

4th September 2020

Dear students, parents and carers

It has felt very surreal in school this week. We should have welcomed our new Year 7 students to UCC, along with re-opening for all other year groups as part of our phased return. Instead, our corridors and classrooms remain empty and our staff have reverted to delivering the curriculum from behind a screen. This situation is far from ideal but we are making the best out of the most challenging circumstances.

Since the fire last week we have been on a bit of a rollercoaster of emotions; dealing with the implications is extremely complicated and the knock-on effects on other areas of the school have added an additional layer of complexity. Our staff who are allowed on site are doing an incredible job in getting us back up and running as quickly as possible.

As always, I think it is important to keep you all apprised of how we are progressing, so below is a brief outline of the damage and our plans to reopen:

Main affected areas

- **Top floor classrooms** - HU5, LRA5 were the worst affected with fire, smoke and water damage. HU4 has a lot of smoke and water damage. HU3 sustained air contamination damage. All of these classrooms will be unusable for some time, potentially the entire 2020-21 academic year. HU2 and HU1 have no power or network coverage due to damage to the cables servicing these rooms.
- **First floor classrooms** - The library has significant smoke and fire damage. The careers office has completely gone and the floor of this area of the building collapsed over the weekend into the girls' changing room below. Similarly to HU3, LRA1 sustained air contamination damage. All of these rooms will be unusable for some time, potentially the entire 2020-21 academic year.
- **Ground floor classrooms** - En4 and En5 sustained smoke and water damage and will be unusable for some time, potentially the entire 2020-21 academic year. The main changing rooms for PE are significantly damaged, along with the fitness room and the corridor leading down to the sportshall. The sportshall is still drying out and we have to assess the extent of the damage to the floor.

Recovery Plan

Phase 1 - Securing a safe site

The first phase of our plan is focussed on securing the safety of the site. Air quality and structural assessments are taking place regularly to judge the safety of the building and surrounding areas. Scaffolding is being erected so that the building can be wrapped up and capped in an air tight seal - this is dependent on the weather though and any strong winds can delay the work. Wrapping the building must be completed before we can be confident that no debris will be swept off the roof and the air quality is safe. **The very earliest we can wrap the building up is 14th September** and this is very dependent on the weather. Once this is complete we can then test the air quality and start the extensive cleaning process. We are not allowed staff back on site until these measures are completed.

Phase 2 - Reinstate onsite education

The second phase of the fire recovery plan is to install temporary classrooms, changing rooms and staff work areas so that we can re-open the school to all students. This will involve the Humanities team moving into 8 temporary classrooms which will be located behind the maths block on the gravel car park (work has already begun on this, see the image below).



There will also be 2 changing facilities for students and a staff work space for PE. The English staff displaced from En4 & 5 will relocate for 20-21 into HU6 and the classroom/office formerly known as CS1 (now converted to a very nice new classroom), therefore ensuring all English and Humanities staff are located in close proximity of their department colleagues. We have explored partially opening up the safe areas of the school during the installation process but due to the extensive work required to set these temporary building up, we would not be able to.

Phase 3 - Rebuilding

This is the long term aspect of the plan and will involve the redevelopment of the areas lost to the fire. Currently, we are not able to focus on this aspect until Phases 1 and 2 are completed.

Remote teaching

With regard to our remote teaching arrangements, we will continue to post high quality work for our students and provide them with feedback at appropriate times. I asked tutors to make phone calls throughout this week to students in their tutor group. From Monday 7th, they will post a weekly tutor group message on SMHW and ask students to get in contact with them on that platform if they need any support, help or advice.

Phased return and reopening

We are hoping to start our phased return on Monday 21st September for students, with all students then starting back on the full timetable on Monday 28th September. Please note that these dates are provisional and subject to us successfully completing the work in Phase 1 to secure a safe school site.

Fund raising update

We have been overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity shown by everyone who has organised and contributed to fund raising efforts. We will be able to replace everything lost in the fire through our insurance claim, so the money that is being raised independently by the local community will be given to our School Council, who will decide how we should invest it so that all UCC students benefit. The two Just Giving campaigns (links [here](#) and [here](#)) have incredibly raised almost £4000. Additionally, I have been informed that Gretton Sports have raised over £700 through a raffle, which is tremendous. There are also 2 planned events from local community members, a '[UCC Sportiv](#)' cycling event on Sunday 18th October and a '[UCC Move It](#)' public workout on Tod's Piece on Tuesday 15th September. Please check out the links in this email and our social media accounts for the details if you wish to participate and contribute.

Final thoughts for this week...


I often find comfort and inspiration from the quotes and mantras of successful leaders, and the words below, from Eleanor Roosevelt really resonated with me:

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic and now through the fire at UCC, we really have looked fear in the face, and we have lived through an horrific period of disruption and loss. However, we will emerge from these challenges as a stronger school community, more resilient, more united and more determined than we have ever been to ensure our school continues to positively shape and influence the lives of the young people we are so privileged to work with. Right now, things are hard, but together we will get through it.

I am planning to send out a bulletin each Friday as usual, however if things change with regard to our plans then I will get in touch more frequently. In the meantime, thanks for your patience and understanding.

Take care and have a good weekend.



Mr Solly

Principal