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St Colman's College,  
Castlegar,  
Claremorris,  
Co. Mayo.

*Principal*  
Mr. Roy Hession

*Deputy Principal*  
Ms Maria Byrne

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## Parents/Guardians Newsletter, Halloween 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope you are doing well and enjoying the Halloween break of 2021. To say it continues to be a very strange year is quite the understatement, and we have all had to make serious adjustments to the way we live our lives nowadays. The school experience for all of our students and staff has been so different and I would like to commend everybody for all their hard work and efforts in what continue to be difficult circumstances.

### **The 'new normal'**

The constant sanitising of hands, the mask-wearing, the social-distancing have become second nature to all of us. It's not easy to keep the guard up against Covid-19 but we must do exactly that. The virus is still very prevalent throughout our country so we must remain vigilant and we must continue to watch out for one another, particularly for those with underlying conditions and those most vulnerable. There is a distinct resurgence of Covid across our community and country and we must continue to exercise caution and take personal responsibility for all of our actions.

We had a *Covid inspection* in the College at the end of September (carried out by the Department of Education) and we were commended for doing a very good job in keeping our school as safe as possible in the present difficult circumstances. This is testament to all the work being done by management, staff, students, parents and all associated with the College and I would like to thank you for your continued support in this regard.

Our students have generally been excellent in their compliance with all the rules and requirements that have been foisted upon them, and we thank them for that. We encourage them to take a well-earned rest over the Halloween period and to come back on Monday, November 1st, refreshed and ready to face the rest of this school term.

### **Enrolment 2022-23**

Our arrangements for the enrolment of next year's first year students are well underway and we will be hosting a virtual Enrolment/Open evening on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November at 7pm. Present continuing restrictions mean we cannot have a traditional Enrolment/Open Evening like we have had in the past so we are going online again this year, as we did last year. Over the past few weeks Ms. Byrne, the Deputy Principal, along with Mr. Brandon and myself have been visiting the local primary schools to speak to the sixth-class pupils about life in St. Colman's College. Sincere thanks to the principals and staff of all the schools for their welcome. It's always a lovely time when we get to see the primary school pupils and their teachers doing great work.

Please log in to **[www.stcolmans.ie](http://www.stcolmans.ie)** at **7pm on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November** for details of how to enrol a student for the 2022-23 school year. All details will be available on the website and will remain there until Friday, November 19<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, keep an eye on our Facebook and Instagram pages for further updates.

We look forward to welcoming the sixth-class pupils to visit the College in person, with their parents/guardians, in the near future, as soon as we are allowed to do so.

### **Leaving Certificate Accredited Grades**

Well done to our Leaving Certificate class of 2021 who received excellent results over the past few weeks. It was a very difficult school year for them with the uncertainty surrounding the examinations themselves and the relatively late results emerging from the State Examinations Commission. Generally, throughout the country, results were very good but we always pride ourselves in St. Colman's with all of our students reaching their potential. That is most important for us. All in all, a tough year for the Class

of 2021 but they have come through it now and we wish them all the best in the years ahead.

### **Allergies, Epi-pens, inhalers**

Please let us know if your son has any allergies we should be aware of, and make sure he has his inhaler or his epi-pen with him at all times. It is important that we are made aware of any student health issues.

### **Covid-19 reminders**

If any student displays symptoms of Covid-19 during the Halloween break please contact your GP who will give advice. If the student is referred for a Covid-19 test and subsequently tests positive then please inform us here in the College without delay so that we may help the HSE with their contact tracing arrangements. If he is a close contact of a confirmed case then please follow the guidelines issued by the HSE.

Please note the Principal and Board of Management are not permitted to inform members of the school community of the identity of the person or persons who have tested positive for Covid-19 for the following reasons:

- Doctor-Patient confidentiality
- GDPR legislation preventing the publication of personal data without consent

Thank you for continuing to encourage your sons to follow the guidelines, to work hard in school and at home, to remain positive and upbeat despite all the difficulties around at the moment. We are doing all we can in the College to keep everybody as safe as possible, to keep everybody teaching and learning in the traditional ways and to keep our school open. Please encourage your sons to attend school everyday, to be on time for class everyday, and to observe the rules that are in place for everyone's safety and wellbeing.

### **Safe Routes to School**

I would like to remind you that St. Colman's College has been selected to participate in the *Safe Routes to School* programme. *Safe Routes to School* is designed to reduce congestion and increase safety at the front of the school and to improve safety for students walking and cycling to the College.

As part of the initial phase of this programme the *Safe Routes to School* Team would like to gather information on how our students travel to school and from where they start their journey. Your input is needed to help create a safer school environment therefore we are asking all parents to complete the short survey by the 31st of October 2021. Many thanks to all who have completed the survey already, we appreciate your input.

Here is the link if you haven't done it already: <https://arcg.is/0Cij9q>

### **Winter Examinations**

You will see from the Parents/Guardians Calendar on our website that the Winter examinations had been scheduled to start on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November and taking place all that week. However, we have decided to postpone these examinations to now start on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> November instead. *Study skills* courses for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year students will take place in the week beginning Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November, as scheduled.

### **Website**

We are currently working on updating our school website, we are hoping to have it live in the near future with a whole new look. More details to follow shortly!

### **Sport/Extra-curricular activities**

It has been wonderful to see the tentative return of some sport to the College in recent weeks, albeit with quite severe restrictions still in place. We have hosted various school teams in all grades of Gaelic football throughout the month of October and we hope this will continue. We are hoping for good news in relation to the utilization of changing rooms, showers etc. in the coming weeks and we will relay this information to everyone involved when permitted to do so. Various other extra-curricular activities are slowly re-emerging too and we are delighted to see that, all of these activities are vital for the wellbeing of our students and we will continue to do all we can to facilitate them to get involved in activities outside the classroom.

### **U-16 'A' County Final**

Congratulations to captain Niall Hurley and all the players and management involved in a tremendous County Final victory against Castlebar Mitchells

last night, Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> October, in Islandeady. Well done to all concerned!

## **Planet Youth**

‘Planet Youth – Growing up in the West’ is an organisation that does great work with young people in the Galway/Mayo/Roscommon regions. It carries out various surveys among young people and, based on the results of these surveys, offers opportunities to improve health and life outcomes for them. We have worked closely with Planet Youth over the past few years and have found their insights and observations of young people to be very informative. Planet Youth will host an information evening on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November at 7pm entitled ‘The importance of sleep for our teenagers’. You need to register for this event on this link:

<https://event.webinarjam.com/channel/PlanetYouthTeenSleep>

Please have a look at [www.planetyouth.ie](http://www.planetyouth.ie) for lots of information on a whole range of youth-related topics. It really is a fantastic website full of ideas and information.

## **Oratory/Prayer room**

We are presently putting the final touches to an Oratory/Prayer room in the College. We have renovated a room in the old house attached to the College and we are looking for a set of stools to use in the room. If anybody happens to know where there are stools available (perhaps not being used at the moment) we would really appreciate you letting us know. Just call the office on 094 93 71442 or email us on [office@stcolmans.ie](mailto:office@stcolmans.ie) . We want to have the prayer room available for all of our staff and students as soon as possible after the mid-term break.

Enjoy the Halloween break!

With every good wish,

Roy Hession

Principal