

Whitechurch N.S.

Newsletter Jan/ Feb 2023



Happy New Year!

Welcome back to a new term at WNS! We hope you all had a lovely break over the Christmas holidays. Thank you for all of the lovely cards and presents sent to our staff at the end of term- it was very much appreciated! It was so nice to see the children happily coming back to school on Thursday ready to get back to their normal routine and see their friends again!

WNS Choir

Our School Choir sang beautifully at the Church Carol Service and the Senior Carol Service. It is wonderful to have our school choir back up and running after a number of years without due to the Pandemic. Thank you to Jenni Harrison and Miriam Barry for all of their continued work our talented bunch of singers!



Carol Services

We were delighted to see so many family members at our two carol services at the end of term. The children all did a great job performing their songs, mini plays and poems. 6th Class and 1st Class deserve particular mention for leading the two services with their Nativity plays. The carol service collections amounted to €775 in total to be split between 3 charities- Bumbleance (Children's Ambulance Service), the Parish Rwanda Mission Link, and Purple House Cancer Support.

Wellbeing Week

This year's Wellbeing Week will be held from 23rd- 27th January. Each year, we focus on the five ways to wellbeing and zone in on one in particular. The theme will be 'Keep learning, keep growing!' The week will focus on growth mindset, resilience and perseverance. We look forward to lots of activities relating to wellbeing for all members of the school community! Watch this space!!



How to help your child resist peer pressure

Helping your child to develop a strong sense of identity and their own opinions can help them to resist peer pressure. Here are a few suggestions taken from Big Life Journal Parenting Resource:

Let them choose music for drives in the car.

Why do you like this song? How does it make you feel? What other types of music do you like?

Help them develop their own sense of style.

What colour combinations do you like best? How do you want your outfit to make you feel?

Help them develop opinions about current events.

What do you think about the situation? If you don't understand something, how would you get answers?

Play 'What If' games together.

What if you didn't have to go to school? What would you do instead?

If you could study anything at school, what would it be?

When you routinely ask non- judgemental questions and accept their opinions...

You help them develop a strong sense of identity and resist peer pressure.



Respiratory Illness

All parents received a recent memo and the above poster from the HSE which we were asked to send out. It notes the very high prevalence of illnesses such as Covid, Flu and RSV currently. Please do not send sick pupils to school as respiratory illnesses spread so quickly in classrooms. Your continued cooperation is much appreciated.

Workshops/ Activities

6th Class have been very busy recently with lots of activities. Below are some accounts of what they have been up to!

Museum Explorers Workshop

On Tuesday the 6th December, 6th Class did an online workshop with the Museum of Decorative Arts & History. It was called 'Museum Explorers' and it was very interesting. We learned lots of new facts about Collins Barracks and Stokes Tapestry. We played a few games and we had to try and figure out the backstory and purpose of each artefact. We were given two options, A or B, and we had to choose the correct option. The majority of the class got all of the questions right. It was really good fun.

Josh Kelly (6th Class)

Virtual Workshop with the Natural History Museum

On the 30th November, 6th Class did a virtual workshop with the Natural History Museum. The museum preserves animals in different ways by drying and stuffing them, and they're kept in a special alcohol. Some aren't preserved at all, they're just bones. Geraldine told us how peregrine falcons almost went extinct due to harmful pesticides. We also learned that tons of animals, such as the Giant Irish Deer, went extinct due to the cold, and that rats originated in Asia. We were also shown some taxidermied animals. We're very thankful for Geraldine's talk and we enjoyed it a lot.

by Eli Clarke and Arthur Heard (6th Class)



Killakee Christmas Tree Farm

On Wednesday the 7th of December we were kindly invited to Killakee Christmas tree farm, organised by Vann's mum. James, Katie, Marianna, Alex and Vann's mums gave us lifts there. Firstly Karen (the lady that was giving us the tour) told us about the history of the farm and how many trees they grow a year. Then we did a scavenger hunt all around the Christmas trees where we had to find things like ivy and a 5 year old Christmas tree. After the scavenger hunt we went back to their cabin where you can buy Christmas trees and wreaths and here they gave us our own little trees to plant at home! After that we went to the car park and Alex's mum had

kindly made us hot chocolate and homemade gingerbread cookies. James' mum had jellies for us, too! That topped off a great day.

by Alfie Byrne and Josh Kelly (6th Class)



Primary Sampler Module- PPLI

Following the first year of the Post Primary Languages Ireland scheme to offer a languages sampler module for senior classes in primary schools, we are delighted to have applied and been approved for a second year with the scheme. Pupils are introduced to another language and to the wider world of foreign languages in general. Our pupils loved learning Italian last year thanks to the trojan work of parent and post primary teacher, Salvo Cacciato. This year, we will be welcoming Ms. Jenny Healy will be teaching Irish Sign Language (ISL) to the senior end classes (3rd-6th) during January, February and March. This is another exciting and interesting opportunity for our pupils and we are delighted to be able to take part once again!



