

Tús maith, leath na h-oibre

**St. Joseph's National School,
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Theme for School Year 2020 – 2021
“Childhood is a journey, not a race”

Principal: Richella Kelly Deputy Principal: Siobhán Finnegan McElgunn

3th September 2020

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

Welcome

We would like to welcome all children back to the school after an extended school closure due to Covid 19. As all schools had to close on 12th March it has been almost six months since children have been in school. It may take your child some time to readjust to the school routine. This is to be expected. We extend a very warm welcome to all the newly enrolled children in the school.

This will be a very different school year. I've already updated you on some of the measures in place to keep Covid 19 out of the school. We have a dedicated **Covid 19 page on the school website**. Please keep an eye on this during the school year. Most of the communication between the school and home will be electronic this year. A small number of documents will be sent home in hard copy. **It is of the utmost importance the we have at least one current, valid, frequently checked e-mail address for every family. We also need one mobile number for the text a parent system.** We need all your current contact details. If these change during the school year, please inform us immediately.

Staff Changes/ Updates

This year Ms Kilkenny will teach Senior Infants. We welcome Ms K McManus to the teaching staff. Ms McManus will teach Second Class for the duration of Mrs Hynes' maternity leave. This year Mrs Griffin and Ms Quinn will be our Special Education Teachers (SET's) offering additional support to pupils. In addition to this we will have two visiting SET. Ms Greaney and Ms McLoughin. These teachers will be in the school one day every week this school year.

Ms Taylor and Ms Fallon left the school after three years with us. Ms Taylor is now teaching in Fourmile House N.S. and Ms Fallon is now the principal of Ballyleague N.S. in Co. Roscommon. We wish them the very best of luck for the future.

SNA: This year we have two full time SNA's working in the school, Mrs Marie McNabola and Mrs Catriona Gardiner.

School calendar 2020 – 2021

Please find attached a **DRAFT** copy of the school calendar for this year. It contains **most** of the school closures for this year. In addition, there will be three half day school closures to facilitate staff inservice on the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC). Every primary school in Ireland will be require to close for three half days this school year. We will strive to give you as much notice as possible about these school closures. We are awaiting information form the DES in relation to this. In an

emergency we may have to close the school at short notice. Should this arise you will be informed by text message. Therefore, it is very important that we have your up to date mobile number. **Please e-mail the school if any of your details (mobile number, e-mail address or address) have changed.**

No Homework/ School Bags and Coats

As you are aware teachers will not be assigning homework for the month of September. Pupils will still need to bring their school bag to school as it will be used during the school day to safely store your child's coat. Please put a plastic bag in your child's school bag so the coat can be stored safely on wet days.

Class Teacher E-mail Addresses

All visitors to the school must make an appointment to enter the school building. We have one phone line in the school. Teachers may not get to telephone parents at a convenient time so each teacher has set up a class e-mail address as a form of communication between the home and school. Each class e-mail address is indicated below.

We need to establish **clear guidelines** in relation to these e-mail addresses. Teachers will be supervising pupils from 9:10 a.m. Teachers will be teaching between 9:20 a.m. and 2/ 3 p.m. Teachers **cannot** read or reply to any e-mail during pupil contact/ teaching time. **Teachers will read e-mails between 3 and 5 pm, Monday to Friday** and will strive to reply to parents **within 24 hours**, if the matter is deemed urgent by the teacher and **within 48 hours** if the teacher thinks the matter can wait.

While parents can send an e-mail at any time please note that they teachers will only be reading e-mails after 3 p.m. and the 24/ 48 hours will commence at 3 p.m. on the day the teachers read the e-mail. Teachers will not be reading or replying to e-mails over the weekend and any e-mail sent after 5 p.m. on a Friday will not be read until after 3 p.m. on a Monday.

This is designed to assist parents in contacting the school and should not be abused. What might be an urgent matter to a parents may not be urgent in the context of the class. Please remember that your child is just one of 27/ 31 pupils in the class. This is an extra that teachers have kindly agreed to undertake this year (in addition to supervision from 9:10 a.m. and additional yard duty). Any form of abuse or aggression in e-mails will not be tolerated.

The class e-mails are as follows: -

Junior Infants	juniorinfantsstjosephslv@gmail.com
Senior Infants	seniorinfantsleitrimns@gmail.com
First Class	firstclassworkstjosephsns@gmail.com
Second Class	2ndclass2020@gmail.com
Third Class	thirdclasscovid19stjosephsns@gmail.com
Fourth Class	4thclassleitrimns@gmail.com
Fifth Class	MBlake5th@gmail.com
Sixth Class	6thclassleitrimns@gmail.com

Teachers may contact you this week using the above e-mail address.

In the event of a school closure we will be using these e-mail addresses to send work to pupils.

