

# Letters to Families, 2010 / 2011

## Number 7

**Monday, 30 May 2011**

Dear parents/guardians,

As the school year draws to a close I wish to refer to the following points:

### State examinations

On behalf of the school community, I extend our very best wishes to the 250 students who will be taking their Junior and Leaving Certificate examinations this month. This is a stressful time for all of these students and their parents. It is important that they are strengthened by our thoughts and prayers at this time.

### School website – [loretowexford.com](http://loretowexford.com)

Your attention is once again drawn to the school website. Please visit this site from time to time as it is full of up-to-date and useful school information. The booklists and calendar for 2011/2012 will be posted on our website within a week or so. Additionally, the application form for the Free Books Scheme will shortly be available for downloading from the website.

We continue to make a hard copy of all correspondence/forms available at Reception for the benefit of families without internet access.

### Voluntary Contribution

A sincere thank you is extended once again to all families who have kindly supported our Voluntary Contribution this year. Any outstanding contributions will continue to be accepted up until Friday, 24 June.

### Summer holidays

The school offices will close for the summer holidays at 4.15 p.m. on Friday, 24 June and will re-open at 9.00 a.m. on Monday, 15 August. Please ensure that any Social Welfare forms are submitted for signing before 24 June.

During the holiday period, the school website will be updated from time to time as necessary.

Any urgent matter can be brought to the school's attention by e-mail to [loretowexford@eircom.net](mailto:loretowexford@eircom.net)

### Commencement details, 2011/2012

All students are obliged to attend Introduction Meetings in the school as follows:

#### Monday, 29 August 2011

4th year	9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m.
5th year	11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
6th year	2.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

### Tuesday, 30 August 2011

1st year                    9.00 a.m. to 10.20 a.m. Following the meeting, timetabled classes will be held for 1<sup>st</sup> year students until 3.33 p.m.

2nd year                    11.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

3rd year                    2.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.

Timetabled classes will commence for all students on Wednesday, 31 August 2011, 8.50 a.m. to 3.33 p.m.

### **Summer works in the school**

The summer months will be busy in the school as work will be taking place on upgrading the heating system in all buildings as well as on the provision of improved fire safety measures.

The school acknowledges the grant-aid provided by the Department of Education and Skills for all of this work.

### **School Development Planning:**

#### **Whole School Community- Communications Review, 2010-11**

Prior to Easter, the School Development Planning Group (SDPG) conducted a survey of 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, 5<sup>th</sup> year parents and the teaching staff. The purpose of the survey was to evaluate how well communications within the school are operating.

The SDPG will carry on this self-evaluation process in 2011/2012 by making recommendations in relation to the main findings of the survey and by moving to other key areas in the operation of the school.

What now follows are the main findings of the survey in relation to communications.

#### **Text messaging:**

» *The text messaging service from the school has received an overwhelmingly positive response from all three parties.*

#### **School website:**

» *Overall, the school website, [www.loretowexford.com](http://www.loretowexford.com), received a very positive response.*

*There was a mixed reaction however to the attractiveness of the website.*

*There was also a low return on those who access the website on a regular basis.*

#### **Letters to Parents:**

» *There was a very positive response to these questions with a very high percentage of parents agreeing that letters were very accessible on website and that letters received were informative.*

#### **Parents' Council:**

» *When asked 'are you aware of the work of the Parents' Council?' the response was very varied. The majority of parents are aware of its work. However, a very low percentage of*

*students and staff said that they were aware.*

**Students' Council:**

*» When asked 'are you aware of the work of the Students' Council?' the response from students and staff was very low.*

**Board of Management:**

*» When asked 'are you aware of the work of the Board of Management?' the response was varied. The majority of staff and parents said that they are aware but a very low percentage of students said that they are aware.*

**Complaints/Problems/Issues that may arise:**

*» There was a very positive response to this question with the majority of all parties saying that they knew who to talk to if they had a problem.*

**Conduits of Information including, Notice Boards, TV Screens, Intercom, E-Portal, ANSEO, Academic Reports and Assemblies.**

*» There was a very positive response from staff regarding all the above. However, relative to the others, intercom announcements did not receive as positive a response.*

*» There was a very positive response to all these means of communication from both parents and students.*

**Class Teachers:**

*» The response to questions regarding class teachers wasn't as positive as other responses. A large percentage of both students and teachers feel that they don't know each sufficiently well in this role.*

**Staff/Department Meetings:**

*» A low response to this question with many members feeling that not enough time is allocated to these.*

Please contact me if you need any clarification in relation to the above matters.

