

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

8th October 2020

Re: Communication Letter October 2020

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Dates to Remember:

Friday 23rd October: Optional Halloween dress up.

Monday 26th October – Friday 30th October: School closed for Mid Term Break.

18th November: County Photos: Junior Infants and Sixth Class ONLY

14th January 2021: Closing date for application to Junior Infants for September 2021.

County Photos

A photographer from County Photos will visit the school on **Wednesday 18th November 2020** to take individual and class photos of pupils in **Junior Infants and Sixth Class pupils only**. As classes cannot mix it will not be possible to facilitate family photographs this year. This is a BOM decision

Fogging

As an additional measure on top of 25 hours of cleaning every week the BOM have been getting the classrooms fogged. This is an additional safety measure to sanitise classrooms and keep pupils and staff safe from any possible spread of Covid 19.

Dress up for Halloween

Pupils have the option of dressing up for Halloween on Friday 23rd October. Pupils may wear a costume over their school uniform. Pupils will be going to the yard at break times, if dry, so the costume should be warm. Senior pupils are reminded not to wear anything too revealing or too scary which may frighten younger pupils. This is optional. Pupils may also wear their school uniform to school on this day.

Absence Sheet

Please find attached a copy of the school absence sheet. Please return a completed absence sheet or e-mail the school to explain why your child was absent from school. All absences are recorded on Aladdin, our digital Roll book and all absences of over 20 days are notified to Tusla.

What if there was a suspected or confirmed case of Covid 19 in the school? A letter was e-mailed to every family On Monday 5th October outlining what would happen if/ should this arise.

Admission for the 2021 – 2022 school year.

The BOM have published the school Annual Admission Notice and this together with the new Admission Policy and Application for Admission Form are available on the school website, under the Admission Tab. The closing date for admissions for the 2021 – 2022 school year will be 14th January 2021. There will be 27 places available for Junior Infants again next year.

Please note that returning a completed application form with a copy of your child's birth cert and utility bill does not guarantee a place in the school. In the event that the school is over-subscribed the Admission Policy will be adhered to in allocating places. Should this arise parents have the right to seek an appeal

Student Teacher Placement and Transition Year/ Second Level Work Experience:

In early 2020 the school staff, with BOM approval, agreed to facilitate three student teachers on teaching placement in the school. Teaching placement is an essential part of their course. Placement was due to commence between September and December 2020 but the Colleges of Education have moved placement to Term 2 (January to Easter 2021). Unless advised otherwise the school will facilitate these student teachers in Term 2.

Due to the nature of work experience and students moving between classes the BOM have decided not to facilitate any second level pupils on work experience this school year.

Fire Drill. Due to Covid 19 the BOM have requested that each class practice evacuating the school on an individual class basis. There will be a full school evacuation only in the event of an emergency (fire etc).

Friendship Week and the Stay Safe Programme

Many teachers have been working on the theme of Friendship in class since the start of the school year. This is an ongoing topic. In addition to this the school will hold the first of two Friendship Weeks in November. You will be notified closer to the date and photos of pupil's work showing some of the activities they participated in will be uploaded to the school website. This is one strategy used in the school to combat Bullying.

Following DES advice, the Stay Safe Programme is being taught in every class in the school this term. As part of this programme your child may have worksheets to complete at home. This is specifically designed to serve as a home school link.

Parent Teacher Meetings: For the past number of years we have held our Parent Teacher meetings in October, before the Mid Term Break. We have decided to push these meeting back as we are waiting to see if the DES will issue advice to school as to how best to facilitate parent teacher meetings this school year. We will be in contact with you when we have reached a decision on dates. As much notice as possible will be given.

In the meantime, if you have any concerns about your child, please contact his/ her class teacher via the class e-mail address. Please remember that teachers cannot reply to your e-mails during class time. Teachers will reply as soon as possible inside 24 to 48 hours.

Child Safeguarding Questionnaires September 2020 Summary of Responses

Thanks to everyone who took the time to reply to the child safeguarding questionnaire issued in mid- September. Below is a summary of responses: -

Pupils: Pupils in 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th class were issued a questionnaire. 112 out of a possible 112 pupils returned questionnaires. 102 always felt safe in school. Over 91% of pupils. 10 pupils felt safe in school sometimes, less than 9 %. No pupil never felt safe. The reasons given for only sometimes feeling safe were: -

Sometimes people are rough and don't know they are rough. Stop letting bullies bully. Removed the chain dividing the yards as some people swing it as a skipping rope. Add tablet time. No homework. I like the new changes keep it this way. I don't like tall people and boys. I'm scared of them. If others go within 1m they should get a punishment. If you see someone bullying say don't

do that. Get a bigger yard. Make the fence higher. Get the teacher to look for the person that hurts you. Tell the boys never annoy the girls. I feel safe in school but hate it.

Parents: We currently have 213 pupils in the school from 140 different families. Every family was given a questionnaire. 107 questionnaires were returned by Friday 25th September (over 76%) representing 159 pupils (75% of pupils). 97 parents indicated that their children always felt safe in school, over 90% of parents. 7 parents indicated that their child sometimes felt safe in school, just over 6%. Reasons given for only sometimes feel safe in school included: -

Child feels outcast and lonely by other classmates. Bullying – online outside of school which extends into school – not seen by the school as a school matter. Anxiety around Covid 19. Trouble on the school bus. Encourage children to talk. All good. Child is concerned that the school will have to close again due to Covid 19. Perfect – plenty of fresh air. Teachers needs to watch what's going on at break time – throwing stones. Child is lonely at lunchtime. Revise the anti-bullying programme / campaign continuously throughout the year. There were a lot of positive comments too thanking teachers for all they did to reopen the school safety and the additional supervision etc.

Staff were happy with the current policy and didn't suggest any changes or alterations to current procedures and practices.

The BOM will review the Child Safeguarding policy at the next BOM meeting. Your feedback will feed into this review.

News Flash/ Primary Planet Magazines

This year children in 2nd to 6th class will receive 4 copies of the Primary Planet/ News Flash Magazine. These magazines cost €2 each so a total of €10. I have not asked for payment yet and the BOM have yet to make a decision on Creative Writing. €10 from the Book Rental fees is put towards the cost of the Creative Writing. If Creative Writing does not go ahead, your child will get the magazines for the portion of the book rental fees already paid. I will update you regarding the Junior end of the school in the next communication letter.

Bus

It has been brought to my attention that a number of children are using bad language on the school bus. I have spoken to the bus driver and he has confirmed that it is a number of children. The bus inspector may have to get involved and could take child's ticket. If your child travels to school by bus, please speak to him/ her about language and behaviour on the bus.

Yours sincerely,

Richella Kelly

Richella Kelly,
Principal