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

Principal
Mr. Roy Hession

Deputy Principal

11th September 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians

After our first full week back in school where everybody has returned to St. Colman's College for the new academic year I would like to make a few points: Firstly, we are delighted that all of our staff and students have returned to the College and are ready to do all they can to make this year as positive and productive as possible. Secondly, we appreciate that the school environment is different this year for everyone and there are many new protocols and regulations that we all must adhere to in the interests of public safety. Thirdly, we are very dependent on your good will and your understanding of the requirements on everyone to adhere to the guidelines that are in place to keep everyone safe.

We hope that your son has settled back and we do understand that things are more difficult than ever before in many respects. **However, please understand that we are here to help and we are doing all we can to make the 'new normal' as manageable as possible for everyone.** We are particularly concerned about our new first year students and we would encourage you to keep in contact with us if you have any concerns. They are in a totally new environment and we know that transition to secondary school can be difficult under normal circumstances so the present circumstances don't make things any easier, I'm afraid. We are continuing to do all we can to make all students feel reasonably comfortable, notwithstanding all the issues. Please contact us if you feel there is anything else we might consider going forward. **Remember, we all have to do our very best in school, at home and in our community to minimise risks to all of us and to keep Covid-19 under control.**

We are asking our students to wear masks at all times when they are inside the school building. Generally, everyone is compliant in this regard and we thank them for that. **All students must sanitise their hands** every time they enter a classroom and they are expected to wipe down their desks and seats before they leave. They are expected to sit in a designated seat in each teacher's classroom and they must occupy only that seat whenever they are in that particular classroom. This rule also applies to the seating arrangements in the lunchroom. Each student

must sit in his designated bench/desk when in the lunchroom for morning break and lunch break. We must try to **ensure that students adhere to the guidelines around social distancing** insofar as is possible. For all of these things we depend on your sons accepting personal responsibility to adhere to the guidelines and **we would ask you to keep advising and encouraging them** to continue doing these things. If there is a concerted effort from home and school it will make compliance more manageable for all concerned.

We would ask you to keep encouraging your sons to remember that when they are in groups, even outdoors, they should wear their face masks if they are not at least two meters away from each other. Even in the open-air students must understand that the Covid-19 virus is very contagious and they must be ever vigilant. Again, we would appreciate you reminding your sons about this regularly.

Many students are driven to school by parents/guardians in the morning. We would ask those of you who drive your sons to school to arrive as close to 9am as possible so that when your son enters the school he can proceed straight to his first class. We understand that this is not possible for everyone but if it is possible we would really appreciate your adherence to this if and when you can. Classroom doors will be open and students should enter straight away, sanitising their hands before entering. They must sit in their designated seats without delay. If your son goes to the lunchroom before classes begin he must sit in his designated seat only. Again, we would ask you to encourage compliance in this regard too. **We are operating a ‘one-way’ system** throughout the school to ensure a better ‘flow’ of students as they move through the building and **certain doors have been designated ‘Entry’ and ‘Exit’ only**. Again, it is important that students adhere to these protocols.

Unfortunately, we are still not in a position to offer locker facilities to students and so it is vital that they only take to school books and materials that they need on any given day. Many teachers are using **Microsoft ‘Teams’** for lessons and homework assignments and this facility should help in reducing the number of books needed in class, thereby reducing the weight of student schoolbags. We may be able to review this in time and we will keep you informed. We appreciate your understanding in this regard and we know that not having locker facilities is an added difficulty for students.

Thanks for your understanding and for all your encouragement for the students during these unprecedented times. We are delighted that St. Colman’s College is up and running after such a protracted period and that our students are doing so very well in these early days of September. Remember we are here to do all we can to normalise life for everyone in our care and we thank you for helping us on that journey.

God Bless,

**Roy Hession
Principal**