

*St Michael's National School
Water Street, Castlepollard,
Co Westmeath*



T: 044 9661865

F: 044 9661875

cpns3h@gmail.com

Roll No: 05513H

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NEWSLETTER

Volume 6 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 details of the activities we take part in.

Attendance:

The following are the attendance figures since our return after Christmas; January 91%, February 91.3%, March 89.9%, April 90.3%, May 89.2%, June 85.7% (To date). The average attendance for the year is 89.9%, which is almost on par with last year's rate of 90%. We have made improvements in certain months, particularly the winter months when illness levels spike, however, June figures are almost 5% lower than last year. While there has been more illness during June than normal, a considerable number of pupils have also gone away on holidays during the month. We continue to remind you of the importance of explaining all absences. This can be easily done through Aladdin.



Free Primary School Books Scheme

We are in the second year of the DE's Free Books Scheme for primary schools. We are currently in the process of accessing our secondhand books and placing our order for the next school year. All pupils' books and writing material will be labelled and ready for the first day back in late August. Our art, crafts, photocopying and Insurance charge of €25 can be paid up to the end of September through Aladdin.

New Building Update

Having officially opened our modular building last June, our attention turned to progressing our new building application this year. We were approved planning permission in April and our Design Team are now preparing the next report with costings for the DE. We hope to submit this report before the summer is over and receive a response from the DE by the end of 2024. We are hopeful that building works will commence before the next school year ends. We will inform you of any further updates as they happen.

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 have greatly benefited our pupils. We hope that more parents can become involved in our PA next year, particularly parents of new pupils to the school.



St. Patrick's Day Parade

We again entered the St. Patrick's Day Parade this year where the theme was 'Westmeath Through the Ages.' Our senior pupils created visuals of school life past and present. There was a great turnout of pupils from the school as well as parents who all donned their green attire on the day. We again thank our PA for coordinating this event.



Workshops and Events

We had an action-packed final term which included GAA coaching, Yoga, modern dance, cookery classes as well as fitness activities with Niall Fagan. We also welcomed back Niall De Búrca 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 especially important in their own right and hopefully increase pupils' enjoyment of school.

Summer Programmes

We will remain open after the 26th of June to facilitate the DE's Summer Programmes. We have 12 pupils engaging in the Primary School Scheme which involves our pupils with complex needs which will run for a fortnight while 24 pupils (two classes of 12) will take part in our DEIS

Camp, run over a week at the start of July. We have lots of fun activities planned and are sure our participating pupils will gain greatly from the experience.

Charitable Donations

We place a strong emphasis on giving back to others less fortunate than us and again this year we supported several charities. We took part in GOAL's Jersey Day. We engaged in the Christmas Shoebox Appeal as well as the ASIAm 20 for 24 fundraiser. We also supported a local appeal through our Bake Sale. All of these are worthy causes and certainly create greater awareness among our pupils which we hope they will remember as they mature.



Oliver

On June 11th, our senior pupils performed the musical 'Oliver' in Mullingar Arts Centre. Our fourth, fifth and sixth classes took part and were fantastic on the night. This was a wonderful opportunity for our senior pupils and one we are sure they will not forget. We will be taking part in this wonderful initiative again next year. We sincerely thank the Arts Centre and particularly the instructors for all their work on this project.



GAA

Unfortunately, this wasn't our year in the football and hurling competitions. While we performed well in many of our games, we didn't make any finals. We did enjoy an extremely competitive Street Leagues where Amy O'Neill's Limerick got the better of a Tipperary team captained by Jamie O'Neill in the final. We will continue to promote Gaelic games in our school and hopefully with many upcoming young hurlers/camogie players and footballers that success won't be too far away.



Outdoor Environment

We have invested heavily in our outdoor environment in recent years and have added further this year. We have our outdoor classroom, which has gotten lots of use this year, as well as our walkway around the hurling field. We added another two sets of playground equipment (One for ASD classes and one for senior yard) to the two purchased for the infant yard last summer. Our willow house beside our school garden is also beginning to take shape while Albert has been busy making extra benches for pupils in our ASD and mainstream classes. We are extremely fortunate to have such a large area for our pupils to play in daily and all these additions we hope make for more enjoyable break times.

New Beginnings

We welcome eighteen new junior infants to our mainstream class for the new school year. With the same number departing, we expect an enrolment figure in the region of 160 for the 24/25 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 will be sad to see our sixth class leaving us on Wednesday. They have led the school very well and set a wonderful example to our younger pupils. We wish them well next year and beyond.



Summer and Return

We would like to thank you again for your continued support over the course of the year and we look forward to collaborating closely with you in the new school year. **Pupils will return to school on Thursday, August 29th.** We wish you all a nice summer break and hope that the current weather pattern we have will continue into July and August.