Dance Classes

Veronika Sardoku will take the pupils for dance classes once again this term. All pupils really enjoy and greatly benefit from learning dance- it helps with confidence, coordination, motor skills and teamwork. The cost of our Term 2 in school Dance lessons is covered by the pupil contribution, which is greatly appreciated by all.

Pupil Financial Contributions

Many thanks to those who have paid their pupil contributions to date. Without these contributions, the school would not be able to function and therefore, we encourage all parents to do their best to participate in the scheme. So far this year, the pupil contributions have been spent on:

- 24/7 additional pupil personal accident insurance for all pupils. Some parents have already made claims for accidents that their children have had outside of school already this year.
- Drama classes for all pupils for the first term. Dance classes will take place in the second term. Gymnastics lessons will take place in the third term.
- 6th Class visit to Christ Church Cathedral.
- Professional PE coaching for all pupils. Please note that the school no longer charges for Playball coaching during the school day and the cost of this is included in the Pupil Contribution.
- Class teachers have spent €15 per pupil on art and craft materials.
- Class teachers have spent €15 per pupil on reading materials for pupils in their classrooms.
- Photocopying, binding and laminating of pupil work and teaching resources.
- Computer software and licenses, IT maintenance including pupil iPads and laptops.
- Replacement furniture and equipment.
- Visiting speakers and workshops for pupils- Marine Environment science workshop for all pupils in Term 1. More workshops will be taking place over the rest of the year.
- Assistance with shortfalls on general running costs such as heating and electricity, stationery, maintenance, stamps, parent text messaging facility and cleaning services.

The tradition with our pupil contribution is that we do not ask for lots of smaller amounts of money throughout the year for each activity. That is why it might seem higher than some other schools who would also charge parents for individual activities as well as set charges for photocopying, reading material, stationery, art supplies etc. throughout the year, however please bear in mind the range of activities and resources that we spend the pupil contributions on. It

really is good value when you see the many ways in which our pupils benefit from it. We would strongly urge all parents to contribute- the monthly standing order. It is quite convenient and can be easily set up on request from the office. We are able to budget as we know it is coming in. We also very much appreciate the prompt return of the Charity Tax Refund forms which you have been sent if you needed to complete one. This enables the school to claim a tax refund based on your pupil contribution as we are a registered charity. This means less fundraising during the year!! If you still have not paid or signed up to the monthly direct debit scheme, we would greatly appreciate if you would contact Laoighse in the school office to make arrangements. Thank you for your continued support.



Soccer Tournament

Recently, some of the 4th and 5th Class boys and girls played in a 5-a-side football tournament in Rockbrook School. There were many eager participants for this event as the tournament took place during the school day! One team from 4th Class and one team from 5th Class also managed to qualify for the finals evening that took place a couple of weeks later. All pupils involved showed exceptional teamwork, skill and sportsmanship. A big thank you to all the parents who helped organise this, by giving lifts and supervising, especially to the 4th and 5th Class parent representatives Eve Pendergast and Emma Neill.



P.T.A. Update

The PTA kindly organised for Santa Claus to visit all of the children before Christmas and to bring some treats to each class. Pupils also had a very enjoyable Christmas Fun Day and the PTA Selection Box Raffle was a popular event with 3 prizes per class and a bonus box at the end.



Santa Claus gets ready to deliver treats to all of the children at WNS!

PTA Clothing Collection-1st February

Please leave all bags of clothing at the school under the porch roof at the entrance near 5th Class on the morning of the 1st February or else at the Drop Off Zone. You can also leave bag under the porch roof on Tuesday 31st January after school. The following are items that are accepted and not accepted:

We accept the following 'good quality' items for RE-USE:

- Men's, Ladies and Children's clothing
- Paired shoes (tied together or elastic band around)
- Handbags, Hats, Bags, Scarves and ties
- Belts
- Soft toys

We **DO NOT** accept:

- Duvets, blankets, bedding
- Pillows and cushions
- Charity shop items
- Carpets, rugs and Mats (including bath, shower and toilet mats)
- Soiled, painted, ripped or wet clothing
- School uniforms with and without logo
- Corporate clothing and workwear
- Textile off cuts, yarns or threaded material

School Pupils Mini-Fair 3rd February

If you are planning a clear-out of any surplus toys, games or books, please keep us in mind. We plan to hold our annual School Mini-Fair for pupils on Friday 3rd February and would welcome donations from everyone. These can be left in the classrooms from Friday 27th January. For those of you that are new to the school, the Mini Fair is a small event just for pupils that takes place for an hour during school that is run to help with fundraising each year after Christmas. The older pupils run different stalls in their classrooms and the younger children are paired up with buddies from the older classes who help them to 'shop' and play the games. It is a very much looked forward to event each year! We will send out more details near the time and will be looking for volunteer parents to help with the games and hot dogs. Our May Fete is a much bigger event that takes place on a Saturday later in the year.

