

Whitechurch National School

End of Year Newsletter 2020



6th Class Graduation

We were delighted to be able to celebrate the graduation of our 6th Class pupils with a special 'Drive In' ceremony on Wednesday. Although it was an unusual sort of graduation, it was lovely to be able to come together to celebrate our special and unique pupils and to mark this special milestone for them. The pupils shared their special memories of their time at the school, sang their class song and came together one last time as primary pupils before they embark on their next adventure to secondary school. Speeches were made by their class teacher Ms. Masterson, Ms. Richards and Sandra Younge (on behalf of the parents). Canon Mc Kinley also gave a special blessing. The ceremony ended with each pupil being presented with their graduation certificate and receiving a well deserved round of applause from all of the proud staff, parents and family members in attendance.

Thank you to Ms. Masterson and all the staff who helped with the preparation and organisation of the graduation to make it such a special day for our pupils. Thank also to Sonia Champ for making a balloon arch, to Mark Younge for helping to ensure the cars all fitted in with a good view of proceedings, and to Jonny Sommerville for taking photographs of the event. Thank you also to Sandra Younge and the other parents in the class for organising the family picnic after the graduation.

[You can view the special video that the staff made for our graduating 6th Class pupils by clicking here.](#)

[You can view the 6th Class pupils graduation video by clicking here.](#)

Goodbye!

We wish all the graduating 6th Class pupils every success as they move on to Post Primary School. They are a talented and unique group of children and we will miss them next year. Congratulations and best wishes to: Aaron Alexander, Daniel Burke, Alex Casey, David Chukwueke, Ethan Clarke, Henry Jenner, Adam Pollock, Naoise Bradley-Brady, Tilly-Rose Burgess, Sasha Leeson, Alison Loughnane, Katie Loughnane, Olivia Margetts, Grace Mc Carthy, Aster Mc Guinness, Sophie Pollock, Rachel Pollock, Anna Rainsberry, Zoe Sparling, Katie-Tara Willis-Kenny, and Hannah Younge.

We look forward to hearing about all of the wonderful things that you will do over the next number of years. Please keep in touch and come back to visit us if you can!

As our 6th Class pupils leave, it is not only the children that we will be sad to see go as some families will be leaving our school also this year as their last child will have finished primary school. We thank those families that are leaving us for their contribution to the life of the school while their children have attended Whitechurch N.S. We extend our best wishes to the:

Bradley-Brady Family, Alexander Family, Burke Family, Chukwueke Family, Pollock Family, Burgess Family, Leeson Family, Loughnane Family, Margetts Family, Rainsberry Family and the Willis-Kenny Family.

We also wish James Loughnane, Harry Quinn and Lucy Coughlin well as they leave us to move to new schools next year.

Congratulations!

We have two very special and significant occasions to mark this month. Firstly, teacher Heather MacLachlan has reached the amazing milestone of having taught at the school for 30 years! That is a huge achievement and over her time at the school, Heather has always been extremely hardworking and dedicated. She is always one of the first to embrace new technologies and methodologies in teaching. She is a much valued and caring colleague to all the staff at the school. A presentation was made to Heather

on the last day of term by the Board of Management.

Canon McKinley is also celebrating a record breaking milestone on 5th July. This date will mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination as a Deacon. On Sunday, 5th July, the Archbishop of Dublin and Glendalough will take part in the church service in Whitechurch Parish Church in recognition of this very special occasion. Congratulations to Canon McKinley on an amazing 50 years in service of the church and his many parishioners and wider community members!

Staff News

We were very sad to say farewell to both Ms. Gráinne O'Brien and Ms. Sarah Horan at the end of term. Both teachers have been with us in a temporary capacity this year and both have been absolutely outstanding in terms of their work and overall contribution to the life of the school. We wish Ms. O'Brien well as she moves to teach in the UK. Ms. Horan will be moving home to Offaly to take up a teaching position there. Both schools will be very fortunate to have them on their team!

School Books- please return!!

