



Dear Students,

As we approach the end of term I want to say ‘comhghairdeas agus míle buíochas’ – congratulations and thank you – to you all.

There have been huge challenges in returning to school and in keeping our schools running safely during this whole term. I am very appreciative of the keen sense of responsibility you have shown over the last number of months.

You have adapted brilliantly to the changes that have been necessary and you have shown great resilience in the face of all the challenges the year has brought.

This has been a really difficult year for so many of you. I know that the closure of school buildings in March and learning remotely was an enormous challenge. It was daunting also to return to school after many months and become familiar with new ways of doing things.

I want to say just how much I admire the work that you have all done, to keep learning, to keep the spirit and heart of your schools alive and to enjoy your time in school.

I know many of your favourite activities have been postponed or changed due to the restrictions that have been necessary. I promise that we will continue to work with Public Health to ensure that your ability to work and learn can continue as normally as possible and that as the country’s vaccination plans progress we will be able to adapt further.

To anyone who has been having a difficult time, please remember there is always someone to talk to in school, so that you can reach out to talk about how you are feeling. It is important to stress that you are not in this alone. In your schools there is always a teacher or guidance counsellor who will listen to and help you. More information on wellbeing is available on gov.ie/schools, so please feel free to draw upon this resource also.

I’m so proud of all your efforts. I know that you will listen to all the good advice out there and take a well-deserved break over the holidays.

I also wish to acknowledge the hundreds of cards, drawings and letters that arrived to my office over the past number of weeks. I now have the most beautiful, festive display in my office. They keep my spirits up no matter what task I face and prove that creativity and imagination will always thrive, even in the most difficult of situations.

Mind yourselves, and each other. Enjoy your holiday as much as you can whilst keeping each other safe. I wish you and your families a happy and peaceful Christmas. I look forward to a time in 2021 when I can visit more of your schools, meet many of you in person and see your creativity, your innovation and your enthusiasm up close.

Nollaig shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh go léir.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Education