff that situation then. I will keep parents/guardians informed of all developments when we know them ourselves.

The news in the last few days has focused on the government’s long-awaited plan for reopening schools in September. The announcement unfortunately was vague, contradictory and as clear as mud basically. We are now told that we will get detailed plans/guidelines etc. in a week or two. These new plans/guidelines will be presented to us by a new minister I’d imagine. These will no doubt be substantial and probably not the only ones to be issued in the 10 week period before Coosan National School re-opens on Tuesday 1st September at 9.20am. Details of all these announcements will be available through all media sources and the school will issue its own response in light of all these and what they mean for our school’s context. We will be ready for re-opening in whatever form when September comes, make no mistake about that. Coosan National School will be a safe place to return to for everybody. Never before have we all been looking forward so enthusiastically to coming back to school and this is before the old school year has even finished!

Today we say farewell to our 6th class pupils. The Board of Management, staff and I would like to wish all the pupils well as they continue their educational journey and life beyond. We were privileged to have played a part in their formation. I am sorry you did not get to do all the fun activities we had planned for you in the final term. We will have a Graduation Ceremony when it is safe to gather as a school community in the GP Hall. Mr. Ronaldson and Ms. Waterstone wish to thank you for all the hard work you did this year. They congratulate you on completing 6th class and wish you well as you transition to secondary school. A special mention also to our new junior infants. All 58 of them! We’re really looking forward to having you in Coosan National School in September. We’ll be in contact with all the parents/guardians of graduating parents and parents/guardians of new infants.

Finally, on behalf of the Board of Management and staff I want to wish you and your families a very enjoyable, relaxing, safe and sunny summer. Thank you for your support and co-operation throughout this most unusual year.

Go dtéigh sibh uilig slán,

Tom Flahive,

Principal.