At the start of the lockdown, lots of school books were sent home. We have a lot of these back now but many are still missing. We really do need to get these back so we can get ready for next term. We have a hugely reduced income this year due to no fundraising during the closure with no Sponsored Walk or May Fete and we really need to avoid having to spend money replacing books that have not been returned. Please do a double check at home and look for library books and readers. They will usually have the school stamp on the inside of the cover and may well have become mixed in with all of the other books in your house. While our coffers are very limited at the moment and we cannot offer a reward for returned books, we would be incredibly grateful if you could give this matter your urgent attention and return books to the school within the next week! Thank you

Return to School

It is very unfortunate that at the end of this school term, we still have not received any guidance from the DES on reopening. We do know from the news that the Government's preference is for a full return in the next term. This will depend on the advice from the HSE and public health bodies. So while we are all very hopeful of having all pupils back each day next term, we cannot give any definite answers about specific arrangements just yet. We are working on the assumption though that we will all be back from Thursday 27th August. As soon as we hear anything official, we will communicate

this to parents. However do keep an eye on the news as that is where the announcement is likely to be made first!

New JI Induction Day

We had a very different sort of induction day for our incoming 27 Junior Infants on Monday 22nd June. Each family was invited for an individual time slot to meet with Ms. Richards and their new class teacher, Ms. Deacon in the infant playground. The sun shone thankfully and the new pupils got to meet their new teacher, peek into their classroom, and see their playground and school. Ms. Deacon will also be making a video giving the new pupils a virtual tour around the school building and their classroom. It was lovely to meet all of our new families and lots of excited (and a few reluctant) new pupils!

A huge thank you to all of the parents in the group with siblings already in the school who have all kindly agreed to act as 'Buddy Parents' to the new parents. This role will be even more crucial in the current circumstances where we haven't been able to run our normal induction programme!

School Tours Week

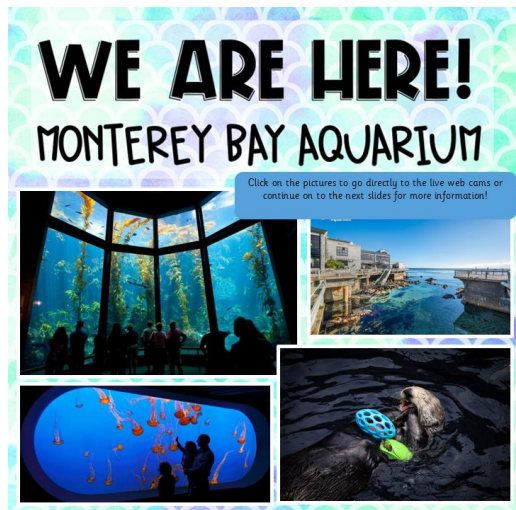
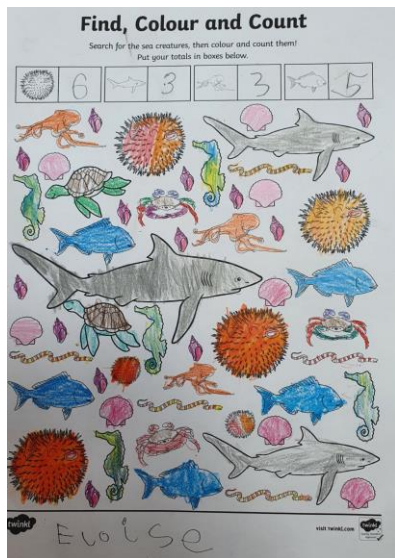
Usually in the last newsletter of the year, we have reports and photos of our school tours and this year is no exception! Thank you to all of the teachers for organising virtual school tours for the pupils on the second last week of term! Despite the patchy wifi in some homes, all pupils got to experience some really fun places that we would never be able to visit on a face to face tour!

Junior Infants Tour

We went to Monterey Bay Aquarium in California for our school tour. It was a long way to travel- over 8,000km away! We watched live cams of the Jellyfish, Sea Otters, Sharks and Penguins. We enjoyed learning about all of the different sea creatures. We drew some pictures of our favourite animals from the tour and created some of the creatures from Lego!



Before going on our school tour, we listened to the story 'Commotion in the Ocean' and completed a variety of Maths and English activities based on the theme 'Under the Sea'. We learned a lot of cool and interesting facts about many different sea creatures.



