

Drumshanbo Vocational School

Telephone: Office 071 – 9641085 **Website:** www.dvs.ie **email:** info@dvs.ie

Principal:

Mr. Martin Fallon B.Sc., M.Ed.

email: martinfallon@msletb.ie



Deputy Principal:

Mr. Sean Wynne M.I., M.A.

Seanwynne@msletb.ie

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

I hope you and your family are well. This letter is to address some of the issues that are arising as a result of this unprecedented but necessary closure.

Teaching & Learning at home

Our teachers are doing their best to engage with their students on-line for the continuation of learning in so far as possible. Teachers will endeavour to connect regularly with all students but, for now, may need to prioritise the exam years – Third Year and Sixth Year. Most are using Microsoft Teams and all students have been set up with their usernames and passwords for that. So far the feedback has been positive from teachers, that, in general, students from all years are engaging fully and doing their assignments on time. It's very important that they continue to do so and that all students realise that this is not holiday time until the scheduled Easter break, April 6th – 17th. I do understand that some students and teachers have difficulty with internet service at home. Also, there are some students that do not have access to a laptop or computer. For convenience, the MS TEAMS app can be downloaded to any smartphone or other surface device. If, your child has no access to the internet, please send a note to the school and we will try to organise a study pack. All students were given time to collect all of their books and bring them home on the day of closure.

Examination students

This is obviously a very anxious time for all Junior Cert and Leaving Cert candidates and their parents. At least we have clarity now on some of the practicals and the oral exams. In general, courses have been covered at this stage and, as well as keeping contact with their teachers and doing assignments as required, students should go over past papers and study for the exams that are still scheduled to take place in June. Remember that all exam candidates in the country are in the same predicament.

The mock exam results are coming in gradually and as soon as they are all available, we will publish the Mock Examination Reports on VShare.

Practical & Oral Exams

As you may already have heard, all the language orals and the Junior Cert practicals that were scheduled to take place from March 23rd to April 3rd have now been cancelled and students are to be awarded full marks. We have already had a couple of queries from students previously entered for Ordinary level if they would now be better to change to Higher level, given the full marks available for the orals. It might seem so but we're not in a position to

advise on that at the moment because we don't know what the SEC are doing to mitigate that apparent anomaly.

Regarding deadlines for project work and coursework – they have been extended to May 15th for all the following:

Leaving Cert projects in Art, Ag Science, History, Geography, Music, Construction Studies & Home Economics.

Junior Cert Metalwork & Woodwork and Junior Cert assessment Tasks in English, Irish, Modern Languages, Science, Business Studies.

As of this date all the practicals scheduled from April 27th to May 8th are to proceed. I expect any changes to these arrangements will be posted on the State Examinations Commission web-site – www.examinations.ie

First Year Subject Choice

Shortly after the Easter we would normally be getting First Years to select their subjects for Second Year and an Information Evening for parents would be taking place. Students were just entering their final rotation for the options subjects when the closure was announced. Hopefully we can all be back to school after Easter so that these students get to experience that final block of subjects, in order to make an informed choice. In the event that this does not happen, we will have to make alternative arrangements and I will keep you informed.

Third Year Subject Choice

Students going from Third Year in to Leaving Certificate Year 1 are required to make their choice of subjects before Easter and a separate letter has been published on this web-site for that.

Incoming First Years

We will post a letter to all students enrolled for First Year 2020 in the coming week.

In these uncertain times, there is still no certainty regarding the arrangements for the State practical exams or even the written exams. All I can advise the students to do is to continue to engage with their teachers in so far as possible on-line using their MSOffice accounts. I understand that some students and indeed teachers may have insufficient internet and I am also aware that there have been some difficulties accessing Teams on MSOffice this morning. In general, courses have been covered at this stage and students should go over past papers and study for the exams that are still scheduled to take place in June. As soon as I get any news on practical exams I will notify on our web-site.

If we all abide by the instructions of the HSE and the authorities, hopefully this will all be over fairly soon and we'll be able to get back to 'normal'. Until then, I will try to keep you updated on school issues using this web-site.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Fallon