

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to everyone and I hope you all had a lovely Summer break. For my own part, it is wonderful to be back – I've never felt so grateful to be able to return to work in September. I want to say a heartfelt thanks to so many of you who sent good wishes, Mass Bouquets, prayers, cards, gifts and bouquets during my illness. I can honestly say I was overwhelmed by your kindness. Thank you very much

I want to welcome our 20 new Junior Infants to our school and hope they and their families will be very happy with us. It is a huge step for them as they begin this 8 year journey. The photographs taken during their first days in school will bring back so many memories when you are preparing them for secondary school and you will wonder how the years have passed so quickly. We are also delighted to welcome Amy Rose into 1st class and Micheala into 4th class. We hope they makes lots of new friends and enjoy their time with us. Parents are always welcome in the school. If you have any concerns about your child/children please make an appointment to speak to the class teacher. I can also be contacted by phone or by making an appointment to talk to me. It is always advisable to make contact with the school as soon as concerns arise rather than allowing issues to develop. Of course, we are also very happy to welcome Ms Murray, who teaches 4th and 5th class, to the school and we hope she, too, will be very happy as a member of our staff.

Ready for Work!

As we begin a new school year, it is really important that children are ready for work in class each day. They need to be well rested and go to bed early on school nights. They also need to eat a healthy breakfast and bring healthy lunches to school. Physical exercise is essential – please limit the time spent watching TV and playing on computers. Homework needs to be done to the best of your child's ability. If your child is struggling with homework or spending too long doing it, please speak to the class teacher. Our homework policy gives recommended times for homework at the various class levels. Please supervise your child's work and sign diaries and shared reading cards each night.

School Attendance.

It is really important that children attend school every day unless there is a genuine reason for absence. In general there is excellent attendance, but unfortunately there are a few children who miss a lot of time in school. This is invariably reflected in their Standardised test results. Children who miss a lot of school time may miss out on complete topics or find it difficult to keep up with the class when they return. They often experience social difficulties too and feel isolated from their friends. It is very difficult for teachers, with large numbers in their classrooms, to find time to catch up with the child when he/she returns, and it is unfair on the other children who are missing teaching time. I am also drawing attention to the number of days missed due to families taking holidays during term time. This has become an issue again. I do understand it makes financial sense to take holidays earlier in the year, but I feel it is my duty to draw attention to the need for children to be in school. It is also very important that children are in school during the weeks of the Standardised tests in

May/June. Children who take the tests separately, following holidays, often achieve scores which are less than expected.

Early Intervention.

We are continuing with our Early Intervention Programme. Pupils from Junior Infants to 2nd class will be included this year. We will concentrate on Literacy until the end of January and on Numeracy for the remainder of the year. During Early Intervention classes the children work in small groups with their Class Teacher, the Learning Support teacher and the Resource teacher or Mrs Cosgrave.

Learning Support/Resource Teaching Hours.

The Department of Education has implemented a new model of allocation of Learning Support/Resource hours to schools this year. Schools were assured there would be no reduction in the number of hours allocated to schools. However, we were allocated 7.3 hours less this year than last year. We have appealed the decision, but to no avail. This is a huge loss to our school and to the children who need support. In an effort to minimize the loss of teaching time, I will work with Ms O' Brien's and Mrs Sheppard's class for Early Intervention and with Ms O' Meara's class on one day for Early I.

Music Generation and Summer Memories Competition.

We have engaged Music Generation Carlow to work with all classes again this year. Our fund raising concert in June brought in €1,487. However, this leaves a very substantial shortfall of €2,223. This money will have to be raised in some way – any suggestions would be very welcome.

In June 2016 the concert brought in €1505 and the Summer Memories competition brought in €460. Music generation, for last year cost €3014. There was a shortfall of €1049 and this was made up by using the proceeds of our annual 5 week draw. It really isn't sustainable to continue to do this as the raffle was usually used for purchasing resources for the school.

Summer Reading Challenge.

Congratulations to the pupils who completed or participated in the Summer Reading Challenge in the local Libraries. Please encourage your children to read as it is really important for their education, enjoyment and general living. Those who completed it through Bunclody Library received their certs and medals in the school on Wednesday 6th September. They were Ava Byrne, Amber Cleary, Emma Cleary, Amy Rose Dillon, Grace Ennis, Joshua Ennis, May Hogan, Ian Kealy, Ella Keogh, Ellie Kirwan, Aoife McGrath, Niall McGrath, Farrah Murphy, Ellie Roberts, Oliwia Romaniec, Ava Tracey, Ben Tracey, David Whitty, Isabel Whitty and Thomas Whitty. Pupils who participated but didn't complete the challenge received certs. They were Ethan Butler, Odhran Butler, Megan Doyle, Shaun Doyle, Sean Dunne, Pauric Kelly, Ava Mai Moynihan, Leah Murphy and Darragh Plunkett. Well done to all.

Green School Flag & Active School Flag

Both of these flags are due for renewal during this school year. Committees will be elected in the coming days and we will be working hard to achieve our new flags.

Swimming

Due to the increasing numbers of pupils on roll, we have organized two swimming sessions in Graiguecullen Pool this year. As the Pool is heavily booked from year to year, we have had to accept random dates and times for the second session. We decided to go with Graiguecullen Pool for these sessions as they teach the PAWS Programme and children receive certification.

