



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE TO SIXTH CLASS STUDENTS

FROM

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS

May I send my very best wishes to all of you children as you enter the final weeks of your primary school years.

I know that these last two months have been difficult for you, for your teachers and your parents. To those of you who have lost loved ones may I offer my deepest sympathies. Many of you, I know too, are worried about relatives who are ill or maybe lonely. I know, from so many who have written to me, that you are of course missing grand-parents, cousins or neighbours that you haven't seen for some time.

All of you will have greatly missed being with all your school friends and teachers. For example, the cancellation or postponement of Confirmations, sports days, school concerts, graduation ceremonies and other events which would traditionally mark and celebrate the end of your time in primary school will, no doubt, have been a source of disappointment for so many of you.

As President of Ireland I have been very impressed with the way in which all of you have responded, risen to the challenges, continued to learn at home, working with your teachers and parents.

You have found all sorts of imaginative ways to remain in touch with your friends and pursue your hobbies, while at the same time always putting the safety of others, including your relatives and neighbours, ahead of your own wishes and plans. Those are achievements of which you can all be very proud indeed.

While this last term in primary school has, in many ways, been difficult for you, it is my great hope that it has also allowed you to experience something very important about your school days. You have learned that your school is not just a building containing a series of classrooms where lessons are held, tests are sat and homework is corrected. A school is so much more than that.

School is where you have been making friends, working together in teams, discovering your talents and developing them to the best of your ability. School is where we celebrate all that we have in common with each other while recognising and respecting the differences that make each of us unique.

School is where we learn how to be part of a community and, most importantly, how to include others in that sense of community, by being kind and supportive and generous.

School and home are places where we release our creativity and begin to realise our great potential as citizens, and the importance of becoming a person who works with others to make our society a better place.

Although your school buildings have been closed now for many weeks, the fact that you have remained united has shown that there are some things that no lockdown can ever postpone, shut down, cancel or take from you, including the connection you share with your fellow pupils, your teachers, and with all those who have made school and your community such an important part of your life.

In September you will be commencing a new and exciting chapter of your lives during which I hope that all of you will be able to look back on your years in primary school with gratitude, affection, and humour too.

As you now say goodbye to your primary school years, and look forward to your first year in secondary school, may I wish each and every one of you every happiness as you continue your educational journey.

Beir beannacht d'on todchaí

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

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

MAY 2020