



20th March 2023

Dear Third Year Parents/Guardians,

We hope that this communication finds you well and that you all had a nice long weekend.

Thank you to all of you who braved the elements for our recent Third Year Parent teacher meeting on Thursday 9th March. It was great to see so many of you in attendance and this will be a great support to your children over the next three months.

Following Mock Examinations, corrections, feedback and reports, if there are any areas where your child needs further clarity, please encourage your child to speak to the relevant teacher. All of our Third Year teachers and the Third Year Team are here to support your child over the remaining ten weeks of the school year.

We are aware that some Third Year parents/guardians are concerned about our lunchtime protocols and the need for students to socialise and eat their lunch outside. Please know that if there was a simple solution to this issue, then it would have been found by now.

As mentioned previously, one of the challenges which we have had this year is with the Department of Education's reduction in staffing resources for safe supervision of all secondary school students at breaks and lunchtimes.

As a result, we do not have adequate supervision resources to safely supervise students across nine separate base classrooms as well as our three outdoor yard areas/social spaces. In addition to this, with our interim accommodation, we do not have one large canteen area where students can eat or socialise indoors.

This means that that students are required to go outside at break and lunchtime when the weather permits. Thanks to one of our generous Third Year parents, we have installed a large outdoor thermometer on display outside classroom no.4. For days when the outside temperature is below 5 degrees or when it is raining/generally inclement, we are able to provide extra supervision in order to accommodate students remaining in their classrooms at break and lunchtimes.

However, this usually means cancelling all lunchtime clubs and staff lunchtime planning meetings scheduled for that day. While we can put these measures in place on an occasional basis, it is unfortunately, not currently possible to put this practice in place for every lunchbreak.

Currently 30% of our staff supervise every lunch-break with almost every one of our teaching staff involved in coordinating one or more of the fifteen lunchtime clubs that we offer as well as a number of teachers providing specific lunchtime support to some of our students with additional needs.

We acknowledge that this situation is very far from ideal. The solution which we want and which your children deserve is for the Department of Education to deliver on their commitments to our school community and provide us with a permanent home.

Your children /our students deserve dining, social and recreational facilities like their peers in all of our neighbouring schools. However, before we eventually get our permanent home, we will need to work together to find creative, sustainable solutions to such complex, messy problems.

Last week, we met with some Third Year students from both base classes to hear their concerns and explore other possible solutions. One of our local TDs, Chris Andrews also attended this meeting to hear our students outline the current challenges of our interim accommodation. He intends to raise this matter with the Minister for Education this week once the Dail resumes sitting.

This meeting was also be an opportunity for us to provide a platform for greater student leadership in our school. Our commitment to you is that we will try to find a better solution to this issue. However it is possible that until our current teacher allocation grows further, most of the existing practices and procedures may need to stay in place for the rest of Term 2 and Term 3. We expect our current teacher allocation to grow next year by around 35%.

On a different but related note, some of the Third Year parent to teacher interactions on Thursday 9th March, around this issue were clearly not in alignment with our core values of mutual respect and understanding. We very much understand that this issue is of huge importance to many of you as it is to us.

The strength of our school community is anchored around providing the best possible educational experience that we can, given the physical and human resources at our disposal. We all want the same for the young people who attend our school.

Our commitment to each of you, as outlined in our Third parent info talk on 21st September 2022, is that as a parent of one of our students, you will always be heard and will always be treated with respect, empathy and understanding. This is the behaviour which all of the adults here in our school, model every day for your children.

The purpose of parent-teacher meetings in our school are to solely focus on your child's progress in subject specific areas. Each of these individual meetings are six minutes in duration. Unfortunately, as a result of a focus on lunchtime issues, some of our parents did not get to speak with a number of the subject teachers to whom they had come in to speak to about their child's progress in a range of subjects.

General issues of a non-subject specific nature should be addressed via a telephone call or an email to your child's tutor or Year Coordinator.

We kindly ask that going forward, all future interactions between parents and staff are approached in a manner that is respectful and courteous.

We will update you all over the coming weeks after we have met again with third year students, our student council and staff.

Thank you for your continued support.
It is hugely appreciated.

Kind regards,
Pádraig Conaty
Principal

Mick Heffernan
Deputy Principal