



End of Term Letter Hilary 2022

April 2022

Dear parent or guardian,

As we approach the end of Hilary term I wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on the last few months and thank you and your children for all the efforts to work with us as we started to emerge from restrictions.

COVID restrictions

I appreciate that it has become increasingly difficult to keep pace with what restrictions are still in place. From the start of next term masks will no longer be recommended anywhere in school although pupils and visitors are free to continue to use them if they wish. Masks will no longer be available from the Concourse Office.

We will also start to scale back the use of the one-way system around school, although there may be areas of the buildings where this is retained just because it improves movement around the school. Lateral Flow Test kits will no longer be distributed. Continuing to wash our hands and to regularly sanitise them, also continuing to observe good respiratory hygiene will of course restrict the spread of COVID.

School life

Throughout the year we have engaged in as many extra curricular activities as possible and I am grateful to the many staff who have freely given of their time to run these activities.

School teams won the Ethics Debate and came third in the Bar Mock Trial.

The dance team had thirteen entries in the Northern Ireland Creative Movement and Aerobic Championships (NICMAC), achieving seven first, three second and two third places. Well done to Mrs Shufflebottom and all the team.

It has been perhaps our most successful sports season ever. We would like to commend all our pupils and their coaches for their commitment to training and high quality play and draw particular attention to the following achievements:

1XI	Stevenson Shield (finalists in Schools Cup)
2XI	Won Ulster Cup
3XI	Finalists in cup competition
U14	Won Junior Schools Cup Won June Smith All Ireland Championship
1XI (Boys)	Semi final of the Prior Shield

1XV	Won the Subsidiary Shield
2XV	Won the 2XV Plate competition
3XV	Quarter final of the 3XV Plate
4XV	Quarter final of the 4XV Plate
Medallion XV	Semi final of the Medallion shield
U16 XV	Final of the U16 Trophy

Attendance

Thank you for your continued wisdom in keeping children who feel ill away from school until you have been able to confirm that they do not have COVID. It's hard to tell when someone might be COVID positive and your action, which I understand has not always been easy, has undoubtedly reduced the opportunity for infection to spread.

Boarding

As you aware boarding is a key part of our school's identity. The pandemic has placed significant pressures on boarding staff and many of the pupils who call boarding home. It was not possible for some of them to return home at Christmas and travel restrictions mean that some of them will remain on site over Easter as well. We understand the challenge this presents for them, and their families and we are very grateful to all the staff who will work with them over the holiday.

Spring Concert

It was great to hold our spring concert in St Patrick's Cathedral again last night after a forced absence of two years and we were delighted to be able to display a range of trophies won by school teams in sporting and non-sporting endeavour throughout the year.

As always the event was a showcase of the gifts, skill and hard work of our musicians and choristers. We are very grateful to all the pupils involved and all the staff associated with our music department. Although we have come to expect such high levels of performance we do not take it for granted!

We are also very grateful to the Dean and Chapter for making the necessary arrangements for this event.

Service to others

We have all been shocked and saddened to see the death and destruction visited upon the people of Ukraine in recent weeks. I'd like to thank you for your very generous donations to our appeal for Ukraine and commend our Year 14 geographers for their commitment to work for the wellbeing of others.

We are also very grateful for all the donations for the foodbank and the clothes donated for 'Cash for Clobber' which will go towards Womens' Aid.

Home/ School Communication

Following Department of Education guidance has inevitably meant that parent teacher consultations have continued to be restricted throughout the last term. We are grateful for your cooperation as we have worked to refine remote models of engagement. We are appreciative of the feedback we have received and based on it we hope to move to a hybrid model of parent teacher meetings when restrictions allow.

We have endeavoured to maintain regular meaningful contact by:

- Making calls home when we have felt it necessary
- Responding to parental calls for specific information

You are still very welcome to attend school if you wish to speak face to face with a member of staff. To ensure that the member of staff you need to speak to is available and in possession of the information they may need for your meeting please ring ahead to make an appointment. If you wish to inform us about a safeguarding concern an appointment is **not** necessary.

School uniform

The Royal School is known in the community for its high standards and we have now returned to wearing full school uniform each day. After Easter, hoodies and tops (other than the school pullover) will not be permitted. We want to avoid unnecessary confrontation with pupils over uniform and would therefore ask for your cooperation. Boys may not wear earrings at all and girls may wear ONE stud in each ear lobe. Nail varnish should be neutral and gel nails are not permitted. We would ask for your particular cooperation to ensure that pupils are not displaying non regulation piercings. Further information about appearance, including information about hairstyles, is contained in the Parents' Handbook.

Important forthcoming dates

Although disruption from COVID is never far away we are pleased that we have been able to keep disruption to a minimum and make good progress with learning and teaching this term. Below is some important information about the next few weeks:

- **Monday 25 April** – school starts back for all pupils. Boarders may return on Sunday 24 April (unless by prior arrangement).
- **Monday 25 – Wednesday 27 April** – Year 11 Mock Exams for modular subjects.
- **Monday 02 May** – School Development Day 5 (no pupils).
- **Wednesday 04 May** – Year 10 Options Meeting (remote).
- **Wednesday 11 May** – Year 9 parent teacher consultations.
- **Monday 23 May – Wednesday 01 June** – Examinations for Years 8-10.
- **Thursday 02 & Friday 03 June** – Jubilee Holiday.

After School hours

For insurance purposes I must ask that all day pupils, who are not participating in supervised activities after school, leave the grounds by 3:30pm. Any pupil who encounters difficulty getting home should report to either of the vice principals or to me.

External Examinations

Easter represents the firing of the starting pistol for external examinations. Best use should be made of this holiday for well planned, sustained and thorough revision. To assist with that, a Study Skills Guide has been made available which can be downloaded from the school website (go to **About → Pupils → Preparing For Exam Success**). It contains what we believe will be useful information for everyone preparing for external examinations. We would particularly draw to your attention that from 3 May school facilities will be open to 8:30pm Monday to Thursday to enable pupils in Years 12 to 14 to study in school if they would find that beneficial.

Lost Property

Please remind your sons and daughters to check Lost Property for any missing items. Lost Property will be kept until the first Friday of the next term after which, if unclaimed, it will be sent to charity. All Lost Property requests to Mr Hooks please.

Car park

Parking on the school site is limited to staff and visitors only. Pupils are not permitted to park in the school grounds. To ensure the safety of everyone using the school site only pupils in the Preparatory Department may be dropped off or collected in the grounds. The exception to this is in cases where a pupil has mobility issues which should be discussed with Mr Hooks. Pupils who are fortunate enough to have their own car to bring to school should show courtesy to local residents and should also arrive to school in time to get parked and be at registration punctually.

Lunchtime

If you wish your child to purchase food in school, please ensure that the relevant parent pay account has credit. We regret that we cannot ordinarily provide food to pupils where there are no funds available in the account. From the start of the Trinity term we will return to the use of biometrics (finger print) for meal purchases. Sixth Form may leave the school grounds at lunch time in line with conditions which have been explained to them, they may not use their cars at lunchtime.

Staffing

Mrs Ann Kelly has served the school community for almost thirteen years in a very pupil facing role. Mrs Kelly will be retiring at the end of April and we want to take this opportunity to thank her for her service and wish her and her family every happiness in the years ahead.

And finally....

It takes a community to make a school successful and on behalf of the Governors and all of our Staff I would like to pay tribute to your children whose contribution to school life is highly valued and also to wish you all a happy and blessed Easter.

Yours faithfully

Graham Montgomery

Headmaster

