

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan Academic Year 2020/2021



Welcome Back

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan would like to welcome all our students back for the 2020/2021 school year. It has been a long time since Thursday 12th March 2020, when our school was forced to close due to Covid 19. We look forward to reopening more than ever this year, after such a prolonged shut down. There will be a number of aspects of school life that will be very different this year. These changes have been forced upon us due to Covid 19, and they are being felt by every school community throughout the country. We are very lucky to have such a supportive and sincere school community of families, staff and other partners at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan. We know that this support and this sincerity will be invaluable in getting us all through the many challenges that lie ahead. As we forge a path of education for our families through these challenges, we will always be guided by prioritising the health and welfare of all members of the school community. We ask for your patience and for your support in this regard.

Welcome for the 1st Time

We would like to extend the warmest of welcomes to our 100 new First Year students and their families, who will be joining us very soon. We look forward to working together with you over the next number of years. In particular, we would like to welcome those 1st Year families who are joining us for the very first time. We will be holding two identical information meetings for parents of incoming 1st Years in advance of the new school year. These meetings will be held on **Wednesday 19th August 2020 at 7:30pm in the Parish Centre Kilbeggan for parents whose child's surname begins with the letters A to L, and Thursday 20th August at 7:30pm in the Parish Centre for parents whose child's surname begins with the letters M to Z.** These two meetings are necessary as we can only have a maximum of 50 people at each meeting due to the Covid 19 restrictions on indoor gatherings. This meeting will give a brief introduction to the mechanics of school life, and will hopefully address any concerns that you may have about your child's transition to second level. This meeting is for **one parent from each family only**. Please ensure that you wear a face mask if you are attending the meeting. There are also a number of students joining us from other schools across other year groups. We welcome you to our school community, and we hope that you will be very happy here.

Updated School Calendar 2020/2021

The Updated School Calendar for Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan for the 2020/2021 Academic Year is now available at mercykilbeggan.ie. It can also be viewed at the end of this document. This takes into account the Covid 19 restrictions and challenges that we must face. It will be necessary to bring just one Year Group back per day to ensure that they are fully aware of the new Covid 19 measures that are in place around the school. All Parent Teacher Meetings still remain as per the original school calendar, but it remains uncertain as to whether these will go ahead or not. All events about which there is uncertainty are marked as provisional on the Updated School Calendar.

Return to School

The following schedule is in place for the students' return to school.

Wednesday 2nd September	1st Years & 6th Year Mentors (9.00am to 3.45pm)
Thursday 3rd September	1st Years, 5th Years & 6th Year Mentors
Friday 4th September	1st Years, 5th Years & 6th Years
Monday 7th September	1st / 3rd / 5th & 6th Years
Tuesday 8th September	1st / 2nd / 3rd / 5th & 6th Years
Wednesday 9th September	All Students Back

Covid 19 Changes

There will be a number of significant changes to daily school life arising out of the Guidelines for the Full Reopening of Schools due to Covid 19. These changes will be explained and demonstrated to each Year Group on the day that they return. These include the following, which may be subject to change arising out of ongoing Public Health Advice—

- The school day will run as normal from 9.00am to 3.45pm.
- Students will go directly to their 9.00am timetabled classroom when they enter the school in the morning.
- Each 1st Year, 2nd Year, 3rd Year and Transition Year Class Group will be assigned a Base Classroom, in which they will remain for the maximum number of classes possible. The teachers will move between these classrooms.
- Each classroom has been reconfigured to allow a minimum of one metre physical distancing in the classroom.
- There will be a strict One Way System in place throughout the school which will facilitate physical distancing. This will be clearly signposted.
- Students will be required to wear face masks as they travel between classes on the corridors. We fully support students wearing face coverings in the classrooms if they wish to do so.
- There will be no lockers available to students in order to maintain physical distancing and student health whilst the current guidelines are in place. Teachers will work with students to ensure that the load of the school bag is kept to a minimum whilst lockers are not available. The school is equipped to facilitate students using wheelie bags when they need to move between classes.
- The school canteen will not be accessible to students to avoid congregations and to maintain physical distancing. The small break circa 11.00am will be staggered across years to minimise the number of students out of class at any one time. The main lunchtime break will be increased from 30 minutes to 45 minutes running from 1.00pm to 1.45pm. The full detail of these changes will be explained to students when they return.
- There will be no shop at the 11.00am or lunchtime break, to avoid congested queuing and to maintain physical distancing. Browne's on the Green will continue to act as the school catering company, offering a reduced lunch menu to all students. Lunches may be ordered before school on arrival at the main entrance, and these lunches will then be distributed to the designated Base Classrooms at lunchtime. All students will eat their lunches in their designated Base Classrooms or outside if the weather permits.

