



Portadown College

Principal: Gillian R Gibb, BA(Hons), PGCE, MSc, PQH(NI)

Thursday 7 January 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

I trust my correspondence finds you and your loved ones safe and well.

Further to my letter of Thursday 31 December 2020, I write to inform you of key information regarding the extended period of school closure announced by the Education Minister, Mr Peter Weir MLA.

The Department of Education (DE) wrote to all schools on Wednesday 6 January 2021 to instruct that all mainstream education providers, including pre-school education settings, primary and post primary schools, are required to provide remote learning at home to their students, rather than face-to-face teaching in school, until the half-term break in the middle of February 2021.

As you will already be aware, the College half-term break for students is scheduled for Wednesday 17 to Monday 22 February 2021 (inclusive). However, at the time of writing, I await clarification from DE as to the exact date at half-term on which it is anticipated remote learning will end. Upon receipt of clarification from DE in this respect, I will notify parents/carers as a matter of priority.

Trial Examinations

As a result of school closure, the College's Trial Examinations, scheduled for all year groups from Monday 25 January to Friday 5 February 2021 (inclusive) will not now proceed as originally timetabled. Details in respect of alternative arrangements will follow in due course.

External GCSE, AS and A2 Examinations

- As you will be aware from the Education Minister's announcement on Wednesday 6 January 2021, all CCEA GCSE, AS and A2 exams due to take place in January, February, May and June will be cancelled. Work will continue on the alternative awarding arrangements and further details will be brought forward as soon as possible.
- The College will keep you updated in respect of alternative arrangements in accordance with the Minister's announcement.
- For subjects examined by other awarding bodies (AQA and WJEC), examinations scheduled for summer 2021 will not take place either. Again, we will forward further details as soon as possible.

Supervision of Vulnerable Young People and Children of Key Workers During School Closure

- Please be assured that the College remains committed to facilitating the needs of vulnerable young people and the children of key workers and, as per the Minister's announcement, College will remain open for vulnerable young people and the children of key workers to avail of supervised study.
- A full definition of key workers and vulnerable children and young people can be viewed under the heading "Notes to editors" by clicking [here](#).
- Should you wish for your son/daughter to attend supervised study from Monday 11 January 2021, please contact College via our info account info@pc.portadown.ni.sch.uk by 3:00pm on Friday 8 January 2021.

College Communication with Home

- Home/College communication will be via Text Alerts and Parent Mail. Key information will also be shared on the College website: www.portadowncollege.com.
- I would request that any parents/carers wishing to communicate with the College during the period of remote learning do so via our info account: info@pc.portadown.ni.sch.uk.

Student Access to Learning Materials

- Our staff have worked exceptionally hard to prepare learning resources for students in the event of remote learning. These resources are being provided as the College endeavours to meet statutory curricular/specification requirements and maximise learning progression for students outside the school environment. Work has been available via Google Classroom since 5 January and this will continue to be the case throughout the period of remote learning.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to ensure, in as far as possible, that their son/daughter structures the day to mirror their daily school routine during remote learning. Students should complete work set by teachers during remote learning unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this.
- In circumstances where students are not able to attend a live Google Meet lesson, they should inform the teacher concerned as soon as possible via Google Classroom.
- Whilst some students may have part-time jobs that have key worker status, students are strongly advised that they should schedule their work commitments outside of the College day in order to attend online classes and complete their work fully.
- Students should ensure their C2k log in details are working. Should they have any difficulty accessing the C2k services, students should email Mr Robinson crobinson946@c2ken.net using an alternative e-mail address. He will change your password and reply to that address between 9:00am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday.
- Please refer to the "Remote Learning FAQ" and "Accessing C2k Files and Google Classroom" documents (attached) for further clarification on the above guidelines.
- Please note that some teachers may use email for submission of work. In these circumstances, teachers will only communicate with students using C2k email addresses. Similarly, students must only correspond with teachers regarding school work via the C2k email addresses which teachers have shared with particular classes.
- Please note that students and staff have been made aware of the etiquette and protocols for online learning and communication: [Portadown College Online Safety Policy - Appendix 1 \(Netiquette\)](#).

Access to Hard Copy Resources

The vast majority of resources your son/daughter requires for remote learning are provided through the Google Classrooms. However, some departments have paper based resources which students will require over the coming weeks. Please ask your son/daughter to check their subject Google Classroom for further details.