I hope that you and your family have a very safe, enjoyable and refreshing summer holiday and I thank you for your positive support of Loreto, Wexford throughout the year.

Yours faithfully,

Billy O' Shea,  
Principal.

**Number 6**

**Tuesday, 29 March 2011**

Dear parents/guardians,

The school's Student Care Co-ordination Team is organising a talk for parents/guardians on:

**"The Internet Lives of Young People"**

**in the Talbot Hotel, Wexford**

**on Tuesday, 12 April 2011 at 7.00 p.m.**

**The input and discussion will conclude by 8.30 p.m.**

The guest speaker is John Collins. A practising teacher who has represented Ireland at international conferences on computers in education, John works with the National Centre for Technology in Education to increase awareness of internet safety and the safe and enjoyable use of social networking sites.

The talk will focus on the benefits and potential dangers associated with young peoples' use of the internet. It will refer specifically to social network sites and will highlight the need for good, open communication between parents/guardians.

There is no cost to parents/guardians for this talk. You are welcome to bring a friend or relative to the talk who does not have to be a Loreto parent

The school strongly commends this talk to you and expresses the hope that as many parents/guardians as possible will attend to learn more about this important topic.

Yours faithfully,

Billy O' Shea,  
Principal.

**Number 5**

**Monday, 24 January 2011**

Dear parents/guardians,

In my first letter to you of the new year, I would like, at the outset, to extend my very best wishes to you and your families. I am particularly mindful of those families in which a daughter is undertaking state examinations in June. May the next six months be as calm and productive as possible and a period of time in which every girl will deliver to the best of her ability. As a school community, we are also very aware of the many families where genuine hardship is being experienced as a result of the current economic climate. It is now more important than ever that Loreto functions as a caring, tolerant community and, to this end, please be assured of support and understanding from my colleagues and me should you need to bring matters of concern to us in the course of the year.

I would like to inform you of the following points in this letter:

**School improvements**

Over the past few weeks some significant improvement works have been completed:

1. The new dressing room/shower area in Teach Mhuire is now in use and will be of daily

benefit to all students involved in P.E. classes and games.

2. Water conservation measures have been fitted to all taps and toilets in the school.

This should help in reducing our annual water charge which last year came in at €3,800.

3. The water tank and pipes serving much of the old convent building were moved indoors in

the hope that the problems of freezing pipes experienced before Christmas will not be repeated.

4. The Physics lab has been fully insulated and already students and teachers have welcomed

the huge increase in temperature and comfort.

Over the next number of weeks, improvement works will be carried out on spaces around the lunchroom and vending machines in an attempt to provide additional lunchroom and study accommodation.

With the exception of the water conservation measures, all of this work has been and will be funded by the school's Board of Management. It is for this reason that your support for the Voluntary Contribution Scheme is now more important than ever.

### **Voluntary Contribution Scheme**

You will recall from my last letter that government funding to schools has been cut by 5%. Coupled with the increased expenditure by the Board of Management in carrying out improvement work, as outlined above, in these very old buildings, pressure on school finances is now serious. This makes it more important than ever that the family voluntary contribution scheme would be well-supported.

The request for 2010/2011 is as follows: **€150 per family**

Payments can be made to the School Secretary, Noeleen Goggin. All monies received will be duly receipted. Contributions are now being received.

The school acknowledges the generosity of so many families in supporting this voluntary contribution already this year and also in the past. It is our hope that the same level of generosity will apply once again this year even though the financial pressures on most families are considerable.