Senior Infant -TripAdvisor review of Ms. Barry Virtual Tour Travels

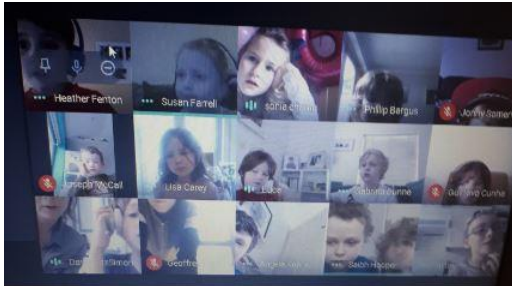
This year, us Senior Infants decided to book our School Tour with Ms. Barry's Travel Agents. We went on a very exciting Mystery Virtual Tour Package exclusive to Senior Infants only.

We hopped on a virtual Airplane



We didn't expect Ms. Barry to be the Air Hostess **AND** Pilot so this was a great deal. Just like Magic, we arrived in Disneyland and there were a squeals of delight from the whole of our travelling tour!

SeniorInfants



We took a stroll through the streets of Disneyland



and hopped on some rides including a water slide:

Look at some of the rides here:

It's a Small World



Mickey and Minnie's Runaway Railway



Buzzlight Year's Space Ranger



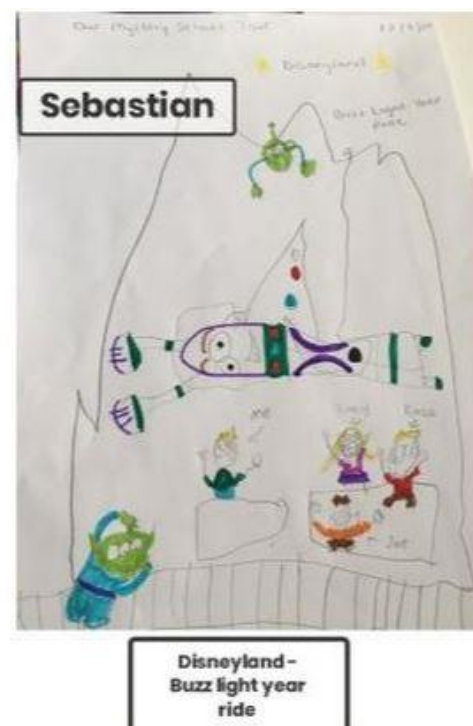
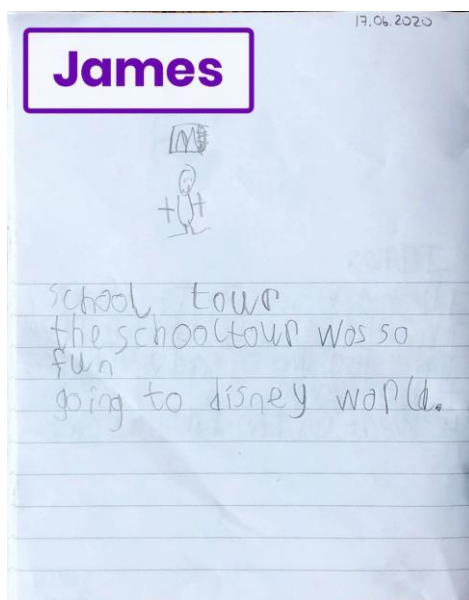
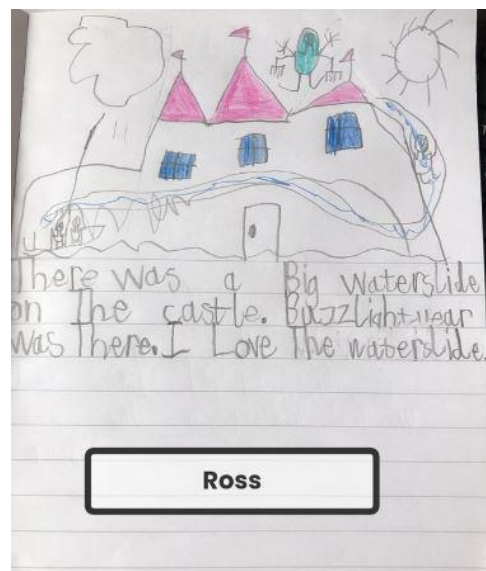
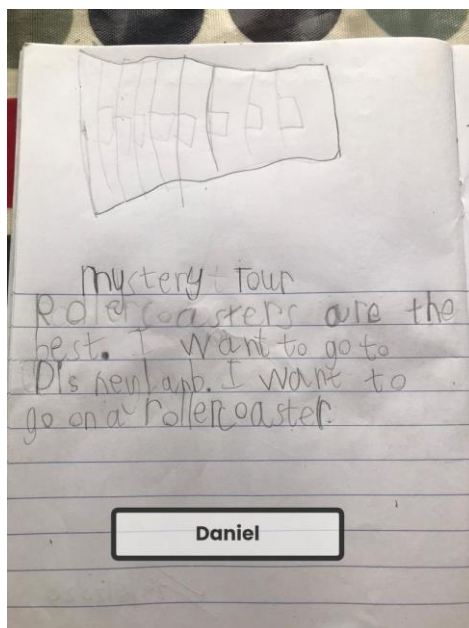
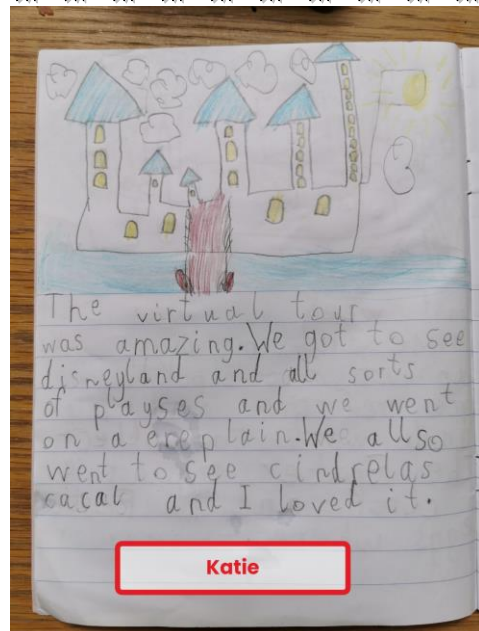
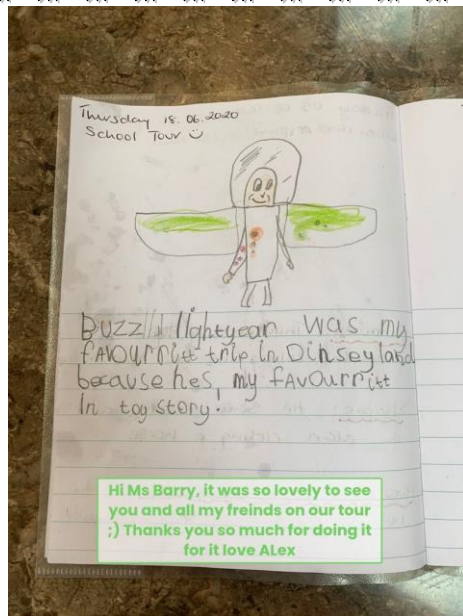
Afterwards, we took a little rest before heading off on our own to the Seattle Aquarium.

