

OUR LADY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Our Lady's P.S.



DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



'Learning through Friendship.'

I am delighted to inform you that we have agreed our new vision statement. Over the past year we have consulted staff, parents, children and Board of Governors regarding a vision statement for our school. After all the votes had been counted our Board of Governors ratified '*Learning through Friendship*'. It was a very close contest between our three final statements with the Board of Governors unanimously supporting '*Learning through Friendship*' as the statement receiving the highest number of votes and the one that was most popular following the children's vote. It was felt that if it resonated strongly with the children then it should be our vision to be a school where children learn in a friendly and collaborative environment. We will strive to embed our vision statement in our school and promote it in a way that is meaningful to our children and wider community. Thank you to everyone who assisted or supported the school with this process and hopefully we can all play our roles as members of the school community in promoting this vision.

NEW PUPILS IN 2021/22 – Traditionally, we would have hosted an Open Night for prospective families and Reception/Primary One children during the month of December but unfortunately this year we are unable to do this. We have updated our school Prospectus and it has been uploaded on to our website. Copies will be available from the school office from Monday 7th December. We will also upload a short video on to our website later this month which will offer parents a glimpse of life in our school. Online applications for Reception and Primary One children open on Thursday 7th January until 29th January (12 noon), on the Education Authority website. Please encourage all prospective parents/guardians to visit our school website to learn more about our school. Parents/guardians can also contact the school to chat with me or arrange an appointment to come and walk around our school.

DITCH THE DARK DAY – On **Friday 4th December** we are hosting our annual '**Ditch the Dark Day**' which is organised by Ms Loughran and our Eco/Student Council. Usually, we would have gathered at the Community Centre and walked, scooted or cycled to school together but unfortunately this year we are unable to do this. The children can walk to school in their bright clothes although we will not be meeting at the Community Centre as it is very important that we protect our class bubbles and socially distance. The children will not be able to cycle or scoot to school as the carpark is already being used as a playground and it would not be fair to let some children bring their bikes and others not. The children will all be offered a hotdog or pancake when they come into school. They will also begin their journey to Santa as we continue to work with Sustrans to promote active travel. As this is a **non-uniform day** there is a charge of **£1 per child or £2 per family** although all **donations are in aid of the Tullysaran, St. Vincent de Paul society** who will be supporting local families over the Christmas period. I would encourage everyone to support this appeal as the Tullysaran St. Vincent de Paul society has previously supported the school with the establishment of our Breakfast Club, Numeracy remediation initiatives and donated two laptops to the school. Supporting the local St. Vincent de Paul society is an opportunity for us all to continue to help our community in difficult times. If anyone needs support, please contact Mrs Comiskey or Mr Mc Kee and we will put you in contact with a member of the local St. Vincent de Paul society. I can assure you that we will treat all requests in the strictest of confidence.

CHRISTMAS DINNER - Our Christmas dinner is scheduled for **Thursday 10th December**. Children are invited to come to school in their own clothes wearing a Christmas jumper, hat or festive clothing (no charge for non-uniform). Christmas dinner will be served in the classrooms so that children can remain in their class bubbles. Children can be collected at the normal times. 123 Clubs and buses will be running as normal.

CHRISTMAS PERFORMANCES – At this time of year there is usually great excitement as our Reception/P1 to P4 children would have been preparing for their Christmas performances which have always been very memorable celebrations in the Community Centre. Unfortunately, we are unable to put on our Christmas Shows but all of the classes are going to perform a Christmas song, which will be recorded on Thursday 10th December, Christmas dinner day. We will then post our Christmas songs on our school website over the course of the final full week of the term (14th-17th December). I realise that this will not be the same as our Christmas shows but hopefully it will bring some Christmas cheer to all our homes.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS – School will **close on Friday 18th December**, normal finishing times, for Christmas. Children will return to school on **Tuesday 5th January 2021**, with Breakfast and 123 Clubs operating as normal.

DINNER MONEY – Dinners continue to cost £2.60 per day and we would encourage all parents/guardians to use **Parent-Pay** to pay for dinners. We have had some technical difficulties over the course of the term but we knew that this was possible with moving to a new system, but it generally seems to be working well for most parents. Please contact the school if you are experiencing any difficulties with Parent-Pay. The school still accepts cash payments although please ensure that any money being brought into school is in a clearly labelled and closed envelope. Thank you.

