

# LORETO

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Grammar School  
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Principal: Mrs Gráinne T. O'Hanlon B.Ed., M.Ed., P.Q.H.

Dear students,

I hope you are all doing well.

We are currently in a situation that none of us could have predicted this time last year. It's definitely not how we expected the academic year to finish. These are uncertain and frightening times. Like me, you may be feeling anxious about the future, frightened for those who are most at risk from this virus and upset by the fact that we can't socialise with our friends and certain members of our family for the time being. Life has in many ways been put on hold and I know how frustrating this can feel. Just know, that we are all in this together.

My experience of social distancing so far has brought new challenges and immense change to my routine as no doubt, it has for all of you as well. My parents are both key workers in the hospital, and with the schools closed, I have had to take on the role of a teacher for my youngest sister who is still in primary school. Life is anything but normal at the minute, which means that we all need to take the initiative to adapt to this new situation and help out at home in any way we can.

While this virus doesn't seem to cause as much harm to young people compared to our elderly relatives, it is imperative that we do our part to protect those who love and care for us every day. If there was a reverse scenario, where children were at greatest risk, I don't think we could even imagine or comprehend the extent our parents, grandparents and other guardians would go to in order to save our lives. You need to stay at home. Don't meet up with friends or people in your wider family circle, because you would be doing them, their family, yourself and your own family a massive disservice by encouraging the spread of this virus, which could result in someone becoming seriously ill. We all have to act responsibly in order to protect ourselves, our friends, family and community. We can tackle this virus by making the right choices in the upcoming weeks and hopefully this way, life in our communities can return to normal as soon as possible, undoubtedly wounded but not mortally so.

Social distancing regulations could last many months, but try not to see this as a period of imprisonment, but instead, an opportunity for personal development. We may never again experience such a lengthy break from our usual routine of work until we have retired, so make the most of your time. We all have a skill that we always wanted to acquire or a talent that we want to perfect but until recently, simply haven't had the time. Now is that time. Learn something new, accomplish a goal and be productive so you can look back on this time with satisfaction that you used your time well.

I've been in touch with the Deputy Head Girls Orla and Caoimhe who are both doing well. Caoimhe told me that one of the most important things she's learned over the last two weeks is to enjoy the simple things in our lives, especially the valuable time we're getting to spend with our families, as well as the chance to recharge and relax at home.

It's important that we all try to form a daily routine in these new circumstances, especially in relation to the completion of online schoolwork, which will help us to stay focussed and add a sense of purpose to each day. The teachers are dedicating their time and effort to provide us with the resources for

remote learning, for which we are extremely grateful. We must ensure to engage with this new learning format so that we can continue to progress and be prepared for our studies in the next academic year. When this finally comes to an end, I hope we will not forget the misery and loneliness that we may have experienced at times during this period of isolation, because then we will forever appreciate the freedom and independence that we used to take for granted. May we never complain about school again but value the time we get to spend with our friends and our opportunity to learn. May we have a greater appreciation for our elderly relatives who at the moment, we wish we could spend some time with, and in the future, may we make a greater effort to visit them more often. May we have more gratitude for the gift of life and all the amazing experiences that we will have, because this virus has taught us how fragile and vulnerable we are as human beings, but also how much stronger we can be when we unite and fight together.

Keep the patients who are suffering from Covid-19 at the present time and the NHS staff on the front line who are so valiantly working to save lives in your thoughts and prayers over the next few weeks. I hope that you all remain safe and healthy over the next few months. Look after yourselves and your families, and we will make it through this soon.

Una  
Head Girl