Reviews from Senior Infant-TripAdvisor:

Matthew: 5 Stars *"I didn't know where we were going. We went to England, no wait it was actually America! Disneyland is where all the Disney characters are. I really liked the water slide. I had fun because I got to see all my friends and I got to see my teacher"*.

Mo: 5 Stars *"We went to Disneyland and it has all Toy Story things and I LOVE Toy story. We went on a computer on an airplane. I've been on one before when I went to Spain. I went on a water slide, and some more rides. I saw some friends like Matthew. My favourite part was the Toy Story ride. I might get to go to Disneyland when I'm bigger. The slide was very funny"*

Faye: 5 Stars *"I liked the water slide. It felt real. Disneyland is a land full of characters and princesses. I saw the princess carriages and Cinderella's castle. I could see Lexi and Sebastian. I got to go on an airplane for the first time. Remember to put your seatbelts on. I got to go on the Frozen ride. I sing Frozen and Moana at home. I miss my class mates. It was nice to see everybody"*



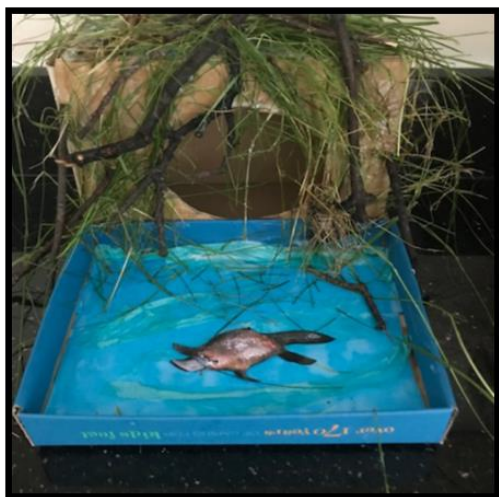
First Class

June has been a busy month in First Class. They really enjoyed our Arts Week and Science Week activities. Check out photos on our Class Blog to see the results of their hard work. They had fun carrying out an Egg Drop Challenge too. There is a video of it on our Class Blog too. It was fun to see the reactions on their faces when they checked to see if their egg had made it in one piece or not!