Pupils from 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th class and all pupils in the ASD classes will attend swimming lessons for 10 weeks, commencing on Tuesday 12th September. Lessons are from 1-2pm and children leave the school at 12.15.

Pupils from 2nd and 6th class will attend swimming lessons as follows –
Friday 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th September from 12 -1pm, bus leaving school at 11.15:
Monday 2nd October from 1-2pm, bus leaving school at 12.15:
Tuesday 17th and 24th October from 11-12, bus leaving school at 10.15am:
Monday 13th, 20th and 27th November from 1-2pm, bus leaving school at 12.15.

2 mainstream class teachers and the teachers of ASD classes will travel on the swimming bus. It is essential that 2 Parents are available to travel each swimming day as assistance is required and we also need 2 adults in each dressing room. Parents need to be Garda vetted – forms are available in the office. Swimming will be cancelled if we don't have 2 Parents on any particular day. We depend on your generosity to volunteer to assist with the swimming each week. Please play your part and don't depend on someone else to do it. If it is more convenient for you to travel by car and meet the children at the pool, this is very acceptable.

Swimming is an important strand of the PE curriculum and therefore all pupils are expected to attend unless there is a medical reason for non-attendance. If there is a medical reason for abstention from swimming lessons for the 10 weeks it is essential that a medical cert is supplied to the school. Any child who is occasionally unable to go swimming due to illness will be supervised in the school and given work to do. However, it is hoped that it will not be necessary for any pupil to miss swimming on a regular basis.

Sacraments:

Pupils from 2nd class will receive the Sacraments of Penance and 1st Communion in 2018. 5th and 6th class pupils will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. We have not been given any dates yet, but I will let you know as soon as I have information.

Beginning of Year Mass:

Again, I don't have a date for this yet but will let you know as soon as possible. Parents are always invited to our school Masses.

Extra Curricular Activities.

Training will be provided by the teachers during lunch break as follows –

Football Training: Ms Hourigan

Camogie/ Hurling: Mrs Sheppard

Basketball : Ms O' Brien

Soccer: Mrs Warren

In addition to this training, Ita O' Donoghue will provide 6 weeks Basketball training and the GAA coaches will provide training in either football or hurling during the year. They will commence with Junior Infants on Thursday 14th September. Other classes will receive training later in the school year. Children will participate in all the Cumann na mBunscoil Football, Hurling and Camogie leagues. They will also participate in the Basketball and Soccer league.

Primary Schools Cross Country Event.

St. Laurence O'Toole Athletic Club is organizing the Primary Schools Cross Country Event and it will take place in Carlow Hurling Club on Wednesday 27th September, commencing at 11am sharp, check-in from 10am. Pupils from 4th, 5th and 6th class can participate. Entry fee is €2 per child and must be paid to the school before the date. If there are sufficient numbers interested in participating, a teacher will accompany the children and a bus will be provided. You will be notified of cost if a bus is being organized. Otherwise parents may take the children who are interested to the event.

Walk on Wednesday.

This will continue this year and we hope you will again use Park and Stride when dropping your children off and collecting them. For new Parents this involves parking at the Graveyard on the Tullow Road and walking down to the school as there is a footpath there. Please do the same in the evening when collecting your children.

Gardening Club.

We have been granted funding from Carlow County Council, under the Local Agenda 21 scheme again this year - €500 for various activities related to the environment. A very sincere thank you to Maria Cullen who gave great assistance to the school. There is a lot of work to be done in the school gardens after the summer break and we will soon commence our after school gardening club. Children will be notified.

Weekly Assembly:

We will continue with our weekly assembly this year – on Fridays at 1.00. Pupil of the week will be announced from each class. It would be helpful if you make “a big fuss” of your child if he/she receives the award. It has to be worked for – it doesn't just come in turn!

Newsletters

All newsletters and letters from the Principal can be sent to you by e-mail. This is our preferred option. If you haven't already sent in your e-mail address, please do so now. As we are now working towards a Digital School Award, this is even more important this year. There has been a great increase in the number of families accepting e-mails and we are very appreciative of this. We have 102 families in the school and only 18 of you have not provided an e-mail address. If you are still in this minority and have an e-mail address, please contact the office as soon as possible to furnish your details. If you still wish to receive a hard copy of Newsletters please note they will be on yellow paper in your child's bag. We use text-a-parent to notify you of various events and activities during the year. If you change your mobile number during the year please notify the office immediately so we can update our records.

The Parents Council

Thank you to those of you who are involved with the Parents Council and particularly the 3 officers – Catherine O’ Brien, Breda Murphy and Eliz Cosgrave. The Parents Council do tremendous work for the school and for your children. If you are already involved with the Parents Council, your involvement is greatly appreciated. If you are not involved, perhaps you would become involved this year. In particular, I would like to encourage parents from the Junior end of the school to become involved. Without new members it is very difficult to organize events and everything done by the Parents Council is for the benefit of your children. It also provides an opportunity for you to become involved in the school community.

As we begin another school year, I want to thank you very sincerely for your support of my work as principal and your support of the teachers in the school. This support is very important for the smooth running of the school and it is genuinely appreciated. I look forward to working with you and your children during the coming year. Please feel welcome in the school at all times and make an appointment to discuss any concerns at a mutually convenient time. If you wish to contact me by phone, the best time would be between 11.15 and 12.30 each day. If I’m not available at other times, I will return your call as soon as possible.

Le gach dea-ghuí

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Anna Cosgrave