



St. Mary's Secondary School

Convent of Mercy, Newport, Co. Tipperary V94 RY18

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Registered Charity Number: 20148379



Remote Learning Policy

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport, is a Voluntary Catholic Secondary School under the Trusteeship and the Patronage of C.E.I ST. (Catholic Schools, An Irish Schools Trust). The School is grant aided by the Department of Education & Skills, and is a co-educational school.

School Management: The Board of Management of St. Mary's Secondary School is a statutory Board, appointed pursuant to the provisions of the Education Act 1998.

Mission Statement:

St. Mary's Secondary School, Newport operates as a Catholic Co-educational Secondary School, to provide teaching and learning of the highest quality for the benefit of the community which it serves.

In pursuing this mission we aim:

- To provide a quality educational experience that caters for the full range of academic aptitude and abilities.
- To foster the intellectual, physical, social, cultural, moral and religious development of our students.
- To enable pupils to achieve their full potential academically.
- To promote the Catholic ethos and faith.
- To cater for the needs of the local community in so far as ethos, resources and facilities permit.

Ethos: As a CEIST school, St. Mary's seeks to promote the five key elements of the CEIST charter.

Promoting Spiritual and Human Development.

Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning.

Showing Respect for Every Person.

Creating Community.

Being Just and Responsible.

Background/ Rationale

This policy was created in response to the Public Health Emergency in 2020, namely the Covid-19 emergency. The events surrounding Covid-19 and the enforced closure of schools to students has highlighted the absolute necessity for schools to be prepared to support the continuity of teaching and learning. As a contingency for any recurrence of school or class closures, and to ensure ongoing support for learning, it is essential that our school strengthen and consolidate its capacity to respond. Here at St Mary's Secondary school, Newport, we have been embedding digital technologies in teaching and learning, supported by the Digital Learning Framework (DLF) and continuous professional development in recent years. Engagement with remote learning at St Mary's during the period of school closure, demonstrated that while many students were in a position to respond effectively, following public health restrictions, for others, the response times were slower and capacity to respond was limited, or very limited. Our school platform, Google Classroom, which facilitates communication and the continuity of teaching and learning, has proven invaluable to our school community during the closures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Aim

This policy on remote learning is intended to provide guidance for the conduct of remote teaching and learning, i.e. from a place other than school. Clear guidelines and important information will be presented to all stakeholders in our school community, the students, the staff, and the parents, surrounding the use of technology when learning remotely. This policy operates as a communication and learning statement, in supporting all those involved, to respond in the event of a partial or full school closure in the future. It is acknowledged that the majority of our school community has already successfully embraced remote learning during the public health restrictions, when students were unable to attend school.

This remote learning policy will serve, not just as a contingency plan in the event of future school closures, but it will also ensure that both the current and future embedding of digital technologies can be progressed. Advances in technology mean that assignments can be delivered remotely, and that greater access to information on the Internet affords opportunities for real learning to take place, under the watchful and professional guidance of the teacher.

St Mary's Secondary school strives to inform students, staff and parents that the standards and values that are instilled in all of our policies remain, no matter how we change our teaching and learning methodologies, or the location of that teaching and learning. This includes remote learning, or when a child is being taught in an environment that is not within the school building, and the teacher is working remotely and is not present with the student(s). In other words, when a student is being directed remotely, it is very important that all partners are aware that once a learning exchange takes place between a student and teacher, whether at home or in school, the same statutory rules apply, i.e. the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and all of the school's policies.

Policy formation

This document has been created after a thorough consultation process undertaken by the volunteers on the committee whose responsibility it has been to create this policy. Students, parents and staff have all been consulted as the framework for design and roll out of our Remote Teaching and learning practices takes shape.

To this end, surveys have been conducted and collated as to how best meet the needs of our students. Staff have identified areas where training can be designed to assist with use of the Google Classroom technologies, and the various apps that can assist the delivery of teaching content remotely. Training workshops for staff will be taking place, utilising the expertise on staff, in the areas of remote teaching technology.

Focus groups of students were conducted where we met with groups of students and discussed their feedback on how previous remote learning experiences had been for them. The main focus of these discussions was to try establish what ways we, as a school, could tailor our remote learning and teaching practices to best meet the needs of the students, especially in the context of the Covid 19 pandemic. The feedback from these discussions has been relayed to both the Senior Management Team as well as the Student Support Team.

The Parent's Council have also been involved in the discussions as part of planning for the implementation of this policy. The importance of clear communication was emphasised here as well as having a regular structure and routine in times of enforced remote learning and teaching. The Parents have reported back to the school overwhelmingly that following the school timetable is a significant help in managing students' learning while they are in the home environment.

Lastly, our committee looked at best practice in other schools, what has been working well elsewhere, and things best avoided when trying to teach and learn remotely. All of this information has been taken on board in finalising this policy.

There are four main parts to our Remote Learning and Teaching Policy, 1)the role of students, 2)the role of staff, 3) the role of Parents/Guardians and 4) attendance and participation.

Role of Students

The main aim of our Remote Learning and Teaching policy is to set out how to best meet the learning needs of all of our students. We recognise that learning and teaching remotely falls short of the all-round learning experience here in the school, where teachers and students can communicate and interact best, and students get the social experience of meeting their friends also. However, by following a few basic rules and guidelines, quality remote learning can be achieved by each student, through close co-operation with their teachers, and support from their parents/ guardians.