The Return of the May Fete!

After a long absence due to Covid, it is hoped to once again run the May Fete. This is a joint Parish and School community event that raises funds for both. A May Fete Committee will oversee the arrangements and will be made up of parish and school representatives. Please do consider helping out if you can- we are looking for someone to coordinate the May Fete Committee. This should preferably be someone who has seen/ been involved in previous May Fetes and know how they work.

Rev. David has some great ideas for re launching the Fete taken from his experience of other parish Fetes. We are aiming to make the event run more efficiently with a shared spread of work. We will be making some changes to the type of stalls in order to maximise enjoyment, fundraising and lessen the amount of junk left over at the end! Please contact the school or parish office if you think you might be able to help.

Cricket

We are delighted that Cricket Leinster will give lessons to 3rd-6th Classes this month. We are hoping that there will once again be the opportunity to take part in a Cricket Blitz later in the year.

World Book Day

World Book Day will be held on Thursday 2nd March. We look forward to taking part in special book related activities that day. All children will once again receive book vouchers that can be used to get a free World Book Day book or else part redeemed against the cost of any book. More details will be sent out nearer the time.

Mother's Union Christmas Hampers

Thank you to all the families that donated to the Christmas Hampers. The Whitechurch Mother's Union were able to make up a good number of hampers that were given to families in the locality.

Cycling Safely

We are delighted to see so many pupils cycling (and even scooting) to school again! Please remember to wear your helmets whenever you are cycling or scooting and always walk with your scooter or bike when on school grounds.

We have been working with Karen Moore, the Green School's Travel Officer, this year and she is helping us with some of our ongoing issues with safety along the road. We have also applied for some on site cycle training for our pupils. If we are granted this, we will let you know.

Meanwhile, we have increased our bike parking spaces just around the back of 1st Class and the school office. We are told a roof for this is coming soon also!

Drop Off Zone Reminder

Please remember to only allow children to get out of the car on the school side and when the car is stopped within the Drop Off Zone markings. Things are really running very smoothly at the DOZ and we continue to have lots of really positive feedback from parents about the facility!



Aladdin Parent App

A reminder that you should enter your child's absence reasons on the app. You do not need to send in a paper form and can do this really easily on the app. If your child is going to be late in for any reason, you can also enter this on the app so then the teacher knows not to mark your child absent. You can also check back over your child's attendance records via the app.

Stay Safe

The Stay Safe Programme will be taught to all classes during Term 2. The aim of the Stay Safe programme is to teach children personal safety skills so they can look after themselves in situations which could be upsetting or dangerous. It deals initially with common situations which most children will experience at some stage or other, e.g. getting lost or being bullied. The programme also teaches children the safety skills necessary to protect themselves from physical or sexual abuse and emphasises the importance of telling a trusted adult about any problems they have.

The Stay Safe programme is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum which all primary schools are required to implement. Co-operation between parents and teachers is essential to the success of this programme. It is important that parents are aware of the content of the Stay Safe lessons and are able to discuss the lessons with their children. Your child may bring home worksheets which will inform you about the topics being covered in class and how you can reinforce the messages at home. Your child's teacher will send you a note on Stay Safe when they start the programme. If

you have any questions, you can speak to them about it.

School Opening Time

We would like to remind you that school opens at 8.10 a.m. for the reception of pupils. It must be noted that due to insurance regulations, no responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before that time. **Children are not permitted to enter school grounds until just before 8.10.am. Please do not leave children unsupervised outside the school prior to 8.10 a.m.**

Dates for your Diary:

Friday 13th, 20th & 27th January: Cricket Lessons for 3rd to 6th Class

Monday 23rd – 27th January 2022: WNS Wellbeing Week

Wednesday 1st February: PTA Clothing Collection

Monday 6th February: School Closed for St. Brigid's Day

Tuesday 7th February: Safer Internet Day

Friday 10th February: School closes at 11.30 a.m. for Primary Language Curriculum Training.

Monday 13th- Friday 17th February 2022: Mid Term Break

Thursday 2nd March: World Book Day

13th -17th March :Seachtaine na Gaeilge

Thursday 16th March: Siopa Gaeilge

Friday 17th March: School closed for St. Patrick's Day

Tuesday 21st March: School Photos being taken by County Photos.

Thursday 30th March: PTA Sponsored Walk Weekend

Friday 31st March: School closes for Easter Holidays at 11.30am