



Belfast
City Council



St Mary's
University College
Belfast
A College of Queen's University



Dear Principal

We are writing to ask for your help in delivering an important message from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council, Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Metropolitan College and the University Colleges to students in your school in advance of St Patrick's Day.

The St Patrick's Day celebrations in Belfast give people the chance to enjoy a carnival and family-friendly atmosphere in the city. As in previous years, our message is to invite people to come and enjoy all that Belfast has to offer – but to do so safely.

The PSNI, Belfast City Council, churches, voluntary groups and both universities, as well as Belfast Metropolitan College, St Mary's and Stranmillis University Colleges, invest significant resources in trying to ensure students and long-term residents can live peacefully together in the Holyland area of south Belfast. However, a popular perception among young people that the area is a key party destination on St Patrick's Day continues to pose significant safety challenges.

St Patrick's Day in previous years has attracted large crowds of young people in the Holyland area, many of whom were intoxicated. This created serious safety issues for emergency services and local residents. Ambulances calling to treat injured people were unable to access streets, and there was significant potential for public disorder, with associated risks for everyone in the area. This level of antisocial behaviour and significant alcohol consumption by crowds of people on residential streets is unacceptable.

While it was previously assumed that the vast majority of people in the area on St Patrick's Day are students from one of the local universities, University Colleges or FE Colleges, it has become clear in previous years, that there are also many young people from schools and colleges across Northern Ireland.

Agencies are working to reduce the number of young people in the area this St Patrick's Day. To support this, the higher educational institutions and colleges have agreed the following joint approach:

- Friday, 15th March 2019 has been designated as a study/reading day in the universities. This means that the universities will be open but there will be no scheduled classes taking place on those days.
- There will be a messaging campaign for students in advance of St Patrick's Day.

Our message to students in schools, and in further and higher education institutions, is to celebrate the holiday away from the residential streets of the Holyland area. This is for their own safety but also to protect local children, older people and other residents who are feeling particularly vulnerable as this St Patrick's Day approaches.

We would very much appreciate you sharing this message with pupils in your school and with their parents. Your support in communicating this out will be invaluable.

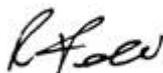
Please encourage parents to be aware of where their children are going and if they are planning to celebrate St Patrick's Day in Belfast that they only attend officially organised events and stay away from the Holyland area.

We are keen to ensure that all young people are aware of the risks associated with antisocial behaviour, for their safety and future educational and career prospects.

Thank you for your support in this matter.



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



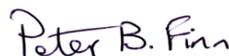
Professor Raffaella Folli
Provost, Jordanstown
and Belfast, Ulster
University



Jim Woods
Head of Learner Success
Belfast Metropolitan College



Dr Ken Gibson
Director of Student
and Learning Services
Stranmillis University
College



Professor Peter Finn
Principal
St Mary's University College



Nigel Grimshaw
Director of City and
Neighbourhood
Services Belfast City
Council



Superintendent Muir Clark
Police Service of Northern Ireland