



Belfast
City Council



Dear Principal

St Patrick's Day holiday - Wednesday 17 March.

It's hard to believe that as educators across primary, post primary, further and higher education we have been operating alongside the pandemic for almost a year. Right across the education sector, we have adjusted to deliver an academic year like no other, with the safety and wellbeing of pupils and students, and their academic progression as our shared top priorities.

As we approach St Patrick's Day, we are writing to ask for your support in protecting young people and those around them in the Holyland's area of South Belfast. Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and the University Colleges, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and Belfast City Council are working collectively to share the importance of a safe, COVID- compliant Public holiday.

These organisations and agencies, alongside local churches and voluntary groups, work together on an ongoing basis to ensure that university and college students and long-term residents can live safely and considerately alongside each other in this part of the city. Over recent years it has become clear that this area has become a popular destination on St Patrick's Day for many young people from schools and colleges across Northern Ireland. Naturally an influx of young people other than residents represents a public health risk during the pandemic.

From Friday 8 January a stay-at-home order became law, meaning people can only leave home for medical or food needs, exercise, and work that cannot be done from home. The collective agencies are working hard to reduce the number of young people in the area this St Patrick's Day in order to prevent breaches of the current COVID-19 restrictions now extended and remaining in place to keep our wider community safe.

As school, university and college leaders, we all understand that against the backdrop of continued lockdown, it is entirely natural that young people may sometimes feel weary or discouraged and are missing socialising with friends. However, to protect the health and wellbeing of our young people and to ensure they do not take unnecessary risks with their future studies, education and career aspirations, it is important that students and pupils alike understand how essential it is to follow these regulations.

In the context of St Patrick's Day holiday, we are keen to ensure that all young people and their parents are aware of the risks associated with breaching COVID-19 regulations, including the possibility of a criminal record for those over 18 and a Community Resolution Notice (CRN) for those under 18.

We would very much appreciate your support in sharing with your pupils and parents the important safety message of Stay Home, Stay Safe, Save Lives. This is important for the safety of school pupils, university and college students and residents who may feel vulnerable and anxious as the St Patrick's Day holiday approaches.

Thank you for your invaluable support in this matter.



Professor David Jones
Pro-Vice-Chancellor,
Education and Students
Queen's University



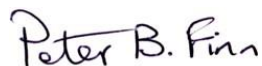
Professor Raffaella Folli
Provost, Jordanstown
and Belfast, Ulster
University



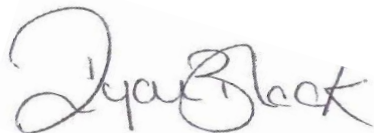
David McDowell
Head of Learner Success
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Professor Anne Heaslett
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Professor Peter Finn
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Ryan Black
Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Belfast City Council



Chief Superintendent Simon Walls
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