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NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 Edition 2

Introduction

Welcome to the second edition of this year's newsletter. We hope this newsletter, as well as our regular communication, keeps you up to date with all that's going on in our school. We also invite you to visit our website: <http://stmichaelscastlepollard.scoilnet.ie/blog/> for lots of useful information about our school and what activities our pupils have engaged in this year.

Attendance:

The following are the attendance figures since our return after Christmas; January 87.2%, February 87%, March 90.8%, April 91.7%, May 90.5%, June 90.3%. The average attendance for the year is 90% which is an increase of 2.7% in comparison to last year. However, going back to pre-Covid figures, they are down 3%. We understand this has been a turbulent year as we came out of the epidemic and that there were more illnesses circulating. We hope that we can improve further as we will be adopting additional measures to improve attendance as part of our DEIS planning. We continue to remind you of the importance of explaining all absences. This can be easily done through Aladdin.

Free Primary School Books Scheme

The DES announced this scheme earlier in the year which further eases the financial burden placed on parents. All school books and writing material have already arrived in the school and will be ready for pupils in the new school year. We ask that everyone pays the additional charge for arts, crafts, photocopying and insurance. This fee of €20 per pupil is very reasonable and really important to the school.



Second special class and their new home

We officially opened our new modular building on the second last day of term. This was a really important milestone for us as a school. The pupils in our two classes have really progressed this year and are very happy in their new surroundings. The sensory ball pit is a particular favourite of all the pupils. We have submitted our Stage 1A report for our new build to the DES and hope to hear some progress on this in the next few months. On a sad note, we say goodbye to Noah as he moves to Wales. We wish him and his family well for the future.

Parents Association

We sincerely thank our Parent's Association for all their support and efforts during the year. They have really got involved in so many activities which has benefited our pupils. They have also fundraised for our summer projects which we expect will be completed this year. We look forward to working with them again next year.



St. Patrick's Day Parade and World Book Day

We entered the St. Patrick's Day Parade this year where the theme was 'Wild in Westmeath'. Up to forty pupils walked with us, as well as many of our parents. We also won a prize in the school's category. Pupils dressed up in green as we all celebrated our identity on this special day. We also had a dress up day for 'World Book Day' in April. We held a fashion show in the hall, our first since 2019. Pupils really enjoy this day each year with the creations getting better year on year.

Workshops and Events

We had an action-packed final term which included GAA coaching, Zumba, Irish dancing, drumming as well as fitness activities with Niall Fagan. We also welcomed back Niall de Burca on the final day for some tales. We have utilised DEIS funding for many of these activities which places less pressure on all our parents as a result. Each of these activities are very important in their own right and hopefully increase pupils' enjoyment of school.

Charitable Donations

This year we again supported our local Down Syndrome branch through our 'Odd Socks Day' initiative. We also took part in the 'Same Chance Challenge' as part of Autism Awareness Month, as well as supporting the 'Christmas Shoebox Appeal'. All of these are worthy events and certainly creates greater awareness among our pupils which we hope they will remember as they mature.



Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat

On January 19th, our senior pupils performed the musical 'Joseph' in Mullingar Arts Centre. Our fourth, fifth and sixth classes took part and were fantastic on the night. This was a great opportunity for our senior pupils and one we will continue with. We have signed up for next year's production, 'Oliver', which will take place in the final term. We also arranged a trip for the cast to a play in the Abbey Theatre in the spring. This was an enjoyment experience for all!

GAA

Unfortunately this year, we were not able to match the successes of last year. Our hurling team did get to the semi-final of the competition but were just pipped by our nemesis, Collinstown. We did enjoy a very competitive Street Leagues where Joseph Mulvey's, Kilkenny team beat a valiant Donegal team, captained by Conor McGrath in the final. We will continue to promote gaelic games in our school and have plans next year for regular coaching sessions which will involve our local hurling club.

Summer Projects

We expect to put in place our walking track around the school hurling field and install some playground equipment in our junior playground over the summer. Both of these projects will be of huge benefit to our pupils in the coming year. The walking track will be an additional space that can be used year round which will become more important when our permanent building works commence. We thank our PA for their support and fundraising efforts to get these projects completed.

New Beginnings

We welcome seventeen new junior infants to our mainstream class while one additional pupil has enrolled in our special classes for next year. Despite twenty-one sixth class pupils departing, we expect an enrolment figure of between 155 and 160 for the new school year. We are now getting closer to appointing a seventh mainstream teacher (164) which would bring the added benefit of an extra teacher and more single streamed classes. We were sad to see our sixth class leaving us

on Friday. Without question, they have led the school magnificently and set a wonderful example to our younger pupils. We wish them well next year and beyond.



Summer and Return

We certainly feel that this year has seen a greater sense of normality than previous years. Thankfully the majority of the Covid measures are a thing of the past and school life is slowly beginning to return to what it was. **Pupils will return to school on Thursday, August 31st.** As always, we thank you for your continued support and we wish you all a nice summer break.

