

# BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA CHIARRAÍ KERRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

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Dear Parents/Guardians/Students,

As we continue to adapt and change to the evolving nature of the Coronavirus – COVID 19 pandemic, I wish to update you on our ongoing contingency plans and also to acknowledge the heroic work of our schools and our parents/guardians and students during this time.

I would particularly like to thank our school Principals, Deputy Principals, teachers and each and every member of staff for their assistance, goodwill and commitment over the past few weeks. As we make our way through uncharted waters, Kerry ETB is very proud of how our schools have responded to this very challenging situation. Every school set about contingency planning immediately after the Taoiseach announcement of school closures on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Our school Principals and Deputy Principals lead the three Community National Schools and the eight Post-Primary Schools in transitioning to teaching and learning remotely over the past few weeks. The use of Microsoft Teams across the Post-Primary Schools and Aladdin Connect in the Primary Schools has been rolled out and is proving very helpful. We fully acknowledge that remote teaching and learning does present challenges for teachers and students in terms of access to devices, sufficient connectivity etc. I wish to thank the Principals, Deputy Principals and the teachers in our schools across the scheme for their hard work, innovation and commitment to supporting students remotely as much as is possible at this time. I'm aware that our teachers are working tirelessly to develop and provide classes and online content to ensure our students are getting every possible opportunity. I am also aware that our Guidance Counsellors and Student Support Teams are available and in regular contact with students when they need support. In addition, I thank most sincerely the administration, caretaking and support staff across our schools - they have been an immense support and it is really appreciated.

Regarding the State Examination for the classes of 2019/20, we fully appreciate that the uncertainty at this time is most acute for these students. I include an extract from the March 24<sup>th</sup> 2020 - COVID-19 Statement from the Department of Education and Skills in which the Minister of Education and Skills is quoted – *“My message to students facing exams is that they should keep focused, keep working and try, as much as possible, to prepare as normal for the state exams. We are doing everything in our power to make sure those exams happen”*. While we have no real certainty at this time, we all support the Minister, the Department and the State Examination Commission's efforts in addressing this matter during this period.

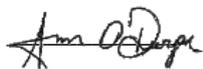
I wish to thank you the parents/guardians/students for your continued cooperation and support for our schools and staff. We fully acknowledge the challenges for all of you, having to deal with the change in routine as well as the uncertainty. However, the daily routine of school work as well as exercise and creative activity are a huge benefit. I would urge you to use this time to read and if you have let this hobby lapse it is now a good time to get lost in a good book. It is also a good time to keep a diary or daily reflection which you may share with your own children in years to come. Also please follow Kerry Music Generation on Facebook and get access to free music tuition online.

In my own case, we have our three adult children home for the first time in many years and it has given me the opportunity to reflect on the importance of living every moment, being aware of how I am in the midst of it all and cherishing the opportunity to spend this time together, which we will never have back again as things return to normality.

As we are asked to come together by staying apart, it is important to remember that life endures, we will endure and our values of kindness and community support will also endure.

I leave you with this very inspiring poem which was penned in 1869 by Irish woman Kathleen O'Meara.

Take good care,



Ann O'Dwyer  
Director of Schools Kerry ETB.

Kathleen O'Meara's poem, 'And People Stayed Home,' written in 1869.

*And people stayed home  
and read books and listened  
and rested and exercised  
and made art and played  
and learned new ways of being  
and stopped  
and listened deeper  
someone meditated  
someone prayed  
someone danced  
someone met their shadow  
and people began to think differently  
and people healed  
and in the absence of people who lived in ignorant ways,  
dangerous, meaningless and heartless,  
even the earth began to heal  
and when the danger ended  
and people found each other  
grieved for the dead people  
and they made new choices  
and dreamed of new visions  
and created new ways of life  
and healed the earth completely  
just as they were healed themselves.*