First Class used Google Earth to travel to San Diego Zoo on their Virtual School Tour. They listened to Zookeeper Dr. Zoolittle telling them about animal habitats and how zoo habitats are designed. They learnt how food, water, shelter, and space make up an animal habitat. They explored different types of habitats and made dioramas of various animal habitats.

Aisling made one for a platypus and another one for an Arctic fox.



Rory made a coral reef habitat



Amy made one for a tiger.



Emma-Jane made a zoo habitat.

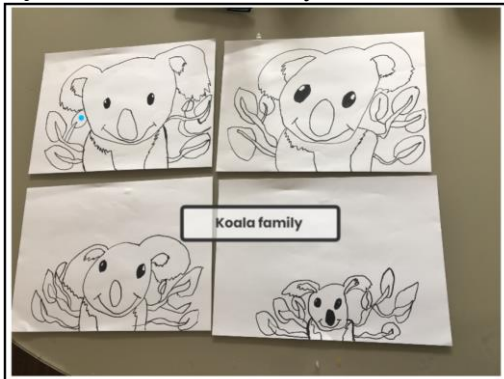


Lilia created a home for a giraffe family.

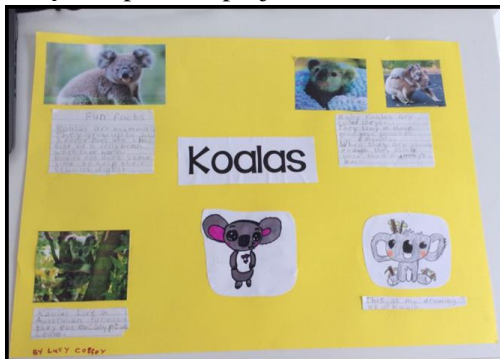


After learning about habitats they visited the flamingos and learnt about Floyd the flamingo. They were surprised to learn that their bright pink or reddish colouring comes from the food they eat! Some people drew fabulous flamingos. After this they visited the cute koalas and learnt about a baby koala called Omeo. They discovered that koalas hug trees to keep themselves cool. Amongst other things they drew koalas.

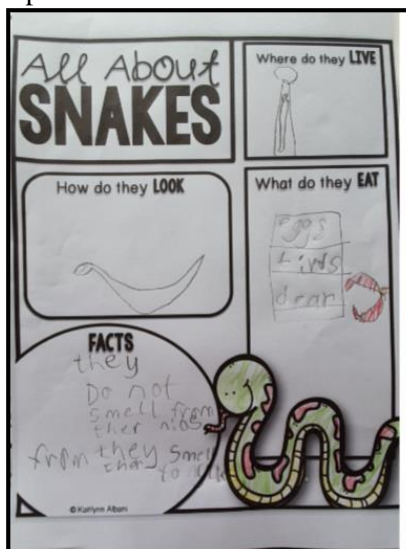
Dylan drew a koala family!



Lucy completed a project on koalas.



They then got to explore different animals in the zoo themselves and watch live web cams and videos about them. Some pupils wrote reports and did projects on different animals in the zoo. **Senan** wrote a report about snakes.



Lilia created a zoo in her back garden complete with a slide for the penguins! Here's her sloth hanging around in the trees.



Olivia wrote a story about koalas to be sold in the zoo gift shop.



You always need a break during a school trip. Here is a very happy **Senan** having a snack during his school tour!



They also got the opportunity to try out an augmented reality activity to see animals up close in their homes. **Holly** got a fright when she discovered a tiger in her living room!



Before going home First Class took a quick detour to Disneyland and tried out a few rides! It was certainly a school tour with a difference this year!