### **New building**

We still await word from the Department of Education and Skills as to when we will have meaningful discussions and a decision as to where our promised new school will be built – on the existing site or on a greenfield site. Whilst the school continues to press this matter every week (and has been doing so for 14 years at this stage!), you are asked to make this an issue when politicians come knocking on your door in the next few weeks. Nothing has been built to improve our situation under six Fianna Fail Ministers for Education (Martin, Woods, Dempsey, Hanafin, O' Keefe and Coughlan). Will the opposition be any better in government for Loreto, Wexford?

### **Website**

Please, please, please have a look at our website at least once a week during school time. It is updated weekly and contains a lot of useful information for all

members of our school community. We have added a useful links section this year that we ask you to look at. You might find the links to the Department of Education and Skills, Central Applications Office and the State Examinations Commission particularly useful. You will also be aware at this stage that school reports are no longer posted home. Instead, you can access them at any time on ePortal, accessible on our homepage – [www.loretowexford.com](http://www.loretowexford.com) Any parent requesting a paper copy will, however, be accommodated.

So, the message is clear – the website has a lot to offer! Please mark it as a favourite.

### **Christmas/Easter study**

It was good to see that many 6<sup>th</sup> year students availed of supervised study provided by the school and its teachers on a voluntary basis over the Christmas. We will make similar arrangements for the second half of the Easter holidays.

### **For your diary**

Please be aware of the following dates:

4<sup>th</sup> year parent-teacher meeting – 4.15pm to 6.45pm, Monday, 31 January  
Classes on this day finish at 3.18pm

Staff meeting – 2.33pm to 4.33pm, Wednesday, 2 February  
Classes on this day finish at 2.33pm

2<sup>nd</sup> cervical cancer vaccination for students in years 3 to 6 – Thursday, 3 February during  
normal school hours

Mock examinations – Monday, 7 February to Friday, 18 February

2<sup>nd</sup> year parent-teacher meeting – 4.15pm to 6.45pm, Thursday, 17 February  
Classes on this day finish at 3.18pm

As ever, please feel free to contact me in relation to any of the above points.

Yours faithfully,

Billy O' Shea,  
Principal.

### **Number 4**

## **Thursday, 9 December 2010**

Dear parents/guardians,

I write at this time to mention a few points to you, as follows:

### **School closures due to snow**

I am very conscious of the interruption caused to everyone by the unexpected closure of the school for 5 days in the last two weeks.

The decision to close is taken very seriously with the following factors in mind:

» The safety of the school grounds and surrounding paths/roads for the admission of staff and students

- » Whether Bus Eireann services are operating
- » The ability of sufficient numbers of staff and students to travel safely to and from school
- » Advice of An Garda Siochana
- » The state of school buildings e.g. power supply, frozen pipes etc.
- » Consideration of what other local schools are doing

The teaching staff and I will ensure that all courses are covered and revised as normal over the remainder of the school year.

As a particular support to 6<sup>th</sup> year students, Sr. Carmel and I will be organising a total of 30 hours of free supervised study in the school to be spread over the second half of the Christmas and Easter holidays.

Additionally, I will very shortly be adding a new "Urgent announcement" section to our website which will provide updates on enforced closures should they occur again as well as work schedules prepared for students by teachers in such circumstances.

It appears to me that extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent and that, as a consequence, we need to position ourselves better to respond to them.

The enforced school closures over the last two weeks have also highlighted the speed and efficiency of our text alert system. To be sure that you receive these

texts at all times, please notify the school secretary, Noeleen Goggin ( 053-9142783), of any change in your mobile number or if you have not received these text messages.

### **Important message from the Student Care Co-ordination Team (SCCT)**

Loreto's SCCT meets weekly to ensure that appropriate care systems are in place for students who might need extra support at different times in their lives.

It became apparent to the team in recent weeks that many parents are unaware of their daughter's activity on social networking sites like Facebook. While such sites have their merits and are very popular with many people, they also have a potentially darker and more dangerous side. Accordingly, the SCCT strongly recommends that parents/guardians familiarise themselves with such sites, discuss them with their daughters and keep a supervisory eye on their daughters' internet usage.

