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NEWSLETTER

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Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of our school newsletter, our way of keeping you informed of what is happening in our school this year. Again, we remind you that our website is active and may be accessed by following this link: <http://stmichaelscastlepollard.scoilnet.ie/blog/>. Our new official school Facebook is in operation so please follow!

Attendance

Our attendance figures for the first term are as follows: September 93.2%, October 91.9%, November 91.4%, and December 89.5%. Our attendance levels have improved considerably from last year and currently stand at 91.2%, an increase of 2% from 24/25. We have put in place additional awards and incentives this December to bring about improvements. Similar to last year, we will be making contact with parents once pupils are absent in excess of three consecutive days where no reason for absence is given. It is particularly important to contact the school if you are aware your child will be off school for a substantial period. We also ask you to record reasons for all absences through Aladdin at the earliest opportunity and give details where appropriate. As part of our DEIS planning, we are trying to reduce the number of unexplained absences, so explanations are very important. We will also hold two attendance drives in 2026, one in January and the second in April/May as a means of improving rates and highlighting the importance of high attendance rates. This is to coincide with the DEY's campaign to raise greater awareness.

Every Day Counts



Numbers on Roll

We currently have 168 pupils on roll, an increase on last year's figures. We had 169 pupils on roll at the end of September which is the point where schools confirm their numbers to the DEY. Based on this figure and the thresholds for appointment of additional teachers last year, we would expect to appoint a seventh and eighth mainstream teacher for the 26/27 school year. While we may struggle to maintain the eighth teacher as we are close to the threshold, we certainly expect to maintain the seventh teacher. Either way, by having additional teachers, we will have few mixed classes and smaller classes across the school, which is a huge positive for pupils learning.

ASD Classes

Our pupils in our ASD classes continue to make great improvements. Both classes are really settled this year and have developed very good daily routines. The group have enjoyed physical therapy, cycling and swimming this year as well as the activities planned for mainstream classes. One huge achievement that we do not speak enough about is the integration of the pupils into mainstream and the increased interaction between the boys and their peers in mainstream classes. This was viewed as a very important objective upon the setting up of our classes and we should be proud of how this has worked to date.

Building Works

Unfortunately, our building application has not progressed. We submitted our stage 2B report last January but despite regular communication with the building section of the DEY, no progress has materialised. We have made contact with local representatives, which has also not yielded any benefits. We have submitted a summer works application under the new SWS 2025 to upgrade our electricity supply; however, this was also not successful in the first round. We hope that 2026 will see movement, particularly in terms of the building project.

Charitable Donations

Giving to charity and looking at others less fortunate is an important aspect of life and one we try and develop in school. This year we have again taken part in GOAL Jersey Day and the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal while we also raised €800 for SVP locally today through our Christmas Jumper Day, hot chocolate initiative and Christmas raffle. We sincerely thank everyone who supported these ventures.



Tennis, GAA, and Gymnastics

Colm Murphy was back with us in September for tennis lessons while we took part in the Cumann na mBunscol football competition for boys in term one. Unfortunately, we did not make it to the knockout stage but were only within a kick of a ball in most of our games! Our first and

second classes also took part in a blitz in Brownstown Hall in term one which they really enjoyed. We had Gymnastics classes in November and December with Liam. This was another activity which we have not had for some years and was a real hit with all our pupils! It showed the vast range of movements involved in this discipline and how such movements are transferable to other sports our pupils play.

Junior Entrepreneur Programme

This year our senior class are taking part in the Junior Entrepreneur Programme for the first time. This is an initiative where pupils learn about how business works. Together, as a group they will create a product from scratch, all the way to selling it at a school hosted JEP Showcase Day while enjoying the profits at the end!

Science and Maths Week

All our pupils were very busy engaging in lots of fun and interesting activities as part of Science and Maths Week. The aim of which is to get pupils more interested in these very important subjects. As part of the development of the new Primary Curriculum, greater focus has been placed on STEM subjects and these weeks are primarily focused on increasing interest. We had a maths quiz involving our senior classes during Maths Week while pupils explored simple coding using Beebots as part of Science Week. We also must mention the Egg Drop Challenge which our third class worked on which has been viewed over 100,000 times on our Facebook page!



Carol Service

Our third class this year got the opportunity to take part in a wonderful project where a locally based soprano, Jayne Horan, worked with them over a two-month period in preparation for a magical carol service which was held in the church last week. A huge amount of work went into this project, and the class deserves great credit in the manner in which they performed on the night. It was fantastic to see a large crowd gather in the church to hear the pupils singing a selection of well-known hymns, including one hymn which was performed in three different languages. Well done third class!

Christmas Plays

Last Wednesday, the 17th of December, our two junior classes performed their Christmas plays in the school hall. We thank all of our parents who came in to see the pupils in their various roles. Mrs. O'Leary's first and second class also sang a selection of well-known Christmas tunes to get us all in the mood for the upcoming festive season!



Halloween Witch Walk

Our Witch Walk was a tremendous success again this year with over €3,400 raised! This was a massive sum, and we sincerely thank everyone who contributed. We again pay special thanks to our PA who collected on behalf of the school outside Tesco that day. The money raised funded a new storage solution for our PE equipment as well as the Christmas activities involving all our classes.



School Trips

Our ASD classes and three junior classes took a trip to the cinema together last week while our two senior classes went ice-skating in Mullingar again. Mr. Renehan's class are planning a trip in the spring to Dublin to some of the museums which I'm sure they will enjoy. These trips are very much a highlight at the end of the term and could not be possible without the support of our PA. The pupils really love taking part in such activities with all their friends!



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Santa's Visit and the End of Term

Santa made a welcome return to school this year. He was joined by the Grinch who was up to his usual tricks! We thank members of our Parent's Association members who decorated the hall, put together the grotto, organised the gifts as well as tidying up afterwards! A huge amount of work was put in this year again and this is one Christmas experience our pupils are sure not to forget. On the final day of term, we again donned our Christmas jumpers and our PA treated all our pupils to hot chocolate and treats in the hall. We also held a raffle where Daniel McCabe was the winner and he received a hamper full of goodies donated to us by Glanmore Foods. All proceeds from these activities went to our local SVP, a great cause particularly at this time of year.

Finally, we thank you for your continued support and wish all members of our school community a very happy Christmas.