Covid 19 Changes (continued)

- All 6th, 5th & Transition Year students and those students living in Kilbeggan who are going to their own homes for lunch remain allowed to leave the school grounds at lunchtime. These students must have a Lunchtime Indemnity Form signed by their parent/guardian. The school reserves the right to withdraw this permission to leave the school at lunchtime. We will impress upon students the importance of maintaining physical distancing whilst off site, and we respectfully ask for your support in this regard.
- Students will have to bring their own drinks for the full school day as water fountains present a risk of contagion by the very nature of their contact with multiple bottles. It is hoped to install a Water Vending Machine in the school that will allow students to purchase bottles of water on an emergency basis.
- Warm water is now available for hand washing in all student bathrooms. There will be hand sanitizers placed at all entry/exit points throughout the school, and in every classroom. It is essential that all students practice good hand hygiene and proper cough etiquette at all times. When a class is leaving a classroom at any time, they will be directed by their teacher to sanitize their workstation thoroughly in advance of any new class coming into the room.
- There will be a full time cleaner on-site throughout the school day cleaning all common access areas, toilets, door handles etc. on a continuous basis. We insist that all students co-operate fully and assist to ensure that the school remains as clean, hygienic and tidy as possible.
- Students will be expected to wear their full school uniform at all times, with the normal exception of PE time.
- Evening Study will continue as normal subject to one metre physical distancing. We are encouraging families to only avail of Evening Study if it is absolutely necessary and essential.
- It is not yet clear what will happen in terms of inter-school sporting and extra-curricular events.
- All students should have their own resources for each subject in school, unless a particular subject dictates that it is not practical to do so. The teachers in each classroom will direct each student as to what it is necessary to get.
- **All visits** to the school by parents must be by prior appointment by contacting (057)9332292 or principal@mercykilbeggan.ie. If you wish to meet any member of the school staff in person, please make an appointment with the member of staff in advance, and wait in your car to be called by phone into the school by the same staff member. All visitors must wear a face covering in order to enter the school campus.
- If you need to drop off anything to the school for your son/daughter, please only do so in matters of emergencies. Please ensure that your child has everything that they need for school, and if they forget something, please do not call to the school, unless it is a matter of emergency. This will have to be strictly adhered to in the best interest of everybody's health and safety.
- If you need to collect your child from the school during the school day, please ring the doorbell at the red reception doors and wait there until you are attended to.
- In the past we have always encouraged all students to attend school even if they did not feel 100%. This year, as a matter of precaution we will be encouraging students to stay at home if they are experiencing in any small way any of the symptoms associated with Covid 19
- There will be a Covid 19 Emergency Sick Bay beside the school office building. We hope that we will not have any suspected cases of Covid 19, but we will use this as an isolation area if we do.

School Website

Please ensure to keep a close eye on the school website mercykilbeggan.ie. This is a great way to celebrate the daily events that take place in our school, and maintain good communication with our wider school community. The website is even more important and relevant in light of evolving developments in relation to Covid 19. There is a Weekly Planner available on the website that indicates the school activities for the week ahead, which will assist families with their own individual planning for collections, events etc.

Farewell & Good Luck

Due to the Covid 19 crisis, we were unable to extend a proper goodbye to the Class of 2020. We wish them every good fortune on the road that lies ahead, and we wish every success in their Leaving Cert Results in early September. We would also like to wish Heather Seery who has recently retired from her role as SNA in the school every blessing on her retirement.

Code of Behaviour

The Code of Behaviour sets out a significant number of school rules and expectations for all. This document is available to view at mercykilbeggan.ie, and it is also published as part of the school journal. All students have signed up to this Code of Behaviour and any associated amendments. It is important that all students always remain aware of the standards and procedures that are set down here. Please ensure that you are familiar with our Code of Behaviour.

Lost and Found

It is very important that our students respect and take care of their property at all times. Every day there are a number of clothing items and books left carelessly behind by students. In this regard, please ensure that your sons and daughters property is clearly labelled and identifiable. Each individual student is solely responsible for looking after their own property. Due to the Covi 19 landscape that we will be operating in this year, all belongings that are carelessly left behind will be disposed of at the end of school week, if they are not claimed.

