

25 September 2020

Dear Colleagues

I hope that you and your families continue to be safe and well and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all back to work. While there may be unique challenges this year I wish all the members of staff in our schools, centres and offices every success in their work and good health in the year ahead.

The period since we closed our schools, centres and offices has been challenging in all sorts of ways. Through your commitment and innovation we have figured out ways to continue learning, to complete assessments, to support the well-being of our staff and students and to continue with our administration and governance responsibilities. This has been possible through the widespread goodwill and generosity of so many.

Recent months have been exceptionally busy for our leaders and teams as they worked tirelessly to prepare for the re-opening of schools, centres and offices. As an organisation we put significant focus on our preparations for re-opening and ensuring that we had as comprehensive a COVID 19 Response Plan in place in each location as possible.

I am immensely proud of the energy, commitment and tireless work of our school leaders, centre and service managers and our administration and support teams. There is no doubt that it is because of their work that we have been able to welcome back our students and learners. I know that there have been challenges and others will arise during the year ahead but we have procedures in place to seek to ensure the health and safety of all those within Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board and we are following the national guidance.

Working in the '*new normal*' has brought its own demands and we are all now learning to work in different ways. Technology has played a key role in enabling us to continue our teaching and learning and our administration work. We have prioritised support and training within the organisation to further develop our digital capacity and our readiness to move to further online and blended learning should it be needed.

I understand that the return to work and learning has come with a set of unique challenges and concerns this year and our extensive preparations have been undertaken to provide as much reassurance as possible to our staff, students and parents that the health and safety of everyone is our priority. It is important for the well-being of you, our staff and that of our students and learners.

The Board of Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board met on Tuesday, 15 September and the Chairperson and members were fulsome in their praise for the tremendous efforts of our leaders and staff in preparing for re-opening. On behalf of the Chairperson, Councillor Peter Cleere and the members I extend sincerest gratitude to each one of you for your ongoing work.

While I acknowledge that things are different as we move into the academic year we must continue to be vigilant. We must do everything we can to stay safe by following the guidance and taking the necessary precautions. We must also stay connected to our colleagues and to our own schools, centres and services. We recognise also the specific challenges which our students and learners may face this year and I have no doubt that you will do everything you can to make their learning journey enjoyable and fulfilling – the best it can be. We can all help to support each other and our students and learners during the months ahead with a kind word, a generous smile and a little forbearance when needed. As we do this we remain committed as always to the delivery of high-quality education and training for our students and learners.

As we embark on the academic year our executive and administrative teams in Kilkenny and Carlow ETB are working hard to support our schools, centres and services as they seek to navigate the challenges and uncertainties of COVID 19. I want to reassure you of our commitment to continue to do this during the months ahead.

In the meanwhile I urge you to stay safe and stay connected , *“Tough situations build strong people”* (R.T. Bennett).

Bí cúramach agus bí sábháilte.

Kind regards,



Eileen Curtis  
**Chief Executive**