Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that this letter finds you and all your family and friends well in these very strange times.

As Principal, I am so proud of all the work our students and teachers have been doing over the course of the recent weeks through distance-learning and I ask that you please keep up and sustain this engagement over the next few weeks. To our parents, thank you for all the support that you have shown the school community over the last few weeks. I ask you to encourage your sons/daughters and please do not for any reason let their opportunities for continued learning slip.

I am very aware that both students and staff are missing the school environment, their friendships, the laughter, and their daily interactions making the remote-contact with teachers and fellow students all the more important during this time.

We are now entering week two of our final 6 weeks of the last term of the academic year 2020.

In relation to distance learning and access to the internet or any other issues that may be impacting on your sons/daughters learning could I ask that you contact us via info@scoildara.ie and let us know the nature of the issue(s). We are so aware of the many issues affecting daily-life at home - minding small children, home-schooling with children, caring for family members, balancing work along with all of the above.

I would ask all of our parents/guardians to ensure that your sons/daughters are engaged on Office365, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo or whatever educational platform their teachers may be using with them and that they are engaging with the work assigned to them, in all subjects, to the best of their ability. It is important that students correspond with teachers regarding difficulties they are having or any support they need.

The Leaving Certificate has been postponed to late July and we will be working with our students to ensure they are prepared and have the support that they need in the lead up to the start date.

For Junior Certificate students, there is a lot of media coverage surrounding the exam and speculation about the format it may take. Please be assured that we will share with you the outcome of the pending discussions once the Department of Education and Skills issue their announcement. The following information has been sent by the management body to secondary schools and represents the current proposals:

1. Students in recognised schools are required to study subject and short courses in accordance with the Junior Cycle Programme as set out in DES Circular 0055/2019

2. Students are not required to undertake Junior Cycle final examinations in 2020

3. Schools are free to use the assessments provided through the NCCA and SEC, but they are also free to design and organise the assessment of students’ progress in accordance with their own schools’ policies

4. Examination fees in respect of this year’s Junior Cycle will not apply

In relation to the Junior Cycle examinations, Classroom-Based Assessments, Assessment Tasks and project work, the Minister believes that it would be preferable that discussions with the

education partners are concluded before schools consider their assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle students in 2020.

The Minister for Education is due to make a statement around Junior Cycle and we await this clarification before we make a decision for our 3rd Years.

As a school community, the Senior Management Team, Year Heads, Tutors, Special Education Teachers, Guidance Counsellors and all teachers are here to support you over the coming weeks in whatever way we can.

We will keep you updated of any developments on our website, twitter or by text.

I wish you all the very best as we continue our journey together through this exceptional time.

Yours sincerely

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D. McCormack