The SCCT will discuss this matter further with the Parents' Council to see if additional support can be provided for parents/guardians.

### **Christmas Reports**

This year's Christmas reports will be published in full on e-Portal in the week beginning Monday, 20 December. Please be sure that you have your unique username and password to access these reports. If you have lost this information, please contact Betty at reception.

Any parents/guardians who cannot access e-Portal information are invited to

request a paper copy of the report from Noeleen, school secretary.

### **Dressing room/shower area**

It is expected that the new dressing room/shower area for students will be ready for use from 10 January onwards. This represents a major improvement in basic student facilities and has been funded entirely by the Board of Management.

### **Information Technology (IT) Upgrade**

With the welcome receipt of €97,904 in state funding, the school is set to complete a major upgrading of its IT facilities. It is planned to have broadband access in all parts of the school, a computer and data projector in every classroom and a second dedicated computer room in place before the end of the current academic year. These developments will add considerably to the educational experience of all students across every subject area for years to come.

### **School website**

I draw your attention once again to the school website – [www.loretowexford.com](http://www.loretowexford.com)

This website is updated weekly and is used by the school to communicate with all members of the school community on topics of general interest. Information from previous years is also archived in different sections. The website means that general letters will no longer be posted by the school to all families. However, families without internet access may request paper copies of such letters by contacting the school secretary. Paper copies can also be obtained from Betty at reception.

### **Family voluntary contribution - reminder**

The government has announced that funding to schools will be cut by 5% from January next. This measure will put even further pressure on school finances and makes it more important than ever that the family voluntary contribution scheme would be well-supported.

The request for 2010/2011 is as follows: **€150 per family**

Payments can be made to the School Secretary, Noeleen Goggin. All monies received will be duly receipted. Contributions are now being received.

The school acknowledges the generosity of so many families in supporting this voluntary contribution already this year and also in the past. It is our hope that the same level of generosity will apply once again this year even though the financial pressures on most families are considerable.

As ever, please contact me if you wish to discuss any of the above points.

With kind regards,

Billy O' Shea,  
Principal.

**Number 3**

**Wednesday, 3 November 2010**

Dear parents/guardians,

I wish to bring the following important points to your attention:

### **Appointment of home / school financial liaison person:**

The school's Board of Management (BOM) is acutely aware of the financial hardship being experienced by many families in these unprecedented times. The BOM is keen to be pro-active in ensuring that the full range of school activities will be available to all students even though the cost of education may be pressing down hard on their parents.

To this end, the Board has appointed one of the school's senior teachers, Ms. Gay Brennan, to the new position of home / school financial liaison person. Ms. Brennan's duties are set out below.

### **Home / School financial liaison:**

- » Administration of the Department of Education and Skills Free Books Scheme in consultation with the Principal
- » Liaising with the Visitor Teacher for travellers to ensure that such students are provided with all necessary requirements
- » Consulting with the Board of Management to establish, regulate and maintain an annual fund to assist needy families with certain payments e.g. school tour, supervised study, mock examinations
- » Co-operating with school management, staff and the Parents' Council to identify families eligible for the above fund and to inform the school community of the existence of such fund
- » Assisting with the provision of second-hand books and uniforms, where available, for students
- » Being available to meet with parents/guardians/students in relation to school-related financial matters
- » To conduct all the above in as confidential and sensitive a manner as possible

Parents/guardians are invited to contact Ms. Brennan by phone or by letter, all in the strictest confidence, should they wish to discuss or avail of any of the supports listed above.

### **Cervical cancer vaccination for girls in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years**

As you are aware, the HSE cervical cancer vaccination programme only applies to girls currently in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years. A private company called Point of Care Health Services Ltd., in co-operation with Aviva Health, is now offering the vaccinations to girls in all other years. The cost is €299 per student. Full details of this vaccination will be posted to all 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year families over the next week or so.

I simply wish to inform you of this offer so that you can make your own decision on what is best for your daughter. The school is not making any recommendation on this matter.

The school's Parents' Council, through Ms. Patricia Hackett, has kindly agreed to

liaise with the company in question in relation to the level of interest, cost, dates and times of vaccinations.