Seesaw/ School Closure or Class at home

In the event that the school/ a class has to close due to Covid 19 teachers will use the above-mail addresses as one method to communicate with families and assign work. We will also use Seesaw. Teachers will set this up this week and forward you the details as to how to download the app and access codes. There are many You Tube videos on how to use and set up Seesaw.

Dates to Note

10th September: Return of Allianz Pupil Personal Insurance.

11th September: Interest in Aldi €50,000 Committee

Visitors to the School

During the school day all visitors to the school, including all parents, must make an appointment prior to entering the school. DES signs are placed at the three main entrance doors to remind all visitors of this. All visitors are asked to enter the school via the main door, complete the visitors contract tracing form, sanitise their hands and then go to the School Secretary's Office. There is a social distance marker on the floor to assist with maintaining a social distance of 2 metres. All visitors are required to wear a face covering.

Forgotten items can be placed on the bench to the left of the main door. Please telephone the school to alert the secretary.

Temperature Checks

Thanks to everyone who has already completed and returned the pupil Temperature Check consent form. A child's temperature will only be checked if he/she becomes unwell during the school day. If you haven't already done so, please return the form immediately.

Any child that comes to school is expected to be fit for school and able to complete a full day in school.

School Policy Updates

Some school policies need to be updated to take into account measures put in place to deal with the Covid 19 pandemic. These policies include the following: -

- Supervision Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Critical Incidents Policy
- Health and Safety and Risk Assessment Policy

Draft versions of these policies with the outlined amendments will be uploaded to the school website. These policies will be discussed by the BOM and possibly ratified at the next BOM meeting. You will be notified when these policies have been ratified by the BOM.

Parents Association

The current members of the Parents Association Committee are: Ailish Keane, Natasha Dunne, Claire Donlon and Michael McNama. Various items from the Parents Association including meeting dates will be included in our communication letter. Please make a special effort to attend at least one meeting this year.

Aldi Play Rugby €50, 000 Prize for sporting facilities

In January 2020 the school won €50, 000 for sporting facilities in the Aldi Play Rugby sticker promotion. Pupils, parents and staff made many great suggestions during February as to how best to spend this money. The BOM decided to set up a committee to guide this project. I sent out an invitation in early March seeking participants for this committee. The school closed a few days later so I am now reissuing this invitation. In particular if any parent has expertise in construction, engineering, project design, PE, fitness, active in a local club/ sporting facility etc and would like to be part of this committee please e-mail the school, leitrimns@gmail.com by Friday next 11th September.

CLAR Funding 2020

The BOM applied for funding under CLAR 2020 for the instillation of solar panels and hot water in the school. Unfortunately, we were not successful with this application.

Shortage of Substitute Teachers

We are currently experiencing a shortage of substitute teachers. From time to time a Special Education Teacher may have to take a class. The principal is fifth in line to take a class. In the event that there is no teacher to take a class the BOM may have to ask a class to stay at home. You would be notified by text should this arise. We cannot divide a class this year.

Tin Whistle lessons by Padraig Sweeney/ Creative Writing/ Swimming

The BOM have decided that there will be no external coaches or tutors visiting the school before Halloween. There will be no private tin whistle lessons with Padraig Sweeney or Creative Writing with Gerry Boland before Halloween. The BOM will review the situation in Mid-October and make a decision at that time for November/ the rest of the school year.

The BOM have also decided in the interest of the health and safety of pupils and staff swimming lessons will not take place from the school this academic year.

Staggered morning entry and exit at home time

We are seeking your continued co-operation in relation to the staggered entry and exit from the school.

Staggered breaks

As break times are now staggered in the school four classes go to the yard at a time. Each class has their own clearly defined playing area. Pupils must stay in their area.

School Fees

We are aware that some family circumstances may have changes in recent months due to the impact of Covid 19. School Fees can be paid by instalment. Please let us know if you wish to avail of this so that we will not send to reminder letters.

This year parents were given two options regarding book rental/ school fees. **Option 1, €80 per pupil capped at €230 for a family of 3 and €300 for a family of 4 or more.** This fee covers book rental (textbooks and workbooks) and stationary, art and crafts, photocopying, homework journal and creative writer.

Option 2, €40 per pupil for stationary, art and crafts, photocopying, homework journal and creative writer. With this option it is a flat rate per pupil **and parents must purchase all textbooks and workbooks.**

It would be greatly appreciated if the above fees could be paid as soon as possible, **ideally by Thursday next 10th September.** Please put the money in an envelope and write your child's name on the outside. **If you would like to pay by instalment, please contact the school to arrange this. If paying by cheque, please make cheque payable to **Leitrim N.S.****

School Policy on Mobile Phones and Electronic Devices

Please re-read the school policy on mobile phones and electronic devices available in the Policies tab of the school website and in your school information booklet. Children **are not allowed** bring mobile phones to school. There are no exceptions to this rule. If you need to contact your child during the school day, please phone the school and the secretary will relay any message to your child. A review of this policy took place in June 2018 and 99% of parents did not want children bringing personal devices to school.

