

Building school communities at a distance - Staying connected is key.

School leaders recognise the importance of connecting with the school community during these challenging times. Connections are made to encourage others while people are working remotely and may feel isolated. Collaboration is key to the school team's goals being realised. Ideally schools have established ways such as video conferencing as a means of staying connected and ensuring that everyone is up to speed on what is happening.

It is equally important that schools find opportunities to share and discuss ideas and to celebrate achievements with each other. Celebrating the small wins can help to motivate each other to keep going and to build on existing successes. Staying connected enables opportunities for feedback and learning from this can be invaluable for all.

Below are some examples of how schools have chosen to connect with each other:

Connections with staff:

- **Whole Staff meetings:** Schools schedule staff meeting once a week using ZOOM/ after school on Monday as live classes going ahead for the exam year groups and some other classes in other year groups.
- **Subject meetings** scheduled – 2 slots each day for required number of days – Senior Leadership Team (SLT) attends each meeting and facilitates check in session with staff, check challenges, share strategies, plan for new term.
- **Subject coordinators** meeting scheduled with SLT to focus on final term and review possibilities for assessment and end of year reporting to parents and students.
- **Student support meetings** – regular scheduling as schools monitor engagement and wellbeing
- **AP1 meetings** –SLT facilitate meeting to explore and discuss strategies to deal with issues as these arise, e.g. engagement, changing home circumstances, disadvantage, school meals, (Chaplain and Career Guidance and SENCo attend)
- **Year group meetings** – Year Head facilitates meeting with class tutors with focus on engagement, wellbeing, anxiety concerns, (3rd year- OAL collection) SEN issues, communication with home. This meeting feeds into AP meeting / SLT sits in on meeting / feeds into Student Support meeting. (Anchor /Liaison teacher from SEN team joins each meeting to listen to concerns and discuss students of concern re SEN)
- **Teachers of Year Group meeting** – YH facilitates meeting with all teachers of Year group with view to key messages for year group / discussion re arrangements for assessment and reporting at end of year. E.g. Teachers asked to set assignment for their subject area between Week one and week five of this term. Assignment to be used as end of year assessment and report home.
- **Principal has scheduled individual video calls with all members of staff** inviting each to chat about challenges, successes, and concerns to date.

Connections with parents:

- School website / school app/ emails – regular contact to home is made using these platforms.
- Video for parents about how to engage with the *Schoology Learning Management System* is posted onto the school's website.
- School issues online survey to all parents to elicit feedback on relevant issues to date. Survey findings shared with all staff at staff meeting.
- Parents of 3rd year and TY students re. options
 - a. Career Guidance and Principal recorded presentation with voice over explaining options for next year. Key dates explained and process set out.
 - b. Students receive email with option form (Google forms)
 - c. Principal, YH and Guidance Counsellor host a ZOOM meeting for parents with questions. Options to record for website – becomes main FAQ doc for those unable to attend.

Connections with students:

- Principal, Year Head and Guidance Counsellor facilitate assembly for 6th year students to explain plan for remainder of year and to address students on relevant issues. Plan to schedule assemblies for each year group in this way.
- Google forms and other online survey tools used by schools to elicit student concerns – these relate predominantly to pacing, level of work being set and clarity re exams and end of year.
- YH and SLT contact all 6th years individually by phone re progress/ connecting and checking in etc...
- Principal sends (via email) separate letter to all students in each year group re new term and plan for learning during the next 6 weeks – different focus for each year group.
- Principal and Guidance Counsellor send out bulletin to all 6th years (students/staff and parents) so that key messages are delivered to all three stakeholders at same time re SEC arrangements and arrangements for June and beyond, e.g. 3rd level concerns etc. General guidelines from NGCE included re wellbeing, pacing etc.
- SENCo in school created a file for each of the SEN students –School ended up sending one to all students (General Advice, useful links, how to ask for support, general guidance re Covid 19 etc.)
- ASD students –school remains in regular contact with students and families – schools advised by some families that schooling is secondary in current times – school continues to check in)
- SLT agreed email template for all staff to amend if/as necessary and to send to their own students – includes the key message while also taking account of the current challenges, includes concerns re level of engagement in the subject area etc.
- Each YH posts assembly notices/facilitates live assembly each week/each morning
- SS team agree wellbeing messages and online posts each week to enhance student wellbeing – these are posted to individual year groups and to all staff.