### **Student medications**

Please be aware that the school can no longer provide students with any medication e.g. paracetamol, panadol even if parents/guardians grant permission. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of a student being unable to continue in class due to illness.

### **Family voluntary contribution**

The school is obliged to seek the support of families for this year's Voluntary Contribution Scheme. Without this scheme, the Board of Management would not be able to balance its budget in light of escalating costs e.g. water charges, refuse collection, E.S.B. charges and the huge costs associated with the upkeep and maintenance of old buildings.

The request for 2010/2011 is as follows: **€150 per family**

Payments can be made to the School Secretary, Noeleen Goggin, in full or in three equal instalments, one per term. All monies received will be duly receipted. Contributions are now being received.

The school acknowledges the generosity of so many families in supporting this voluntary contribution in the past. It is our hope that the same level of generosity will apply once again this year even though the financial pressures on most families are considerable.

### **Dressing room facilities**

The Board of Management has decided to proceed with the immediate conversion of an upstairs toilet block in Teach Mhuire into a new dressing room and shower facility for students. This will result in a considerable improvement for girls involved in P.E. classes and games when the work is completed over the next two months. The entire cost of this work is being borne by the Board. This in turn highlights the need for as much support as possible for the voluntary contribution scheme as outlined above.

### **New school building**

Following the recent completion of a report by a Department of Education and Skills (DES) senior architect, it is expected that significant meetings will take place over the next few weeks to determine the future direction of our new school building project. The choice is between developing on the existing site or moving to a larger green field site with nearby playing pitches. Even though this project has been pursued by the school for close on 14 years at this stage, there is now a sense that the DES is prepared to advance our case in light of the new development represented by the green field site option. I shall keep you informed of significant developments.

### **School website**

I draw your attention once again to the school website – [www.loretowexford.com](http://www.loretowexford.com)

This website is updated weekly and is used by the school to communicate with all members of the school community on topics of general interest. Information from previous years is also archived in different sections. The website means that general letters and notices will no longer be posted by the school to all families. However, families without internet access may request paper copies of such letters and notices by contacting the school secretary, Noeleen, on

053-9142783. Paper copies can also be obtained from Betty at reception.

**Dates for your diary**

Please be reminded of forthcoming school events that necessitate earlier closing than normal:

Tuesday, 9 November

School closes at 2.33 p.m. due to a staff meeting.

Tuesday, 16 November

School closes at 11.49 a.m. due to a parent-teacher meeting for 5<sup>th</sup> year students from

1.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m.

Supervised study will not proceed on these dates.

Please contact me if you need clarification on any of these points.

Yours faithfully,

Billy O' Shea,

Principal.

**Number** **2**  
**Monday, 20 September 2010**

Dear parents/guardians,  
I wish to bring the following points to your attention:

1. The school will close to students at 1.11p.m. on Tuesday, 5 October 2010 to facilitate a staff planning meeting. Supervised study will not be held on this day with students' being compensated for this loss by a financial adjustment in the next half-term's payment.

2. With the lifting of ASTI directives from today, you are advised that all staff and parent teacher meetings will now proceed in accordance with the school calendar as published in your daughter's diary and on the website.

3. If you are not receiving text messages from us regarding either your daughter's absence from school or as reminders of school events, please notify Noeleen (school secretary) at once so that we can include your number.

4. You are asked once again to keep a close eye on the school website – [www.loretoxford.com](http://www.loretoxford.com) – as this is now our principal means of communication with the school community and with the broader public. A hard copy of everything on the website is

available on request from me.

Please contact me if you need clarification on any of these points.

Yours  
Billy  
Principal.

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faithfully,  
Shea,

## **Number 1**

### **Monday, 6 September 2010**

Dear parents/guardians,

As we settle back into the routine of school life for another year, I write to provide you with important information as follows:

#### **Staff changes**

Over the summer we said a sad farewell to four members of our teaching staff who retired – Ms. Pratt, Ms. Clarkin, Ms. Sills and Sr.Christine. We also said goodbye to Mr. Gannon who has gone to travel the world and to Ms. O' Carroll who will now be working in Dublin. All of these teachers made a wonderful contribution to life in Loreto over a long number of years and they will be sadly-missed. On the non-teaching staff, Martin, our caretaker, and Ann, lunchroom supervisor, also retired – news that caused great sadness to students at last week's introduction meetings. We thank them both for their valued work in the school.