School's Personal & Accident Insurance

The school offers students the benefit of Personal Accident Insurance cover. We ask that all students avail themselves of this. The 24-hour cover costs €10 which is included in each student's school costs.

Student School Gmail Account

Each student in the school has an @mercykilbeggan.ie school Gmail Account that is essential to their teaching and learning. This address is the only mechanism whereby teachers can communicate digitally with students through Google Classroom and email. It is absolutely essential that all families are aware of this Gmail Account including the child's Username and Password. In the event of any future school closure, this Gmail Account is the main conduit through which information can flow between students and teachers. As a priority, the school will ensure that all students will be familiarised with their school Gmail Username and Password on their return to school.

Book Rental Scheme

The school is continuing to offer a Book Rental Scheme to all students in the school. Textbooks will be distributed during the first week of term. The costs are described in the table below. The cost of additional books, if required in 6th Year, will be met by individual students. This scheme offers great savings for parents. Students are responsible for the purchase of their own copies, workbooks, pens/pencils, ingredients etc. All books must be covered and maintained by the students to ensure the continuance of the Book Rental Scheme. They must also be clearly marked with the students name and class. **It is important to note that the text books, although in the students' possession, remain the property of the school.**

Transition Year

Transition Year remains a very good option for all 3rd Year students from 2019/2020. It will allow these students to catch up on learning that was lost due to the enforced school closure on 12th March 2020, before they progress to their Leaving Cert Programme. It is intended to use Transition Year as a time to reinforce the basics in the core areas of Irish, English & Maths, that may have been missed in 3rd Year. It is also a very good year to be in Transition Year with so much uncertainty in the air as a result of Covid 19. As discussed at the TY Presentation last March, the estimated cost for TY activities for the school year 2020/2021 was to be €450. However, it is very unclear at this stage how much TY will cost due to the uncertainty over the exact number of trips and events that the TYs will be able to participate in. We are requesting that all incoming TYs should pay a €100 deposit, if you have not done so already. We will not look for any further money for TY activities for the moment until there is further clarity in this regard. We are also requesting that all TYs pay €70 for TY Book Rental, Administration and Insurance. We are not in a position to discuss any TY Foreign Trip at present.

Overall School Costs

Families are asked to pay their school costs before Friday 23rd October 2020. Please make all payments online using your family VSWare Account when it is set up to do so. This will negate the need to call to the school and the handling of money/cheques between people. If you are absolutely not in a position to make these payments online, please make all cheques payable to Mercy Secondary School. It is vital for the continuation of the Book Rental Scheme and the proper financial management of the school that all families pay these costs equally. If there is any issue with the payment of these costs, please contact the school in this regard.

	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year	TY	5 th Year	6 th Year
TY Deposit	---	---	---	€ 100	---	---
Book Rental	€ 120	€ 80	€ 60	€ 20	€ 200	---
Administration (€50/family)	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40	€ 40
Insurance	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10	€ 10
Total	€170	€130	€110	€170	€250	€ 50

VSWare Account

The school will continue to develop the VSWare Administration system to communicate with families. Each family has an online account at mercykilbeggan.vsware.ie whereby they can view their child's Profile, Timetable, Term Reports and Fees Section. We would respectfully request again that all school costs are paid online using this account, in so far as is practically possible. The Usernames and Passwords to log onto your child's account remain the same as last year. This portal will be refreshed for the new school year 2020/2021 no later than **Monday 17th August 2020**. New Usernames and Passwords will be issued by text to the Parents/Guardians of new 1st Year families for 2020/2021 by this date. We will send a text out to all families when this has taken place. If you have any queries or need to have your Username or Password reset, please contact principal@mercykilbeggan.ie.

New School

The New School for Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan up the Dublin Road which will cater for 650 students on a state of the art campus is progressing slowly but surely ahead in the new world of Covid 19. It is hoped to have a building contractor onsite before the end the calendar year 2020. We hope to be ready to move into our new school in September 2022, for the start of the 2022/2023 Academic Year. Once again, we thank all of our school community for patience, support and loyalty in this regard.

Use of Social Media

Social Media is always growing and developing around us, and oftentimes it is very hard to keep up with social media as quickly as your child is doing so. We completely understand the difficulty involved in monitoring and in protecting our students from the dangers involved with social media. Notwithstanding this, please be very vigilant and proactive in terms of your child's use of social media and the internet. Please ensure that your child understands the dangers of sharing personal information or making comments about other people online. **It is unacceptable and wrong for any individual to make negative comments about any other individual on any online forum.** Social Media sites are over-valued and over-used on many occasions. Always practise common sense, respect and care when using these sites.