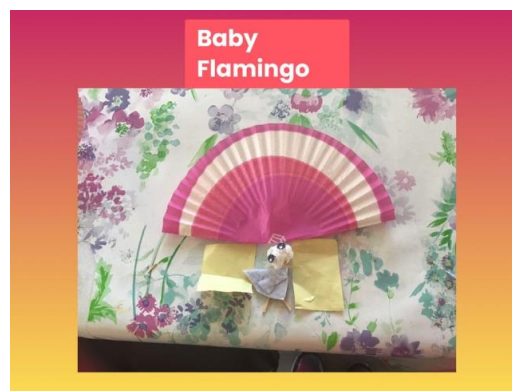
Second Class Virtual School Tour

This year 2nd Class travelled all of the way from Dublin to San Diego Zoo for their tour, albeit virtually! First, we went to see Ms Coffey's favourite- the giraffes! We looked at live web cameras then learned all about them from the keepers. Did you know that a giraffe's hoof is the size of a dinner plate? Then it was onto the polar bears and koalas. After that, the class were allowed to explore the zoo themselves. They filled out a worksheet about their 2 favourite animals- the koala was the most popular by far! Some day we hope to visit San Diego Zoo in real life!



Third Class Virtual School Tour

Pupils in 3rd Class had an enjoyable week making lots of discoveries and learning many new facts during our virtual tour to San Diego Zoo. Our first stop was with the Fabulous Flamingos where we learned why flamingos are pink and why they need such long legs. We even had an opportunity to create our own Flexi Flamingo Friends.



Next, we were able to view some of the 13 livestreaming webcams and take time to watch some of our favourite wildlife in action.



[Ape Webcam](#)

Fun Facts:

Did you know that apes have a bigger and more complex brain than other primates

Did you know chimpanzee, bonobo and orangutan are apes.

Question:

When was the last time you saw an ape?

We learned about Ken Allen, an orangutan who was born at San Diego Zoo in 1971. He lived there for many years in a supposedly escape proof enclosure. However, he managed to escape many times. His escapes earned him the nickname 'The Hairy Houdini'.



San Diego Zoo Kids Corner was our next stop. Here we discovered all about animal builders and their different habitats. Here are some of the shoebox habitats which we created.



Rory Webb



Isla Costello



Tiago Cunha



Jungle box

Evan Corcoran

Everyone then had an opportunity to participate in a San Diego Virtual Scavenger Hunt. On the final day, there was the option of taking a trip to the Kennedy Space Centre, the Georgia Aquarium or to experience the Ocean Dive 360 and dive with dolphins, seals, turtles and sharks. Certainly plenty to keep everyone entertained!!!

Fourth Class Virtual School Tour

Fourth class went on a Virtual School Tour to Whipsnade Zoo in Dunstable just north of London. On their Virtual tour of the Zoo they saw a baby Przewalski foal, a wild boar minding her five new piglets and the yak family who are all named after characters in the Harry Potter movies. They saw a new baby sloth who was taken care of by the zoo keeper. The baby was bottle fed goat's milk every three hours. The Keeper was trying to introduce the sloth to solid food. She has letting him nibble on pieces of carrot. She had to make sure that he did a bit of climbing every day so that he would be ready to join the rest of the sloths in their enclosure. They saw the troop of cheeky squirrel monkeys and we also saw the ring-tailed lemurs, who only live naturally in Madagascar, being given treats of flowers to eat. Lastly we watched zoo keeper Tara getting the otters to show off their running, swimming and diving skills.