Here are our expectations of all students;

- The **School Code of Behaviour** will be followed at all times in the Remote Learning context. Disciplinary matters will be reported to Year Heads, and will be dealt with in the usual manner.
- The **school timetable** applies. Students will be following the normal school timetable from home, to achieve optimal learning. This provides clarity, certainty and structure to the learning process.
- **Live lessons** take place for **2 out of every 3 lessons on timetable**. Students shall attend all live lessons. Absences are to be reported in the usual manner to the student's Year Head.
- Students will have their **learning materials like books and pens** for class as they would were they in school.
- Students **shall follow teacher instruction** on use of microphones and cameras in live lesson.
- **GDPR**. Lessons cannot be recorded and/or photos/images of the lesson cannot be taken. This is to protect each person's privacy. It is considered a serious breach of our School Code of Behaviour, and our Acceptable Usage policy to do so, and will be dealt with accordingly.
- **Punctuality** is important. Students are to be on time to all live lessons.
- **Assignments** and work are expected to be submitted in a timely manner and to the best of the students' ability.
- The **School Journal** shall be used by students to help organise their work, and enable them to best meet deadlines, and the orderly submittal of assignments.
- **Should students feel overwhelmed** in any way, or feel like they are falling behind, we would ask them to contact their Subject Teacher, their Year Head or their tutor and the matter will be dealt with accordingly.

Role of Staff

Teachers will endeavour to best meet the learning needs of the students in the context of teaching remotely. A tailored training workshop for teaching remotely will be taking place for staff in order to upskill on the use of the various educational technologies and apps. This will help to best meet the learning needs of the students in the rapidly developing and changing educational technology field. The following are guidelines that teachers will follow whilst teaching remotely.

- Teachers will follow the **school timetable**.
- **Attendance will be taken** on VShare for live lessons.
- **Live lessons** will take place for **2 out of every 3 lessons on timetable**.
- **Communication** will take place on Google Classroom and, where necessary, via the school email system.
- **Disciplinary matters** will be reported to Year Heads in the usual manner.
- The **Senior Management and Student Support Teams** will meet to monitor student wellbeing in endeavouring to best meet the needs of our most vulnerable students.

Role of Parents/ Guardians

The support of the Parents/ Guardians is essential at all times in order for the best educational outcomes to be attained by any student. This is especially true in the context of remote teaching and learning. We recognise the many challenges that parents face when having students at home, but, with good communication and keeping to sensible guidelines, many of the challenges can be overcome. Here are a number of areas where parents/guardians can work in tandem with us, as a school community, in order to get the best results for your child whilst learning remotely.

- **Communication is key.** If your child is having difficulties with the learning material, contact us using the usual channels. Should your child be absent from lesson for a particular reason, then contact the school to alert us to as you would were the school open.
- Follow the **Timetable**. The teachers are following the timetable to best meet the needs of your son/daughter. Being familiar with the timetable will help you manage and support your child, while they are learning remotely.
- **Google classroom** is where we set assignments. Monitor your child's Google Classroom profile in order to keep up to date with the assignments that they are completing, deadlines that they need to meet, and topics that they are currently working on in class.
- **Reasonable hours.** Teachers will work to get assignments and work corrected and returned as expediently as possible. We ask that Parents/ Guardians be cognisant of encouraging students to get work submitted at reasonable hours.

- **Technology /wifi issues** can and will arise from time to time. Should this be a problem, simply communicate this to us in the school office, so that the teachers of your child will be informed.

Attendance and Participation

The overwhelming evidence gathered from all stakeholders during the formation process of this policy pointed towards the importance of both attendance and participation. It is crucial that students attend each and every live lesson. Should there be a reason for their absence, parents are asked to communicate with the school in the usual manner. In order to succeed and prosper during the extended periods of learning remotely, students need to attend regularly, and participate in the lessons.

Teachers are working to complete their programmes of learning in the best possible way, considering the challenges of teaching remotely. Students participating in the live lessons will facilitate good communication with their subject teacher, and will enable the teacher to best plan and tailor their teaching methodologies in order to meet the needs of each student. Students being absent can mean that they quickly fall behind, and the difficulties for them to catch up on the work missed will only make the experience of learning remotely all the more difficult.

Balance is important. We would emphasise breaks, walks and getting some fresh air for students whilst learning remotely. Getting away from the screen at opportune times will best help them to refresh, and to be ready for their next live lesson.

We acknowledge and recognise the many problems, worries and complications that can arise for all of our students, parents and teachers from the advent of learning and teaching remotely. We hope, however, that this policy has given some degree of clarity and certainty for people during times where students have to learn remotely. There is an adjustment for each and every member of the school community when schools are forced to close, but, with clear communication, understanding and mutual support, we hope that we can best meet these challenges.

Timetable for Review

The Remote Learning Policy will be reviewed as the need arises, and/or every three years. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2024.

Policy development team: Mr. D. O'Callaghan, Ms. E. Mullally, Ms. G. Foley, Mr. D. Hickey, Ms. J Moore, Ms. M. Caffrey, Mr. S. Kennedy.

Relevant dates for this policy

Parents surveyed: April, 2020

Students Surveyed: 11th May, 2020

Students focus group meetings: 4th November, 2020

Results and draft policy presented to Student Support team, 18th November, 2020

Results and draft policy presented to Senior Management team, 1st December, 2020

Draft policy presented to Staff: 4th March, 2021

Draft policy presented to Students' Council: 28th April, 2021

Draft policy send to Parents' Council: 10th May, 2021

Draft policy presented to Board of Management: 12th May, 2021

Policy ratified by Board of Management:

Signed:

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date:

12th May, 2021


12/5/2021