



Newsletter - Autumn Term (2)

November 2021

I hope you and your family had a relaxing mid-term break after the first half of Autumn Term 2021. I would like to thank all of our PCS community for the hard work and support that made the start to this academic year a successful one despite the ongoing Public Health restrictions that apply to our daily work as a Post Primary school. As a staff, we value the support of our families and we look forward to continuing to work constructively with you in the weeks and months ahead.

New Staff

I would like to take this opportunity to 'officially' welcome a number of new colleagues and colleagues who have changed roles. Congratulations to Ms Elaine Moran who was appointed as Deputy Principal in October 2021. Ms Moran will assume D.P. responsibility for 2nd and 6th years, with whom she has worked closely as Year Head in the past.

Ms Brona Coggins and Mr Donagh Murphy to the Careers & Guidance and Technology departments respectively. Ms Coggins and Mr Murphy joined us in recent weeks and have already settled into life at PCS.

Ms Coggins and Mr Farrell are planning a number of interesting events in the coming weeks to offer particular support to our Leaving Certificate 2022 students. More details to follow via announcements on 6th year Google Classroom.

Parents Association

The Parents Association AGM was held online on 12 October 2021. Many thanks to those of you who joined the zoom meeting for that. The next meeting will be held on 9 November and the newly elected Chairperson, Mr Alex Dumas, will be in contact with further details. Please check the Parents Association area on the school website for details of events and P.A. news.

Please check that your contact details, especially parent email address, are correct on VSWare as this will greatly help communication between the P.A. and you.

Social Media & Student Wellbeing

Year Heads and the Senior Leadership Team noticed a worrying spike in negative incidents involving student interactions on social media and messaging apps before the mid-term break. I would urge you to continue to support your son/daughter's use of social media and messaging apps to help them to manage their interactions with peers in a way that avoids conflict and upset whether intended or otherwise. Our Facebook and Twitter pages regularly publicise events and resources to assist parents and students in working together to ensure that these platforms and apps are the source of positive communication.

The school's Cyberbullying Policy is available on our website along with our Anti-Bullying policy and it is essential for parents and students to be familiar with these for the wellbeing, happiness and protection of all.

Zeeko Education will be working with 2nd year students and their parents in December 2021 in order to address this need. 1st and 3rd year students and their parents will take part in these workshops early in 2022.

First Year Progress/ Information Evening 2021

The annual First Year Information evening will return this term on 11 November. Deputy Principal Ms Molamphy and Year Head Ms Morrissey will be in contact with parents of 1st years with details of the Zoom meeting for this event.

Covid 19 Update

Following the Cabinet decisions on the reopening of society on 22nd October there was no change notified regarding lifting of mitigation measures for schools. The guidelines on social distancing, hand hygiene, mask wearing, and respiratory etiquette therefore continue to apply and this is expected to continue in the medium to long term.

Our representative body, the ACCS, have informed schools that they will continue to engage with the Department seeking guidance and clarification for schools at the earliest opportunity. The Department of Education has committed to issue guidance during the week following midterm break on issues such as Parent Teacher Meetings, Physical Distancing, School Trips and a range of other school activities. We will continue to provide updates as soon as these are available.

A number of students are regularly losing or forgetting their facial coverings. The office staff and I would be grateful if you could check or remind your son/daughter to carry a spare covering with them to school each day.

Extra Curricular Activities

We have recently been able to safely resume a number of activities in the sporting and practical subject areas. My thanks go to all staff and students who have worked so hard to ensure that these vital activities can take place in a safe way in compliance with the relevant Public Health guidelines.

I wish both our students and volunteer teachers a successful and enjoyable year ahead!

Lockers

While there has been 'no change' to the Public Health guidance for schools, we do intend to begin to make lockers available to some students on a very limited basis that should enable us to continue to comply with the requirement to maintain distance and reduce interaction between students. We will for now focus on providing lockers for 1st year students who are unable to go home at lunchtime to leave/ collect books and whose schoolbags are therefore heavier than their classmates'. We will begin working on this immediately following the midterm break.

Canteen

Mr Clarke and the Senior Leadership Team have been investigating several different potential providers of canteen services so that we can in the coming weeks once more offer lunch options to staff and students on site. All providers are now experienced in providing school canteen service in a Covid-19 compliant way. We will have further news on this very shortly.

Careers Assessments & Standardised Testing

During the first half-term we were able to complete DATS testing with our Transition Year students and Cognitive Ability Testing (CAT4) with our 1st year students. These assessments will help us to support your son/daughter during their time in school.

Appearance Policy

We thank students and parents for the greatly improved standards of school uniform during the first half-term, particularly in the wearing of the school jacket. This is the only coat/ jacket that may be worn in school. This includes P.E. days when the school jacket should be worn over sports clothing. While the requirement for increased ventilation remains in place, students are permitted to wear their uniform jacket as needed for warmth. Non-uniform coats/ jackets however will continue to be confiscated in line with our regulations.

We remind students that runners/ trainers are not part of the school uniform and therefore should not be worn to school unless for practical P.E. classes. This is especially important now that the weather will become increasingly wet and cold. Plain black leather/ leather look shoes should be worn on non-PE days. The vast majority of students are cooperating with this and we appreciate that.

The Deputy Principals and I will continue to keep you updated as the term progresses and hopefully we will be able to move towards resumption of further aspects of PCS life during this academic year. Please remember that the subject teachers, tutor, SEN team, Guidance Team, Chaplain and Year Heads are all keen to work with you to support your son/daughter on a daily basis.

Wishing you and your family a Happy Hallowe'en!

Kind Regards,

Helen Dargan & Staff