



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

Message for Post-Primary Students from President Michael D. Higgins

As we come to the end of a difficult and unprecedented school year may I thank our secondary school students for the courageous and generous role that they, with others, have played in our ongoing struggle with Coronavirus.

Recent times have taken a significant toll on so many citizens, in so many ways. I offer my sympathy to all those students who have lost loved ones to Covid 19. For you, this has been a particularly unhappy and distressing time. I am also aware that many others amongst you are coming out of a period during which you have been greatly concerned, in particular, for your vulnerable family members. For you too this has been a period of worry and sadness.

For all students the Coronavirus pandemic has been a testing time. It has called for a profound spirit of endurance and shared humanity as you were called upon to play your part in helping to mitigate the risks presented to us all as a society by Covid 19.

The necessary closing of our schools following the Christmas break, the complexities of online learning, the need for social distancing on returning to the classroom and the uncertainty around state exams are just some of the additional to the normal challenges you have been obliged to face in recent months.

I am well aware too that you have also been required to forego so many of the annual events and rituals that are part of school life – the sports days and matches, the concerts and plays, the tours and end of term celebrations that are all part of the reassuring rhythm of the school year.

Your co-operation and patience throughout this difficult time has been greatly impressive and greatly encouraging to us all to witness. You, more than any other recent generation of school students, have been called on to urgently, demonstrate, and in a way that demands a practical generosity, the necessary qualities that lie at the heart of good citizenship. You have been asked to walk in solidarity with those who are most vulnerable and at risk, to make enormous sacrifices for the greater good, and to be flexible, resilient and empathetic as you go about your day to day lives. It is a call you have answered with good will, grace and profound kindness. Traoslaím libh.

Although this has been a challenging year, I am confident it has also been a year during which you will have developed many of the skills that will mark you out as strong and ethical citizens of the future. I have no doubt you have learnt that citizenship is a reciprocal relationship, bringing with it rights and entitlements but also a duty of care and consideration for those with whom we share our communities and our society, and that balancing individual rights against the needs and concerns of others leads to generous decision making and the compassionate compromise so often needed. You will have had the experience of putting into practice values we can never let go, that will always inspire – care, kindness, compassion, solidarity.

Some of you are entering the final days of your school career and will shortly go out into the world to follow your personal pathways in life. Others of you may be returning to school in September to carry on with your secondary school journey. As we proceed, together, towards a better and safer future it is my great hope that you all of you will continue to live by the important values you have demonstrated so impressively in recent months.

They are values that I am greatly optimistic will be what define your generation, one that has already proven it has so much of worth to offer Irish society, and which holds so much potential to play a significant part in the crafting of a post pandemic Ireland - one that is just, inclusive and ethical in its structure.

As President of Ireland, and on behalf of your fellow citizens, may I express my gratitude to you, our secondary school students, all of you, for all you have done to help keep us safe throughout this pandemic. I wish each and every one of you every success in all of your future endeavours.

Beir beannacht d'on todcháí

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael D. Higgins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'M' and a distinct 'H' at the end.

Michael D. Higgins

President of Ireland