Conclusion

The end of the 2019/2020 Academic Year at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan was a considerable challenge for all of our school community. We all had to evolve very dramatically and very quickly to a new landscape of Covid 19, which included remote learning, social distancing, cancelled trips, predicted grades, no sport, no recreation, amongst many other challenges. We worked hard, we persevered and we lived through those challenges together. We now face the beginning of the 2020/2021 Academic Year at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan with similar, plus additional challenges aforementioned above. Once again, if everybody works hard, and works together as we have always done in a spirit of co-operation, support and trust, we will overcome these challenges together. School life will be different, and it may be more complex than it used to be. But this will hopefully be just in the short term. We must all work together for the long term health and welfare of all our school community—students, staff, parents, grandparents, all loved ones alike. We are here to do the best job that we possibly can for all of our students—your children. We wish everyone a very happy and a very healthy 2020/2021 Academic Year at Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan, and we hope that we all have many shared positive moments together during this time.

Mercy Secondary School Kilbeggan



UPDATED School Calendar 2020-2021

Friday	28 th August 2020	Staff Meeting
Monday	31 st August 2020	Staff Covid Induction Training & Staff Planning
Tuesday	1 st September 2020	Staff Meeting & Staff Planning
Wednesday	2 nd September 2020	1 st Years & 6 th Year Mentors (9:00am - 3:45pm) Staff Planning
Thursday	3 rd September 2020	1 st Years, 5 th Years & 6 th Year Mentors
Friday	4 th September 2020	1 st Years, 5 th Years & 6 th Years
Monday	7 th September 2020	1 st Years, 3 rd Years, 5 th Years & 6 th Years
Tuesday	8 th September 2020	1 st Years, 2 nd Years, 3 rd Years, 5 th Years & 6 th Years
Wednesday	9 th September 2020	All Students Back
Monday	5 th October 2020	Junior Cycle In-service. Staff only. No school for students
Friday	9 th October 2020	Staff Meeting (1:15pm to 3:15pm)
Monday - Friday	19 th October 2020 – 23 rd October 2020 (Inclusive)	TY Work Experience
Monday	19 th October 2020 (<i>Provisional</i>)	3 rd Year Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Monday - Friday	26 th October 2020 – 30 th October 2020 (Inclusive)	Mid-term break
Thursday	12 th November 2020 (<i>Provisional</i>)	Open Night at 7:30pm
Saturday	14 th November 2020	Enrolment & Assessment
Tuesday	24 th November 2020 (<i>Provisional</i>)	6 th Year Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Wednesday	9 th December 2020 (<i>Provisional</i>)	2 nd Year Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Wednesday - Tuesday	23 rd December 2020 – 5 th January 2021 (Inclusive)	Christmas Holidays
Monday	11 th January 2021	Junior Cycle In-service. Staff only. No school for students
Friday	15 th January 2021	Staff Meeting (1:15pm to 3:15pm)
Thursday	28 th January 2021 (<i>Provisional</i>)	5 th Year Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Wednesday - Friday	3 rd February 2021 – 12 th February 2021 (Inclusive)	Pre-Junior and Pre-Leaving Certificate Examinations
Monday - Friday	8 th February 2021 – 12 th February 2021 (Inclusive)	5 th Year Work Experience
Tuesday	9 th February 2021 (<i>Provisional</i>)	1 st Year Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Monday - Friday	15 th February 2021 – 19 th February 2021 (Inclusive)	Mid-Term Break
Wednesday	24 th February 2021 (<i>Provisional</i>)	TY Parent/Teacher Meeting 4:15pm-6:45pm. Students finish at 3:30pm
Monday - Friday	8 th March 2021 – 12 th March 2021 (Inclusive)	TY Work Experience
Friday	12 th March 2021	Staff Planning (1:15pm to 3:45pm)
Wednesday	17 th March 2021	Public Holiday
Monday - Friday	29 th March 2021 – 9 th April 2021 (Inclusive)	Easter Holidays
Monday	3 rd May 2021	Public Holiday
Friday	7 th May 2021	Staff Meeting (1:15pm to 3:15pm)
Monday	24 th May 2021 (<i>Provisional</i>)	6 th Year Mass
Wednesday	26 th May 2021 (<i>Provisional</i>)	TY Prayer Service
Monday - Friday	31 st May 2021 – 4 th June 2021 (Inclusive)	Summer Examinations