



St Francis National School

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NEWSLETTER: January 2018

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to the new school term and a very happy new year to all.

There are lots of exciting things coming up this term and we felt a newsletter would be in order to keep parents up to date. However, we remind parents to check the school website and Facebook page regularly for changes and updates – and of course the individual class pages for news from the classrooms.

There have been several queries from parents over the school provision of PE lessons, the use of technology and the policy for School Lunches. I hope the explanations in this newsletter will clarify the school policies on these issues to avoid any confusion.

Congratulations to Elaine O'Rourke on the birth of her son, Finn last term and many thanks to Annie Sweeney for her support as Acting Deputy Principal over the past few weeks.

Thank you to EVERYONE who helped make 2017, our tenth anniversary year, so successful - from our BOM, our dedicated teachers and staff, our PA who work tirelessly throughout the year fundraising and supporting school activities, and above all to each and every pupil. With this continued support and enthusiasm of the whole community of St Francis NS we hope to move forward and grow for the next ten years – and beyond.

Oreena Lawless
Príomhoide

School News

SCHOOL LUNCHES

Children have ten minutes to eat their lunches during class time, before going out to play. To maximise eating time, it is recommended that children have minimal food packaging to deal with. Try to keep it simple. A lunch box is easier to manage than lots of plastic wrapping; re-sealable bottles are easier to manage than cartons with straws; fruit is easier to eat when peeled and cut in pieces (especially for small children). Children are not normally permitted to bring their lunches outside (warm weather allows for occasional picnic lunches). We can't encourage rats and seagulls. Remember - no glass bottles, sweets, fizzy drinks or chewing gum. In reply to a few queries received, pop-corn is acceptable to include for lunch as it is a healthy, whole food snack. *Please refer to our Healthy Eating Policy for further information.*

TECHNOLOGY

As our school has grown and developed over the past few years, so too have our IT needs. This term, all pupils from 2nd - 6th class will participate in Internet Safety training workshops. The workshops seek to teach children the importance of their Digital Footprint and their Personal Information. They will learn about keeping safe while playing Online Games, Social Media their Friends list and the concept of Online Stranger Danger, Cyberbullying, Inappropriate content and more.

Thanks to the great fundraising efforts of our Parent Association, we will also purchase additional laptops to add to the 10 units already in our school library to facilitate whole class teaching in computer skills, internet safety and coding. Our senior pupils have already explored the use of technology to digitally record school news items, and this will be further developed in 2018. *Please refer to our IT and Acceptable Internet Usage Policy for further information.*

SCHOOL POLICIES

Reminder: Copies of most of our school policies are available on the school website or from the school office. We welcome and encourage feedback from parents on any of our policies at any time.



The Family of Paula Kavanagh on the recent loss of her mother

The Family of Paula Stapleton on the recent loss of her mother

The Family of our principal, Oreena Lawless on the recent loss of her brother-in-law

The wife of our caretaker Jonathan and anyone known to us who is sick or in hospital.

Please let Brigitte in the office know if you have a name to be included in our Thoughts and Prayers

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

We frequently receive queries about the provision of PE in our school. The following information may be helpful. The current National PE Curriculum covers six strands:

1. Athletics
2. Dance
3. Gymnastics
4. Games
5. Outdoor and adventure activities
6. Aquatics.

We are very fortunate to have connections with Dundalk Institute of Technology Community Sports Leadership and Health Promotion & Physical Activity Programmes, whose students share their Athletics expertise with our 1st and 2nd classes during the first term. The Athletics strand is also covered by all teachers during the summer term leading up to our annual Sports Day. Trained staff from the local GAA school of excellence in Darver work with us in delivering football and hurling to middle classes enabling us to participate in inter-schools competitions. Gus Kresa (Tennis Ireland) coaches tennis to all classes during different terms during the year. These, along with basketball coaching by our own teaching staff covers the Games strand of the curriculum. Basic Gymnastic skills are taught by all teachers. The Connolly School of Irish Dancing work with us in delivering the dance strand of the curriculum each spring leading up to our annual Céilí before St. Patrick's Day. Outdoor and adventure activities take place in our school grounds, at the beach, in our local Blackrock Park and for Senior Classes during their end of year school trips. The Aquatics strand is covered by the teaching of water safety and the health benefits of swimming in Junior Classes, and in the use of Aura Swimming Pool to facilitate swimming lessons in senior classes. Parents will naturally understand, that due to the nature of specialist coaching being shared among schools, the availability of these coaches dictates when a class will have their PE lesson - depending on the strand being covered. This means that the "PE day" may change for a class from term to term, or that a class may have two shorter PE lessons in a particular week instead of one longer one. Weather also plays a significant role, as does the availability of the school hall. If in doubt, please always check your child's class page on our school website as the teacher will post updates there.

