



Lwetb

*Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Longfoirt agus na hIarmhí*
Longford and Westmeath
Education and Training Board



Ballymahon Vocational School

Ballymahon

Co Longford

Tel: (090) 6432211

Dear Parent and Students.

I hope that you are keeping safe and that you and your families are well. The Easter break has given teachers and students the opportunity to take a break from online learning and to assess how we approach the final six weeks of school term.

Leaving Cert

On Good Friday, the minister announced a revised approach to the Leaving Certificate exams for this year. All Leaving Certificate students received an email informing them of the knock-on effects of those changes. As more information becomes available to us, we will be updating students.

Junior Cert

We are awaiting clarity with regard to the Junior Cycle. The written examinations in June have been cancelled but it has not yet been finalised as to the approach which must be taken in terms of assessments for our current third year group. It has been publicised in national media that a school has decided to hold its assessments before the end of this academic year. We are waiting for clarity from our managerial bodies as to the course of action that must be taken. To that end, it is extremely important that Junior Cycle students remain engaged with their teachers and schoolwork as all approaches to assessment are still a possibility.

Contingency Plans

As a staff, we are meeting regularly to discuss our approach to student engagement. We held a staff meeting yesterday afternoon to discuss the feedback from the survey sent to all Leaving Cert students. Up to the Easter break, we had missed 13 academic days of school. Teachers have been continuously upskilling and working collaboratively to decide on the best approaches to work with students. As identified by some of our Leaving Cert students, methodologies such as voice overs over video content and presentations, the use of Microsoft teams and zoom are examples of some of the approaches that students find most effective and teachers will be utilising these over the coming weeks. As well as some students, some teachers have internet access difficulties and that limits the range of applications available to them.

We have created an engagement monitoring template where each teacher is identifying which students are engaging and those that are not. Our Year Heads,



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Guidance Counsellor and HSCL will continue to contact those whom we have concerns about.

End of year assessments will be issued to 1st, 2nd and 5th year students in the coming days. These will follow the format of an assignment which will be electronically submitted to their teachers. It is essential that all students remain engaged until the end of the school year as these results will be essential in determining subject levels and choices.

The following methods have been in place since the beginning of the school closure and will remain in place:

- All students have been given access to their Microsoft Office 365 accounts. They have received a login and password and were asked to test these over the past number of days. This can be accessed by most devices including mobile phones. If any student has difficulty with logging in, please email the school on contingency.bvs@lwetb.ie
- Work will be shared through Microsoft Outlook and One Drive which are part of the Microsoft Office 365 package. Some teachers may use other online packages depending on what they have used in class with the students.
- Teachers will be uploading the listed work onto VSware which parents can monitor. When you log on to your VSware account, go to reports (similarly to viewing Christmas reports), you will see the report labelled contingency and all work will be listed here or you will be directed to where the work is located e.g. one drive, email, etc.

Advise in relation to public safety

I remind students and parents that schools are closed to them to try to prevent the spread of the virus. To this effect, students should be staying at home and should not be congregating with others. We are all part of a society where we have vulnerable members and every one of us has the potential to carry and transmit the virus to those members. Parents should be vigilant in this regard.

My email is bhiggins.bvs@lwetb.ie should you need to contact me directly.

Kind regards,

Brian Higgins

Principal