

St Brigid's N.S.



September 2018

Dear parents, pupils and all in the community,

It is a privilege to introduce myself as the new principal in St. Brigid's National School. I look forward to getting to know you individually and I thank all who have made me feel so welcome in the school already. Should any concerns or issues arise during the year do not hesitate to contact the school and we will be happy to arrange to meet with you. If you have any concerns about your child/children, please make an appointment to speak to the class teacher first. It is always advisable to make contact with the school as soon as concerns arise rather than allowing issues to develop.

My background as a primary school teacher began in 2001 in Scoil Naomh Mhuire Senior School in Newbridge, Co. Kildare. Following this I moved to Sligo where I taught each class level. I worked in setting up a Learning Support room in Keash N.S., Co. Sligo. In 2010 I graduated from Trinity College with the Post Graduate Diploma in Special Educational Needs. I have worked as a teaching principal since 2011. My last school was Bigstone N.S. in Rathvilly, Co. Carlow where I worked as teaching principal in the senior end of the school for five years. Since 2017 I have worked closely with the Centre for School Leadership. My remit was to mentor new principals. Although teaching and learning will be a big focus of mine here in the school I will endeavour to promote all the extra curricular aspects of the school.

I am delighted to be working in St. Brigid's National School. I firmly believe in the importance of the partnership between school, home and the community and I am confident with your support St. Brigid's school will continue to be a special place for our children to grow and learn.

Welcome Back

I want to welcome all the children back and especially our eight new Junior Infants to our school and I hope they and their families will be very happy with us. It is a huge step for them as they begin this eight 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. Of course, we are also very happy to welcome Mrs. Abbey, who teaches 1st and 2nd class. In addition, we welcome Miss Brooks, who teaches 3rd class and Miss Kane who teaches 6th class. We hope they will be very happy as members of our staff. Mrs. Warren will be in our ASD unit until Christmas and Mrs. Nolan will be working as our Special Education teacher. Thank you to all who have worked so hard to have the school ready for the new school year. The school has been thoroughly cleaned and prepared for the pupils to arrive.

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.

Child protection

Our school fully endorses the Children First – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and follows the Child Protection Guidelines for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017. Our Child Protection Policy is available for parents to view. Mary Gallagher is the Designated Liaison Person for Child Protection and Eithne Ryan is the Deputy Liaison Person. If you have any concerns about any child protection issue you can speak to these staff members.

Early Intervention.

We are continuing with our Early Intervention Programme. Pupils from Junior Infants to 2nd class will be included this year. During Early Intervention classes the children work in small groups with their class teacher and the Special Education teacher or Mrs. Gallagher.

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 in the school recently. Well done to all.

Awards

The Active School Flag was renewed in June. We will be working towards our sixth Green Flag this year. We will be working on Global Citizenship. To date we have flags for Litter & Waste, Energy, Water, Transport and Biodiversity. Committees will be elected in the coming weeks and we will be working hard to achieve our new flag.

Digital School of Distinction Award

At St. Brigid's N.S., Clonegal we strive to develop all areas of our pupil's education including working digitally. In an ever growing technological world, it is increasingly important to develop skills in ICT. Each pupil is exposed to various types of digital technologies such as laptops on our laptop trolley, digital cameras, class visualisers, interactive whiteboards/screens, iPads and more. In using these it is also important to teach the pupils safe use in which we use resources such as www.webwise.ie and Stay Safe programme. We use these as part of our learning, to help us access the wider world of information and also to communicate with the wider world outside our school. Our school website is a great example of this and how we keep in touch with our community. It provides a link between us and our families and local community. We are always trying to improve our learning and skills and have recently been named a Digital School of Distinction for our efforts. We are extremely proud of this.



Swimming

Due to the large 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, 2nd, 4th and 5th class and all pupils in the ASD classes will attend swimming lessons for 10 weeks, commenced on Tuesday 11th September. Lessons are from 1-2pm and children leave the school shortly after midday.

**Pupils from 3rd and 6th class will attend swimming lessons as follows –
Friday 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th September and 5th Oct. from 12 -1pm, bus leaving school at 11.15: Tuesday 16th & 23rd October from 11 - 12, bus leaving school at 10.15:
Monday 12th, 19th & 26th November 1 - 2, bus leaving school at 12.15am:**

It is essential that two parents are available to travel each swimming day as assistance is required and we also need two 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 two 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 second class will receive the Sacraments of Penance and First Communion in 2019. We have not been given any dates yet, but I will let you know as soon as I have information.

Beginning of Year Mass:

Beginning of year mass will take place on Monday 17th at 10am. Parents are always invited to our school Masses.

Sports

We are delighted to work closely with Sean Gannon who is Games Development Administrator with The Leinster Council. On the 12th September after school the staff received in-service training from coaches involved in the GAA 5 Star Centre. We will be working weekly towards an accreditation for the school. We will be striving towards a GAA 5 Star Flag and Certificate of participation for display in the school. Over the course of the school year the teachers will provide the following activities:

- 1. Have a Ball**
- 2. Fun & Run**
- 3. Camán & Play/Catch & Kick**
- 4. Go Games Skill Challenges**
- 5. Go Games**

For the first six weeks of the GAA 5 Star Programme we will have a GAA coach to assist us with the initiative. Children will participate in all the Cumann na mBunscoil Football, Hurling and Camogie leagues, with their first outing next Monday against Myshall in Ben Mulhall Park. Ita O' Donoghue will provide six weeks of basketball training. 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 26th 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.

Pride of Place.

There has been a lot of work completed in the school gardens during the summer months in preparation for Pride of Place and Bank of Ireland Enterprise judging days. Work is ongoing in the garden. Results of these competitions will be issued over the coming months.

Weekly Assembly:

We will continue with our weekly assembly this year – on Fridays at 1.00pm. 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. There has been a great increase in the number of families accepting e-mails and we are very appreciative of this. If you have an e-mail address, please contact the office as soon as possible with 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 – Alison Murphy, Breda Murphy and Elizabeth 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.

We are set for a busy year ahead, but I thoroughly look forward to embracing it with you all. I thank all the staff, pupils and parents for their continued support of such a beautiful school.

Le gach dea-ghuí

Mary Gallagher