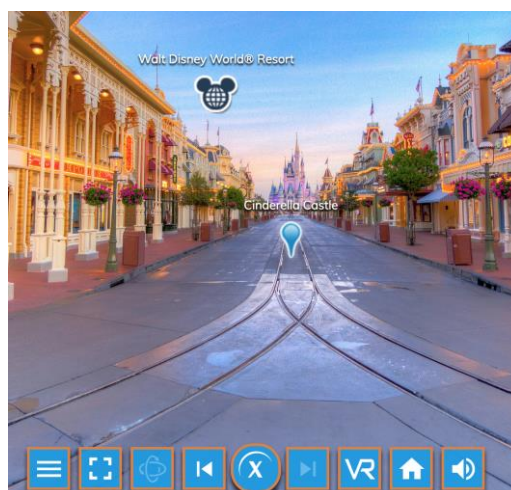
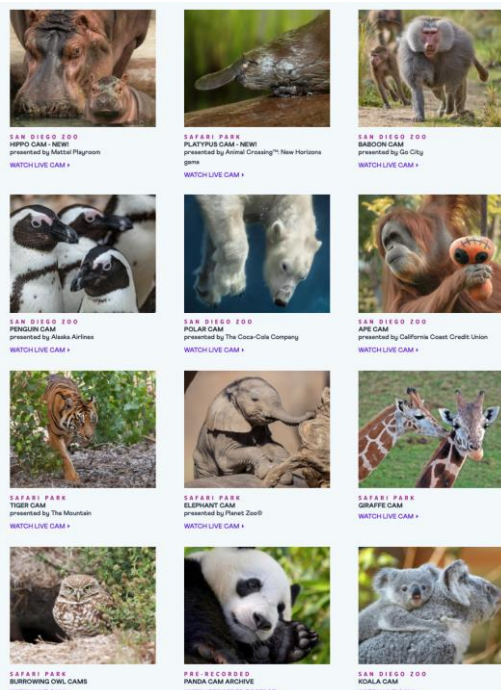
Fourth Class also took a virtual tour of Seattle Aquarium. There they listened to teachers Heidi and Katie tell them about the ecosystems and food chains under the sea. We learnt a lot about Sea Cucumber who actually are the hoovers and cleaners of the sea. They eat the waste of the other sea creatures!

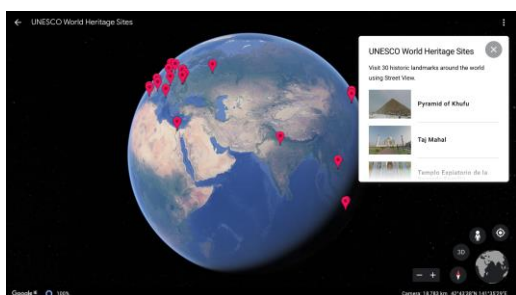
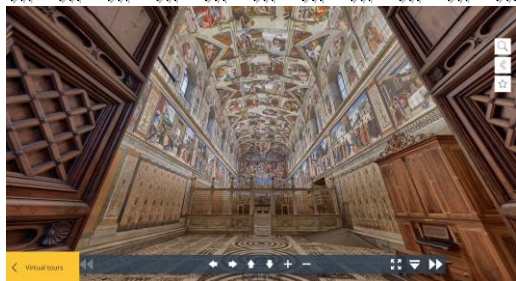


Sixth Class Virtual School Tour

On Wednesday 17th June, 6th Class all joined a video call and went on a virtual school tour together. There are so many brilliant tours online, so we went on a trip around the world, you could say! We started off with a guided tour of some of the US National Parks. We then visited some of the UNESCO World Heritage sites and Wonders of

the World on Google Earth, including The Taj Mahal, The Great Sphinx of Giza, Stonehenge, Machu Picchu and The Great Wall of China. After that, we looked at some of the animal's live cams in the San Diego Zoo, Houston Zoo, Monterey Bay Aquarium and Georgia Aquarium. We then briefly explored the White House and The Vatican before finishing our tour in Disneyland and trying some virtual roller coasters. Some of the websites were a bit slow to load (as can happen with technology!) so the class had the option of exploring them in more detail by using the tour links sent on Seesaw, as well as some new tours that were a bit too long to explore on video call, such as Ellis Island, NASA & Auschwitz. I think it's safe to say that everyone was exhausted after it all!





Birthdays!

Summer Birthdays! We would like to wish the following children a big Happy Birthday and send them a virtual clap:

July Birthdays

Ruby Kirwan
Daniel Brady
Pia Mulholland
Ethan Robertson
Hannah Robertson
Ross Williams
Lochlan Fitzpatrick
Emma-Jane Murphy
Aoibheann Keogh
Liam Killingsworth
Ben O'Connor
Archie Moffett
Zoe Garry
Penny Carey
Conor Carr
Olivia Heaney
Lucy Coffey
Tom Moffett

August Birthdays

Donagh Keogh
Rory Webb
Emma O'Donnell
Eloise Prendergast
Percy Parkins
Ivor Guinness
Leah Fitzpatrick
Jamie Crombie
Sophie Casey
Noah Gamble
Joseph Mott
Mark Garry
James O'Toole
Jessica Sparling
Rosalyn Waghorn
Edie Heard

Thank you!