ENROLMENT OF SIBLINGS

Our Enrolment Policy is currently that siblings of pupils already in the school take priority. If you have a younger son or daughter, please ensure you complete an Application Form (available from the office or school website) as we need to keep track of future enrolments and **we can not automatically guarantee a place to anyone.** Our enrolment lists for 2018-2022 are

oversubscribed and we encourage you to urge other parents in the parish to apply for a school place as soon as possible.

HOMEWORK

Homework plays an important role in a child's learning. It consolidates what is learned in school, encourages a pattern for study habits later on and allows parents to keep in touch with how their child is getting on at school. It is therefore important that **all parents sign their child's daily reading record**, and (for pupils from 1st-6th classes) the homework diaries. It is the responsibility of all pupils from 1st class upwards to copy from the board their homework in to their homework diary and we ask parents to please refrain from posting homework queries on the school Facebook page. If parents persistently get the homework for their child, that pupil will never learn to write it down correctly or bring home the necessary books. If your child is unable to do the homework, for whatever reason, simply write a note to the class teacher in the homework diary. Thank you.

ATTENDANCE

In line with our Attendance Policy and with the Education Welfare Act we are sending out letters to parents when their child's absence is at 10 days, and again at 15 days. As a parent, you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. **It is school policy that reasons must be given in writing.** By law, the school will notify Tusla - Child and Family Agency if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise to concern.

LOST PROPERTY

If your child has lost any item, please urge them to check the lost property box outside the office. Also, please remember to label all coats and jumpers clearly with your child's name.

SCHOOL CHOIR

Congratulations on their singing carols in the Marshes Shopping Centre Christmas Week, and beautiful performance at the school Christmas Concert. The school choir will perform at Seinn 2018 on Thursday 25th January (12.30pm at the Holy Redeemer Church) and at the Peace Proms on Sunday 4th February.

PARENTS ASSOCIATION

Many thanks to our PA for all their support last term, specifically to Jennifer and Paula K for arranging the beautiful 2018 school calendar, to Bronagh for the pupil Christmas cards and to Paula S, Lynda, Kathleen and all those parents who arranged the raffle at the school concert. Upcoming PA events include the school Disco on **Feb 9th**, Clean for Cake on **March 10th** and a Sponsored walk in the summer term. Full details will be notified to you on the school FB Page and website.

After School Activities

Monday – Thursday After School

Homework Club with Suzanne O'Hare on upstairs landing until 5pm. Tel: 087 9732798

Monday After School

Music lessons – guitar and tin whistle.
All enquiries to Miss Gray, Miss Burns and Miss Reynolds

Tuesday After School

Brickx Club with Clodagh Malone
Tel: 086 154 6940

Wednesday After School

FitKids for Junior & Senior Infants with Niall
Tel: 087 672 4411

School Choir Practise with Mrs Lawless and Miss Reynolds in School Library 2.40-3.40pm

Thursday After School

Clayotic with Louise Swords
Tel: 087 169 1065

Friday After School

French with Carmel
Tel: 087 171 8218

Tennis Classes with Gus in School Hall
Tel: 087 930 8613

Booking is essential for all after school activities.

All enquiries, bookings and payment regarding these classes are to be made directly to the instructor.

*Other activities may be added during the school year
Please enquire with at the office if you are interested
in hiring the school premises.*

UNIFORM SWAP SHOP



We shall be holding a Uniform Swap Shop in the school hall on **Friday 19th January** – all day. If you have an old uniform that your child has grown out of, we would be delighted to receive it as a donation. If you then need to get a new uniform, you may be first to come along to pick one from the donations! If you are new to the school, you may also come along and pick up from the donations! No money is involved. If you have nothing to donate, you may still come along and avail of the service! Everyone is welcome
Also we will have lost property on display - hats, gloves, scarves galore ... and even some coats! Anything unclaimed by the end of the day will, as usual, be donated to our Liberty Clothing charity.

Re-Cycling @ St Francis



In keeping with our GREEN SCHOOLS ethos, we are continuing to collect the following items in school:

USED CLOTHING: Please donate all your unwanted textiles to the School's Liberty Clothing Collection – and spread the word to family and friends! Every kilo generates funds for the school and helps with rehab care at Liberty. Green bags are available from the office and filled bags can be dropped off ANY TIME to the school and stored under the back stair well. Once we have enough bags we arrange for another collection. Just a reminder that you can fill the bags with: Clean clothes / Curtains / Old bedding (not duvets) / Towels / Linen / Shoes.

