



Pobalscoil Ghort Inse Guaire

Gort Community School

GORT, COUNTY GALWAY, H91C9K1

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7th July, 2021

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I would like to thank all our Parents/Guardians for supporting our school during this difficult time in the history of education in our country. The many messages of encouragement and positive feedback from Parents and indeed many students, were very much appreciated.

Your support of your child's journey through second level education is much appreciated. Parents play a very important role in education. We in Gort Community School, will work tirelessly to maximise students potential and I am confident that with the support of Parents we will achieve our aim.

We had a significant closure again this year due to COVID-19, with all schools in the country closing for over two months. I would like to commend our students for their online engagement during the closure. The feedback from parents and teachers was very positive.

I would like to pay tribute to the teachers for their dedication and significant additional commitment to prepare, teach and engage online with our students. Our Microsoft 365 Platform and TEAMS provided the link for learning remotely.

Since the closure the Junior Certificate was cancelled and the option of Accredited Grades System was introduced for the Leaving Certificate 2021.

We have dealt with numerous challenges this year, all of which have made us stronger both as a school and as a community. I am confident that whatever challenges face us in the year ahead we will overcome them together with, as always, the best interests of our students in mind. Our school motto '**Ni neart go cur Le cheile**' has never been more appropriate. Strength in unity and working together as a team has enabled us to deal with these difficult times.

Reopening of School

We will be returning to school on Monday the 30th of August and students will be phased back to school, the schedule of return will be circulated to all parents/guardians.

We envisage that the COVID procedures and protocols will be in place up to Christmas at a minimum and we await further instruction from the Department of Education. The protocols in place have kept us all safe. It is a team effort and I would like to thank all our school community for adhering to the new rules and regulations. It is not easy on any of us and we look forward to a time when these measures can be relaxed. Unfortunately, we are not there yet.

The following procedures will remain in place for the new school:

- Increased hand washing/sanitizing
- Enhanced cleaning regimes: additional cleaning rosters.
- If unwell stay at home policy.
- Restricted movement within the school, one way systems.
- Physical distancing-increasing separation/decreasing interaction.
- Contact tracing systems; Response plans
- A number of staff will be appointed as COVID-19 representatives.
- COVID training for all Staff.

Building projects:

- The Department of Education in a recent demographic survey highlighted that Gort Community School will have a Long Term Projected enrolment of 1200 pupils. In June 2021 we were approved a significant increase to our original additional accommodation (Major extension) The list of approved accommodation is listed below.
19x General Classrooms, 7x SET rooms, 2x meeting rooms, 1x DP office, 3 purpose built classroom SEN base, 1x Art room, 1x Home Ec. Room, 1x Graphics room, 3x Science Lab/2 prep area, 1x Construction Studies/Prep. area, 1x Engineering room, 1x Tech. Prep room, 3x Project store, 1x staff room, 1x General Purpose/Dining area.
This will provide the staff and students with the facilities they deserve and will future proof the school. The scale of the initial extension has now tripled in size.
- Phase I- Planning permission for a structure to facilitate 6 classrooms was granted in May and we are going to tender presently. We plan on starting this Phase 1 of our building works in July/August.
- Our application for a **Sports Capital Grant** to resurface the school Astro Turf was completed and was lodged last February (€180,000). We are awaiting to hear the outcome of the application.

2020/2021 Review.

We are always striving to improve and ensure that our students have the best facilities to enable them to reach their full potential. We have excellent facilities in Gort Community School and we will continue to build on this. We have had many highlights during our academic school year, some are listed below:

- Two of our Leaving certificate students in 2020 received over 600 points, with one student receiving the maximum of 625 points. This is the 4th year in a row that Gort CS have had students achieve maximum points in the Leaving Certificate.
- Congratulations to Paddy Commins LC 2020 who received a sports scholarship to GMT.
- Congratulations to Róisín Clancy LC 2020 who received a scholarship which was awarded by Johnston and Johnston for Women in Engineering at the University of Limerick.
- The launching of our 'Le Cheile' CD to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Gort CS took place on Thursday the 19th of November with special guest Sean Keane in attendance.
- The official launch of our Gort CS GAA O'Neills shop was launched recently. You can access the link through our website.
- Jenna Coughlan a current 6th year student won a prestigious music award. Her original composition 'Smoke Storms' explores themes of Climate Change and is available on Spotify

and Apple Music. If Covid restrictions were not in place Jenna would have travelled to Los Angeles to record her track. The album 'Think Earth's Volume 1 EP' has been released by an internationally recognized organization 'Future Youth Records', this organisation is renowned for combating Environmental issues.

- Congratulations to Rachel O'Mahony in Mr Maddens 3rd year English class who recently got her 6 word story published in the Irish Independent with – **‘What’s a little secret between friends’**

Updates on recent changes

1. Our enrolment for 2021 will be over 900 pupils for the first time in the history of the school.
2. We have been approved a third Deputy Principal for Gort CS and the recruitment process has commenced.
3. We have developed a new School Website and I would encourage you to keep up to date on school events and activities on our [Website](#) and [Facebook page](#). We also have school [Instagram](#), [Youtube](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts.
4. As part of our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and in light of research on the effect of phone use/social media on student wellbeing, concentration levels and resilience, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students will not be permitted use of their mobile phones between 9am – 4pm. If you need to contact your son/daughter on urgent matters during these hours you can contact the School Reception 091632163.
5. **We are currently in the process of negotiating a new 5 year Licence Agreement with the Community Centre to rent the hall during school term from 2021 – 2026, The Community Centre have proposed a rent increase from €25,000 to €30,000 per year. This is under review.**

Conclusion

I hope that this letter provides some flavour of the ongoing initiatives and developments in Gort Community School.

It is very important that parents read and are familiar with the school **‘Code of Good School Behaviour’** which is part of every student’s School Journal.

I also enclose important dates for the year ahead and a School Calendar with all the holidays, closure days etc. A General Information Document is also attached. If you need any further information, do not hesitate to contact the school office.

I hope that you and your family have a good summer and we look forward to working with you in the years ahead.

If there are any changes to the schedule or procedures for reopening Gort Community School in August, I will be in touch.

Yours in Education,



Brian Crossan,

Principal.