All dinner money is paid to the Education Authority so it should be paid in advance. The Education Authority policy is that if dinner money is two weeks in arrears then the child(ren) should be refused dinner. We have also adopted a similar policy for attendance at our Breakfast and 123 Clubs so please ensure that all payments are made in advance as this is not a policy that we wish to implement. Thank you. If you are experiencing difficulty with making payments, please contact the school and we can make an arrangement to support you with your payments. The December Dinner Menu is available on our school website.

(Please Note - Nut Products, including seeded bread, are not allowed in school. Thanks.)

HEALTHY SNACK – Children should bring a drink of water and a healthy snack (for break-time): fruit, pancake, sandwich, crackers with butter/cheese (Not permitted: jam, chocolate, Nutella, peanut butter, sugary spreads etc.) to school with them each day for break-time. Recently, we have noticed that quite a few children are bringing cordial juice and other snacks into school. Cordial juice is only permitted at lunch time and cannot be taken during the school day. Children are only permitted to bring the above snacks to school to ensure we promote a healthy and balanced diet. Please ensure all children come to school with appropriate healthy snacks. Thank you.

COVID-19 - Please remember to socially distance around the school grounds and encourage good hygiene as we strive to ensure our school continues to operate as it has over the past four months. If you, a member of your immediate family or child(ren) is/are displaying any Coronavirus symptoms, please keep your child(ren) off school until you have received a test result and follow PHA guidance. If you are unsure if your child(ren) should attend school, please contact Mrs Comiskey or Mr Mc Kee and we will advise on the actions you should follow. Remember that if your child(ren) test(s) positive *or comes into close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19* they will have to isolate for 14 days. The class teachers will then arrange work for your child(ren) via Seesaw or work can be collected from school if appropriate i.e. reading book. I would like to thank all families who have followed these guidelines over the past few months and thank everyone for assisting the school in ensuring that we have been able to function as we have over the course of this term. Thank you.

REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY – Our P3 children have performed a beautiful Remembrance assembly where they remembered all their loved ones and all members of our school community who have passed away. May they Rest in Peace. Their assembly has been uploaded on to our school website and I would encourage everyone to view it as it is lovely to see the children with their special crosses and listen to them read their prayers and sing their song. Excellent! Well done to Mrs. Comiskey, Mrs Kearney and all the Primary 3 pupils.



DROP OFF AND COLLECTION OF CHILDREN – As we enter the final month of the term, I would like to remind you about the importance of safety around the school in the morning and afternoon. Please ensure that you park and drive safely at drop off and collection times. Recently, we have noticed incidents where parents have stopped their cars in the middle of the road to collect children. This is very dangerous as children are being asked to walk between parked cars and it has also created serious congestion around the school. Quite a few parents persist on driving down to the school at 3 o'clock even though there is ample parking outside the GAA grounds or Community Centre. There also can be quite a bit of congestion as people drive home and the traffic is moving in both directions. The road outside the school is narrow and care should be taken. Please, take your time, one or two minutes is not going to make a huge difference as you make your journey away from school. Please remember to be respectful of the properties that are in close proximity of the school grounds. Some parents are turning in people's driveways and driving up on to grass verges that are well maintained. Please do not turn in the driveways of local residents. Thank you. If you are running late, don't worry we will supervise children until they are collected although this should not be a daily occurrence. Morning drop off is usually better than the afternoon although I would remind all parents/guardians that children must not enter the school grounds until 8 am if attending Breakfast Club. All other children must not come to school until 8.40 am. If a child enters the school before this time, they will have to attend Breakfast Club and whether they take breakfast or not their parent/guardian will be charged £2.

I would just like to remind you that all staff have once again requested that parents/guardians do not purchase gifts for them this Christmas. We stress this without reservation. Staff appreciate the kindness shown to them over the years however we feel, parents/guardians have enough expenses throughout the year, and we appreciate all the support you give to the school. Please support the local St. Vincent de Paul society by making a small donation on Friday 4th December for our 'Ditch the Dark' Day, if you are in a position to do so. Thank you.

Finally, 2020 has been a challenging year for everyone due to the ongoing global pandemic. It has been a year that we will never forget and unfortunately some members of our own school community have been directly impacted by COVID-19. Thankfully, our school has been able to operate with some sense of normality over the course of this term and the children have enjoyed being back at school. We look forward to 2021 when maybe we will begin to plan for a future with greater freedom and opportunity. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all staff and governors, to wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Take care, stay safe and all the best.

Tomás Mc Kee

Mr Tomás Mc Kee

Principal