We would not have enough room in this newsletter to thank everyone sufficiently for all of their help this year in so many small but essential ways eg. washing towels and helping at tours, fundraisers etc. So please know that whatever role you played in helping out at our school this year, it was very much appreciated! Our school community is made all the stronger for the active role our parents play in the life of the school. Thank you for giving your time to help out at the school this year. Please forgive us if we have left anyone out- it has been hard to double check with everyone about helpers because of the closure:

PTA Hockey Committee:

Neal Megarity, Naomi Mulligan, Lorna Burke, Nina Casey, Kirsia Kenna and Chris Steele

Cricket: Ruth Kennedy

PTA Swimming Coordinator: Gail Garry

PTA Chess Coordinator:

Helen Kerrane

Board of Management:

Canon Horace Mc Kinley, Rowan Hillis, Geoff Sparling, Hugh St. Leger, Pat Marchant, Gerry Pullman, Terri lalor, Sarah Richards.

Classroom Assistants:

Stephen Geraghty

School Secretary:

Laoighse de Burca (a gift voucher from the PTA has also been given to Laoighse to thank her for her work over the year).

Traffic Action Group:

Judy Brown, Andrea Deacon, Keith Quinn, David Mc Guinness, Mel Steele, Naomi Mulligan, Gerry Pullman & Anna Penar-Turner

PTA Class Parent Representatives:

Zara Lawford (JI), Fiona Jessup (SI), Jennifer Murphy (1st Class), Susan Somerville (2nd Class), Melissa Steele (3rd Class), Gillian Crossan (4th)

Class), Kirsia Kenna (5th Class), Sandra Youngie (6th Class).

Reading Volunteers: Pamela Blackwell, Nicola Brady, Niamh Cacciato, Tracy Chadwick, Katie Costello, Rachel Cron, Gillian Crossan, Lyndsay Delahunty, Máiréad Dorney-White, Rachel Faulkner, Heather Fenton, Caroline Finn, Greta Fitzsimons, Natalie Fulton, Tanja Girdham, Cathy Heaney, Rowan Hillis, Fiona Jessup, Susan Keogh, Niamh Keogh, Jean Kent-Sutton, Summer Killingsworth, Louisa Lalor, Etain & Mark Magennis, Rania Mehanna, Hazel Mc Call, Jennifer Murphy, Holly Nolan, Julie O'Herlihy, Shane O'Neill, Renata Pieroni de Mello, Noel Prendergast, Justyna Pyz, Sinéad Quirke, Carla Rowan, Sandra Stewart-Miller, Suzie Wynne,

School Garden: Cherry Sleeman. (The BOM also gave Cherry a present to thank her for all of her work over the year).

School Choir: Jenni Harrison and Miriam Barry

GAA coaching: David Farrelly

PTA Committee: Aisling Gordon, Stuart Moffett, Rowan Hillis, Lindsay Delahunty, Stuart Moffett, Etain Magennis, Fiona Masterson, Nichola Kinch, Sarah Courtenay, Sonia Champ, Nina Casey, Ciarán Kirwan, Geoff Sparling, Máiréad Dorney-White and Rania Mehanna

Final Words....

What a year this has been- from the highs of our pantomime in December to the lows of the school closure and being separated from colleagues, classmates and friends due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Everyone has risen to the unprecedented challenge that this posed and I can say with absolute conviction that our school and its staff worked

tirelessly and did as much as we possibly could to do the very best for our pupils during the closure. Thank you to our parents and the pupils who got on as best they could with things and engaged with us while doing schoolwork from home. We know how difficult it was for so many of you who were juggling working from home, illness, looking after relatives and trying to do schoolwork with children. Your support and efforts to carry on really helped to make things run as smoothly as it could.

There are certainly some unknown challenges ahead but I feel that we are now better prepared for whatever may come in the next school year. Over the summer, work will continue in the school and at home with the staff in preparing lesson materials for next year and getting the school physical environment ready for the pupils.

When we come back together in the new school year, wellbeing of pupils and staff will be the top priority. We will see where each pupil is and adapt our curriculum to meet their individual needs and to catch everyone up to speed.

Although we have been kept apart, the Whitechurch NS Community has never been closer together and united in our aim to provide the best education and care we can for our children.

Parents, pupils and staff have never looked forward to or needed a summer break more than this year! Thank you once again for your support during the closure. It has been so very much appreciated.

Have a healthy and happy Summer break everyone!

Sarah Richards
Principal