As a consequence of these changes, we welcome several new faces to our school community this year – teachers Ms. Johns, Ms. Kennington, Ms. Ni Thuairisg and Ms. Zimmermann. Our new lunchroom supervisor will be Glenda and Jim will take over caretaking duties in a full-time capacity. Filling in for maternity leave over the next few months will be Mr. Brennan, Ms. Davey and Ms. Foley. We hope that all new faces will enjoy their time in our school.

#### **Summer works**

As is usual, a good deal of work was completed on buildings over the summer months. The convent buildings got a badly-needed coat of paint as well as the repair/replacement of its timber windows. Many classrooms and corridors were re-painted and work on the installation of classroom projectors and laptops continues.

#### **Family voluntary contribution**

The school is obliged to seek the support of families for this year's Voluntary Contribution Scheme. Without this scheme, the Board of Management would not be able to balance its budget in light of escalating costs e.g. water charges, refuse collection, E.S.B. charges and the huge costs associated with the upkeep and maintenance of old buildings.

The request for 2010/2011 is as follows:

€150 per family

Payments can be made to the School Secretary, Noeleen Goggin, in full or in three equal instalments, one per term. All monies received will be duly receipted. Contributions are now being received.

The school acknowledges the generosity of so many families in supporting this

voluntary contribution in the past. It is our hope that the same level of generosity will apply once again this year even though the financial pressures on most families are considerable.

### **Parents' Annual General Meeting**

The AGM of the parents' Association will be held in the school's Concert Hall on Monday, 20 September beginning at 7.00 p.m.

The agenda will be as follows:

- » Welcome
- » Principal's address
- » Chairperson's report
- » Secretary's report
- » Treasurer's report
- » Election of parents to the new Board of Management, 15 October 2010 to 14 October 2013
- » Election of parents to the Parents' Council, 2010/2011
- » Any other business

### **Road safety**

I am very grateful to Wexford Corporation for providing a pedestrian crossing outside the school, the completion of which is imminent. This improvement came as a result of representations from the school's Parents' Council and Board of Management over the last number of months.

I make a very strong appeal to parents/guardians not to park on the double yellow lines on both sides of this pedestrian crossing. Such behaviour – unfortunately we witness it nearly every day – is a serious threat to the safety of students and staff as they enter and leave the school.

### **School website**

I draw your attention to the school website – [www.loretowexford.com](http://www.loretowexford.com)

This website is updated weekly and is used by the school to communicate with all members of the school community on topics of general interest. Information from previous years is also archived in different sections. The website means that general letters and notices will no longer be posted by the school to all families. However, families without internet access may request paper copies of such

letters and notices by contacting the school secretary, Noeleen, on 053-9142783.

### **E-portal**

Every family has been provided with its unique username and password to access the school's E-portal facility from the homepage on the school website. E-portal is now used by the school to record student attendance, personal details, timetables and academic reports. If you lose your username or password please phone Betty

at reception – 053-9142783.

### **Text alerts**

Sr. Carmel will send text alerts to parents/guardians whose daughters fail to register their attendance in school each morning. Such alerts will be sent at about 9.30a.m. Monday to Thursday, 10.30 a.m. Friday.

The school will also send text alerts to remind parents/guardians of particular

events e.g. meetings and to inform you of the posting of a general letter on the school website. Text alerts will also be used in exceptional circumstances e.g. unexpected school closure.

**School mass**

The start-of-year school mass will take place in Rowe Street church on Thursday, 7 October. All students will be escorted to the church by class teachers and will return to school before 3.33 p.m.

I hope the year goes well for all members of our school community. Please feel free to contact me or Sr. Carmel (Deputy Principal) if we can be of any assistance to you.

Yours faithfully,  
Billy O' Shea,  
Principal.