These resources can be collected at the following times:

- Year 11 – Monday 11 January (9:00am – 12:30pm) [Biology, Chemistry, English*, Geography, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Religious Studies and Single Award Science]
* **Please note:** Mrs Montgomery's English Classes will collect resources at a later date and students will be advised of the date for collection through Google Classroom.
- Year 12 – Monday 11 January afternoon (1:00 – 4:00pm) [Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Mathematics and Religious Studies]
- Year 13 – Tuesday 12 January (9:00am – 4:00pm) [Biology, Chemistry, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Religious Studies and Travel & Tourism]
- Year 14 – Wednesday 13 January (9:00am – 4:00pm) [Biology, Chemistry, English Literature, Mathematics, Religious Studies and Travel & Tourism]

Those coming to collect resources must follow all the relevant Covid-19 mitigation measures (face coverings to be worn, maintain social distancing at all times, use of hand sanitisers when entering and leaving the building and following the one-way system from the foyer into the Assembly Hall).

Safeguarding and Child Protection

- Parents and students are reminded that within College, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection is Mr Lowry (Vice Principal, Pastoral) and the Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection are Miss Gibb (Principal) and Mr Richardson (Vice Principal, Curriculum).
- Should any student require to make a disclosure relating to child protection during the period of remote learning, they can do so by contacting the College via our info account: info@pc.portadown.ni.sch.uk. Students should not provide details of the disclosure and are requested to provide a contact telephone number for follow-up by Mr Lowry, Miss Gibb or Mr Richardson in due course.

Pastoral support for Students and Parents/Carers

- Students are advised that they can contact their Year Head by sending an email to the info account: info@pc.portadown.ni.sch.uk. Year Heads can provide advice and support on a range of pastoral matters.
- Parents are advised that when receiving a call from a member of teaching staff during the period of remote learning, it will likely appear as a withheld number.
- Please see attached "Telephone Support Lines for Young People", provided by the Education Authority, with contact details for external agencies providing support for young people and their well-being.
- The website <https://covidwellbeingni.info/relationships> provides useful information and practical advice for children, young people, families and relationships.
- Parentline can be contacted on freephone 0808 8020 400 to provide advice, support and guidance to parents and carers.

Parentline is open:

- Monday - Thursday 9:00am-9:00pm
- Friday 9:00am-5:00pm
- Saturday 9:00am-1:00pm
- Parents/carers can also contact Parentline via webchat www.ci-ni.org.uk or by emailing Parentline @ci-ni.org.uk.

Student Well-being

As a College, we are especially mindful of the significant impact these unprecedented and difficult circumstances may have on the well-being of our students, staff, parents/carers and the community at large. All students are encouraged to follow the *5 Steps to Well-being* promoted by the College: [details can be found here](#).

Counselling

- Links Counselling Service is keen to ensure that ICSS (Independent Counselling Service for Schools) can continue to be delivered to meet the needs of students even when they are not in school.
- Counselling and assessments will operate by appointment only and students will be sent a text to confirm an appointment 24 hours in advance. Should your son/daughter already be attending counselling in College or be on the waiting list, they do not need to contact College. The counsellor will make contact with students directly.
- Please note that students can continue to refer themselves for counselling via the College info account: info@pc.portadown.ni.sch.uk with a contact number, or via the website www.links counselling.com.
- Appointments during the period of remote learning will be via telephone or other channels offered by Links.
- The drop-in service will also be offered at the usual time each week (Tuesday lunchtime 1:00-1:50pm) and students can access this telephone provision by contacting Links on **028 38342825**.

REACH Mentoring

- Students who were attending REACH Mentoring before Christmas should check their C2k email accounts for details of online mentoring sessions.
- Students can refer to REACH by contacting their Year Head directly, sending a private message through their Year Group Google Classroom.
- REACH Mentoring will continue to use their presence online through Facebook and Instagram to support all of our students by providing a positive narrative and practical tips on improving holistic well-being during a period of uncertainty. This online presence also provides an opportunity for parents/carers or students who require additional support to get in touch at <https://www.facebook.com/ReachMentoringNI>.

Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

We understand that at present, eligible students will continue to receive EMA during the period of remote learning.

Free School Meals

Provision in lieu of free school meals will be made to those students entitled to free school meals while normally in school.

College Assemblies

Although we cannot join as a community in College at present, we wish to continue nurturing our College ethos in these challenging circumstances. To that end, we would encourage students to view our College Assemblies which will be posted on each Year Group's Google Classroom from 9:00am every Monday morning until half term.

Please do not hesitate to contact me here in College should you have any queries in respect of any of the above information.

In closing, may I express my sincere gratitude for your forbearance and goodwill as, in partnership, we strive to create security, purpose and hope for our young people during these disconcerting days.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G R Gibb' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Gillian R Gibb
Principal