St. Joseph's P.S. Galbally

Learning, Friendship, Respect

24th March 2020

Dear Parents,

I hope this message finds you well in what are very trying circumstances. I appreciate fully the challenges that the school closing at such short notice places on you, and I want to take a moment today to speak with you directly.

No one could have envisaged the situation we find ourselves in, and it has demanded that we change the way we do things <u>immediately</u>, without notice. I would like to thank you, the parents, for all your support and understanding throughout the course of the last week. I would also like to wholeheartedly thank and applaud all the staff of the school, teaching and non-teaching, for their tremendous efforts in preparing learning packs and resources for all our children at such short notice.

On Friday 13th March, we celebrated our Patron Saint, St. Patrick, with a St. Patrick's Day concert in the school assembly hall as has been tradition at St. Joseph's Galbally for generations. From traditional dancing, singing, to the retelling of the story of St. Patrick, it was everything an assembly should be – a display of our wonderful children's talents, performed for the rest of the school community, in a spirit of support, respect, appreciation and faith. Our school ethos filled the assembly hall that day, with the sounds of laughter, clapping hands, singing voices and the occasional prompt of encouragement from a teacher!

Our school motto, as the children often hear me refrain, is **'Learning, Friendship, Respect'.** The challenge for us all now is to ensure that the children's **learning** continues. Yes, this will look somewhat different, and in between the running of a home, will have to be done in a realistic way. Let me assure you of this, whatever way you are helping your child at home with their learning – you are doing great! Thank you for all your efforts.

I am sure many of you have sons and daughters feeling a bit sad this week at the prospect of not seeing their friends for the foreseeable future – this is very much understandable. I am especially aware of how the Primary 7 children must feel right now – it's almost as if their final term at St. Joseph's has been

robbed from them at no fault of their own. Believe me when I say that we, at St. Joseph's, feel the very same way. In the event that school does not reopen before the end of June, we will figure out a way, together, to make sure that Friday 13th March was not the Primary 7 Class of 2020's last day at St. Joseph's. In the meantime we have the opportunity to use technology, often criticised for its negative impact on young people, for the greater good. Through the use of Microsoft Teams throughout the school, and Flipgrid in Primary 6 and 7, we aim to ensure that the children's **friendships** continue in the digital world in a safe and monitored way, until they get to meet again in the classrooms, playgrounds and gates of St. Joseph's.

Finally, I ask everyone, out of **respect** to all the vulnerable and elderly in our community, to follow the guidance issued by the PHA. Galbally, more than anywhere, is bound together by a sense of community, togetherness, and collective strength. In this time at home with our families, may we all work together for the greater good of our community.
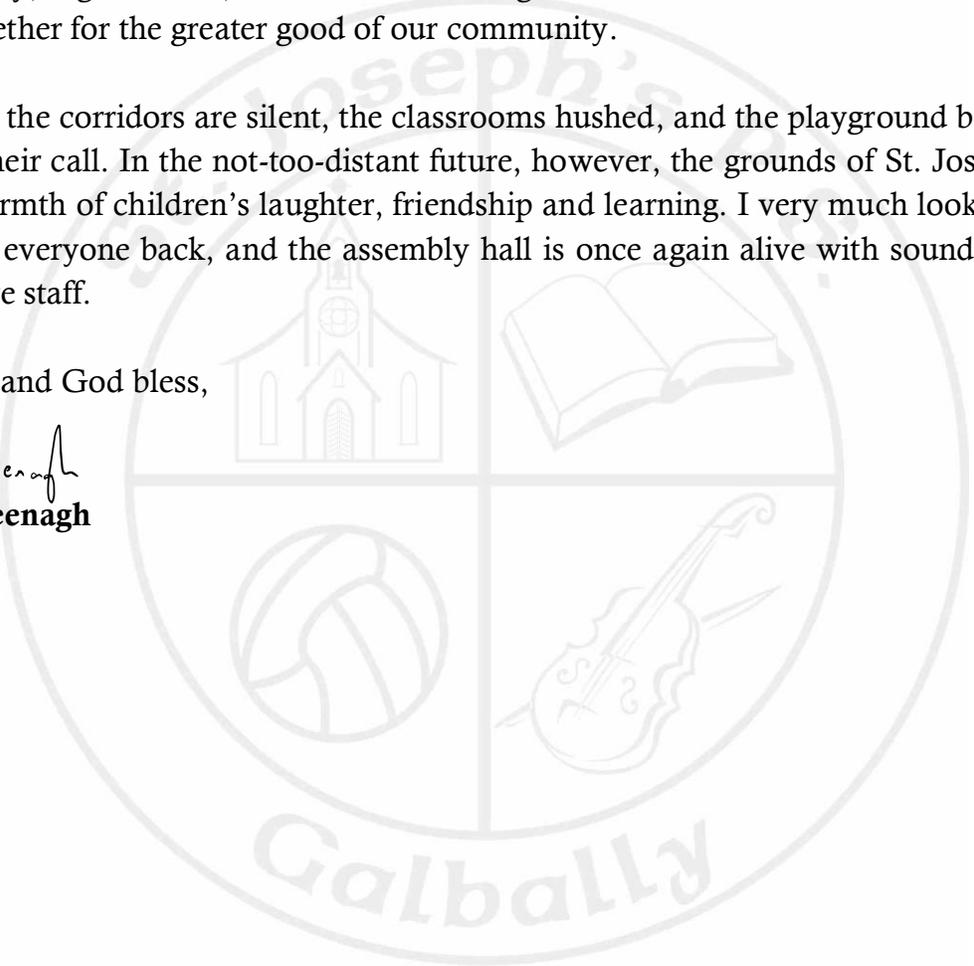
For now, the corridors are silent, the classrooms hushed, and the playground bell rings with no one to answer their call. In the not-too-distant future, however, the grounds of St. Joseph's will be embraced in the warmth of children's laughter, friendship and learning. I very much look forward to the day we welcome everyone back, and the assembly hall is once again alive with sound of happy children and supportive staff.

Stay safe and God bless,

Hugh Meenagh
Principal

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