



12th November, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As we approach the end of November and the beginning of the whole school House examinations, we would like to take this opportunity to give you more information about the new DES funded 1 year CLASS programme that is now up and running in Our Lady's. This initiative, together with our school based Academic Tracking and Wellbeing programmes, has been implemented primarily to further aid those students whose learning may have been impacted by the disruptions of the pandemic. It also is open to all students as we navigate the complexities of the changing learning environment brought about by COVID restrictions.

Towards the end of October the Department of Education released resources to help schools mitigate the adverse impacts of Covid-19 on student learning loss and wellbeing arising from the periods of school closures in 2020 and 2021. This programme, dubbed the Covid Learning and Support Scheme (**CLASS**), gave provision for additional teaching hours to schools in order to support their work in addressing learning loss among students arising from periods of school closures.

Responding to this once off allocation, Our Lady's School immediately set about putting a plan into action. Despite the restrictions associated with the allocation including a national shortage of teachers, we nevertheless set about a recruiting and interviewing process building a team of teachers that would be able to deliver the school's programme. In the first week after the midterm break, we were delighted to be in a position to open up the Our Lady's CLASS programme. Our programme has a three pronged approach.

1) Students who have lost school days due to Covid

We have identified students who have missed class time (5 days or more) due to COVID related issues and together with our Subject Departments drafted a programme of work that would help those students catch up on specific work missed during their period of absence.

2) Academic Catch up for all students

Liaising with our Subject Departments, we have created a subject based revision curriculum to be delivered through after school sessions. These classes aim to reaffirm the learning that took place during the remote period. All students are given the option of signing up for these classes.

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Attached to this letter is a timetable of the Academic Catch Up programme that has been in place since the beginning of this term. The schedule rotates on a four week block with students committing to the period. Each four week block affords students the opportunity to engage with the programme as well as allowing the Academic Tracking team to identify priority students at that given time. Bound by the limitations incurred due to the shortage of teachers in Dublin, we set about using the resources to target certain students, subjects and year groups for the first phase. The intended approach is listed as follows:

1st Year Homework Club, Irish and Mathematics support. Primarily for those identified as needing interventions based on 6th Class info/CATS IV Assessment/PPADE Assessment and Intervention Sheet from the Tracking Team. This has been run with close to thirty students availing of the facility.

2nd Year The focus of the programme for this group will be to ensure the basic skills and concepts are understood in core subjects. English, Irish and Mathematics will be prioritised with other subjects rotating into the blocks at different times.

3rd Year As an examination year this group has been categorised as a priority group. Sessions on core subjects (English, Irish & maths) together with other subjects will be made available. Subject Departments have a detailed scheme of work in place for this group.

4th Year Concentration on transitioning to 5th Year will begin with an academic programme (core subjects first) from January. In the interim period, 4th Years will be welcome to join 3rd Year sessions on basic skills in the core subjects from November. 4th Year students have also been involved in helping to teach 1st Years in the Homework Clubs, advancing their own social and leadership skills.

5th Year The focus of the programme for this group will be to ensure the basic skills and core concepts are understood in core subjects. Other option subjects will be rotated into the schedule also giving students the chance to develop their skills and competencies.

6th Year A priority group. Sessions on core subjects together with other subjects will be made available guided by subject department schemes of work.

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3) Additional Wellbeing Supports

As well as implementing this comprehensive academic support system, we have also contributed to our already flourishing extra curricular timetable. The CLASS scheme offered us an opportunity to recruit outside agencies to fill niche areas such as Drama and Improvisation. The roll out of this programme, complementing our established one, gives every student a chance to socialise, build confidence, develop friendships and improve their Wellbeing. The new activities available for students include: Improvisation & Drama for 1st Years, Speech and Communication 2nd Years, Arts & Crafts for all, an additional Counsellor available to all and access to outdoor sporting equipment for all at the new "Play Zone" (being rolled out later this month). As we will be in a position to employ a supervisor, sports equipment and games will be made available to all in designated supervised areas of the school.

Despite being in its infancy, the CLASS Programme has benefited a huge volume of students to date. The school is as active after hours as it has ever been during the regular school day. We sincerely hope that students will take advantage of this once off allocation and use these programmes on offer to help close the gap in their own learning, whether this be academic, social or both. We are confident that the programme will continue to grow and that we can continue to offer our students the very best to help them flourish in what remains a challenging time. Please review the attached timetables and encourage your daughter to avail of any additional support that could assist her.

I would like to thank Ms Hayes who is the CLASS co-ordinator and the large number of staff assisting within the school community, not only in respect of the CLASS programme but also the dedicated staff that work tirelessly each day to promote the key pillars of Our Lady's - Academics, Wellbeing, Ethos and House.

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Principal

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