Anaphylaxis

Several pupils in the school are allergic to peanuts, one with anaphylaxis to peanuts. This is a life threatening allergy, which could result in death if the child comes into contact with peanuts. In order to help us manage this life threatening allergy we ask you to help us make the school a nut free zone. Please do not give your child peanuts or nuts as part of his/ her lunch, including peanut butter sandwiches. Also children will be discouraged from sharing lunches. This will be incorporated into our healthy lunch policy.

Supervision before/ after school

St. Joseph's N.S. will now open to allow pupils enter safely in a staggered manner from 9:10 a.m. Pupils in Junior and Senior Infants will be released gradually from 1:55 p.m. and pupils in 1st to 6th class will be released gradually from 2:55 p.m. Children and adults **SHOULD NOT** be on school grounds before 9:10 a.m. or after 3 p.m. Each parent/ guardian is responsible for his/ her child outside of school hours.

Healthy Lunches

Your support is greatly appreciated with the implementation of our Healthy Lunch Policy. Please read the Healthy Lunch Policy and keep it safe. Children will eat their lunches before going to the yard. Children will be given 5 - 10 minutes before each break to eat their lunches quietly. The class teacher may allow a little longer in the beginning to establish this routine, however we cannot allow any longer for eating as it would interfere with teaching time. Children are reminded not to use eating time for talking and are asked not to share/ swap their lunches.

Please find attached a copy of the **Complaints Procedure**. (Hard copy will go home on a Yellow Page)

Text a Parent/ Contact Details/ Communication via e-mail/ E-mailing the school

Please e-mail the school if any of your contact details have changed.

When e-mailing the school please create a new e-mail each time. Please do not reply to e-mails from the school. Most e-mails are sent to every parent and if you simply reply your e-mail could get lost among two to three hundred other replies.

Reminders:

Face Masks

Children in Primary School **do not** need to wear a face mask/ covering.

Home Time

Teachers will start to release children in Junior and Senior Infants **from 1:55 p.m.**

Teachers will start to release children in First to Sixth Class **from 2:55 p.m.** (Children going home on the bus will be released first).

Curricular Focus

For the next week for so teachers will allow children time to adjust to school life and get used to the new school routines. Teachers will then focus on Irish, English, Maths and pupils Wellbeing (which will include SPHE, PE and Religion). Other subject may be taught in an integrated way.

Homework

There will be **no homework** to be completed at home for the **month of September**. This will be reviewed and a decision made for October. You will be informed about this. Please feel free to e-mail the school during the month of September with your thoughts 'homework/ no homework'.

Children should not need to bring a pencil case to school.

While children are asked to bring a school bag to school every day the school bag might only contain their lunch and drink. In the event that the school has to close children will need their school bag to bring home their textbooks.

Coats

We will try to get as much fresh air as possible every day at break times so please ensure that your child brings a **coat** to school every day. Every child, including children in Junior Infants should be able to put on and zip up their coats. Children will leave their coats in their school bags during the school day. Please put a plastic bag in your child's school bag for coats on wet days to prevent the inside of school bags getting wet.

School Uniform

We ask that children wear their school uniform/ tracksuit to school and **change out** of their uniform/ tracksuit before going to any activity or to a shop. **Please keep the school uniform/ tracksuit for school wear only.**

Head Lice

Please check your child's hair at least once a week for head lice. Please inform the school if your child becomes infected. It has been brought to our attention already this year that some pupils have head lice. Please read the attached letter and keep it safe. Please treat your child for head lice, following instructions on medication carefully. You may have to re-treat a few times just to kill the new lice. Most lotions only kill live lice and eggs "nits" continue to hatch. This can take a few weeks to ensure all lice are killed.

Punctuality

As we start a new school year we encourage all children to arrive on time for school each day. This will greatly facilitate children settling into class each day and allow each teacher maximise teaching time. We are asking for your co-operation in relation to this matter.

Allianz pupil Personal Insurance

Please find attached information on Allianz Pupil Personal Insurance. The 24-hour cover costs just **€9 per pupil**. If you wish to avail of this insurance please complete an application form for each child and return it to the school, in a named envelope, with the relevant fee, by **Thursday 10th September**. If you want to pay by cheque, please make **cheques payable to the school (Leitrim N.S)**. **Any application received after 10th September will not be processed and returned to you.**

Please find attached details on the policy cover. A hard copy of the application form will go home today. If you require any additional information on Allianz Pupil Personal Insurance please log onto the website www.allianz.ie.

Yours sincerely

Richella Kelly

**Richella Kelly,
Principal.**