**St. Joseph’s College, Garbally Park, Ballinasloe.**

25th February 2022.

 **Updated Covid-19 Guidance to Schools following the mid-term break 2022**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

 I hope you and your families are having a restful mid-term break. As you are aware the Government has accepted the recommendations of NPHET to remove remaining restrictions relating to mask wearing and physical distancing in schools from Monday 28th February 2022. The following points are important to note:

**Staying at home if you have symptoms**

* The requirement to stay at home if you have symptoms remains – for students and staff alike. One of the key messages to manage the risks of COVID-19 is to do everything practical to avoid the introduction of COVID-19 into the school. If infection is not introduced, it cannot be spread.

**Hand Hygiene**

* Schools should continue to promote good hygiene. Hand hygiene can be achieved by hand washing or use of a hand sanitiser (when hands look clean).

**Face coverings/mask wearing**

* It is no longer a requirement for staff or pupils/students to wear a face covering/mask in school. Staff and student/pupils can continue to wear a face covering/mask if they wish to do so on a personal basis and schools should continue to make masks available on request as they are currently doing.

**School transport and Face coverings/mask wearing**

* With effect from Monday 28 February the wearing of face coverings/masks on school transport will no longer be mandatory but will continue to be advised.

**Physical Distancing**

* As the general requirement for physical distancing in society no longer applies, schools are no longer required to maintain these arrangements. It is not envisaged that timetables would be rearranged mid-year and schools have the discretion at local level to determine the timescale for introducing the changes outlined.

**Return to Work Form/ return to schools’ form**

* Schools no longer need to request staff or pupils/students to complete a Return to Work form or a Return to School form after school holidays/breaks.

In view of this updated guidance, we will continue with our existing timetable arrangements, staggered breaks and base classrooms for the time-being, our priority is to continue with teaching and learning as normal. At this stage we want to avoid unnecessary disruption and confusion in Garbally, we will consult with the Staff, Board of Management, Parents Association and Students Voice with a view to returning to normal school activities in a controlled and safe manner.

Yours faithfully,

Mr. Paul Walsh, Ms. Collette Quinn,

Principal. Deputy Principal.