

St. Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk, Co. Louth



Principal: Deirdre Mathews



The below piece is taken from an interview given by St Vincent's Secondary School in Dundalk principal Deirdre Mathews for the [Irish Independent](#).

Click here to watch full [Video Interview](#).

Showing their class - teachers getting more relaxed at doing videos for house-bound pupils



Connected: Clodhna McCusker, second year student at St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk, studying with her tablet at home

It's two weeks on, and teachers and pupils are settling into a new normal.

Even in a schools where technology has been integrated into daily life for years, rising to the challenges posed by a sudden shut-down was "a big ask", says Deirdre Matthews, principal of the 928-pupil all-girls' St Vincent's Secondary School in Dundalk, Co Louth.

But this week, she said, people were getting on top of it.

Already pupils are telling her that they love the video maths classes because they can hit the pause button and go back over something they don't understand.

In the initial stages the feedback was mixed, with some finding the change "good", while others described it as "too much work".

The overnight switch from face-to face to online teaching was a steep learning curve for staff.

One teacher told her that last week: "I was trying to do too much and felt completely overwhelmed. I was up all hours getting my videos ready for the next day, now I feel I am in control again and I feel I have my plan worked out."

Pupils can sense that teachers are more comfortable. When the principal asked some sixth years this week how it was going, one replied "you can see that teachers are getting better, we are getting more videos, they are more relaxed more themselves".

St Vincent's was one of the first schools in Ireland to have the benefit of high-speed broadband, paving the way for it to be an early adopter of technology in education.

The school uses a virtual learning environment known as Showbie and gave guidance to students and parents about the arrangements being put in place to continue teaching and learning during the closure.

Pupils log into Showbie at the normal time for each subject. "It is really important for the pupils to follow a routine and this gives them structure," said Ms Matthews.

In planning their approach they were also "anxious that it would not just be about putting homework online, but that we would progress learning of new material".

"Even up to Easter, that is a huge amount of time to lose out of the curriculum", she said.

If a teacher can't do a class live, they post a video, and respond to student queries before their next class.