USED STAMPS - these raise funds for the ISPC

USED BATTERIES - disposed of via the European Recycling Platform. This also raises funds for Barretstown Children's Charity, offering free, medically endorsed camps & programmes that are designed for children & their families living with serious illness.

USED INK CARTRIDGES - these raise cash for the school via EmptyCartridges Ltd.

ITEMS OF SCHOOL UNIFORM: - these are kept and given to any parent who needs them for their child, and also for the end of year uniform swap shop.

OLD MOBILE PHONES & TABLETS – these raise money for Irish Action Autism and we can earn new iPads for the school.

BOOKS – We have a wonderful permanent display of second-hand adult and children's books in the corridor behind the main entrance. Please call in, browse the selection and help yourself – a few coins in the donation box would be appreciated. ☺

SCHOOL CLOSURES

We are obliged to have one half day per term closure for curriculum planning. The date for May has been moved from 14th May to **21st May**. Also, we have just been advised that teachers have to attend a one day course on **16th April** and the school will also be closed that day. Please see the calendar on the back page for a full list of dates and closures. These are also available on the school website.

PARENT READERS

Can you spare 30 mins after drop off time? We really need more volunteer parents to help with our highly successful Literacy Programme, which depends on the generosity of you – mums, dads, grannies, aunties, etc!!! No serious commitment is needed. You will be assigned a class to call in to and listen to the pupils read. You will not be tied to certain days but any time you can give would be greatly appreciated. If you are able to help – please let Brigitte in the office know (phone, email or note) and she can give you the Garda Vetting forms, if you have not already been vetted, which will have to be completed prior to you starting.



JANUARY 2018

Wednesday 17th: The Irish Blood Transfusion Board will hold its next Blackrock Blood Clinic here in the school hall from 5pm - 9pm.

Friday 19th: Uniform Swap Shop – all day. School Hall. Please drop in any items of unwanted uniform to the school office.

Thursday 25th: The choir take part in the annual "Seinn" Concert, schools' gathering. Holy Redeemer Church, Dundalk at 12.30pm. Parents welcome.

Friday 26th: Bake Sale (4th Class) in aid of Homeless.

Friday 26th: Credit Union Quiz (under 13 & under 11 school quiz teams), St Oliver Plunkett NS, 8pm.

FEBRUARY 2018

Friday 2nd: Grandparent's day in school. Grandparents invited to arrive at 10am to visit the classrooms, followed by refreshments in school hall.

Sunday 4th: The choir will travel to Dublin on to participate in the annual Peace Proms with the Cross Border Orchestra - the 2pm performance.

Monday 5th: School Closes at 12 midday: (Mandatory Teachers Curriculum Planning Half Day)

Friday 9th: School Disco, organised by our PA.

Saturday 10th & Sunday 11th: Féis Dhún Dealgain, Speech & Drama Competition, Crowne Plaza

Thursday 15th & Friday 16th: School Closed for midterm break

Wednesday 21st: (provisional date) Ceremony of Light and Pledge (6th Class). St Fursey's Church, Haggardstown, 7.30pm.

Monday 26th – Friday 2nd March – Scholastic Book Fair in school

MARCH 2018

Thursday 1st: World Book Day. Storytelling and activities in school all day. Pupils invited to come to school dressed as their favourite book character.

Friday 9th: School Photographer coming in for individual and family group photos

Saturday 10th: "Clean for Cake", whole school Spring Clean – all welcome!

Monday 19th: School Closed (St Patrick's Day)

Wednesday 21st: 11am, St Fursey's Church, Sacrament of Confirmation (6th Class)

Thursday 22nd: Irish Cancer Society Daffodil Day Coffee Morning 9.30am-12 midday.

Friday 23rd: School Closes at 12 midday for Easter

APRIL 2018

Monday 9th: School re-opens for summer term

Sunday 15th: Sacrament of First Confession, 7pm, Blackrock Church (2nd Class)

Monday 16th: School Closed – Teachers Primary Language Curriculum Training Day

MAY 2018

Monday 7th-Friday 11th: School closed for week (May Day Holiday)

Saturday 19th: First Holy Communion, 11am, Blackrock Church (2nd Class)

Monday 21st: School Closes at 12 midday: (Mandatory Teachers Curriculum Planning Half Day) *Please note this date has been moved from Monday 14th May*

JUNE 2018

Monday 4th: School Closed (June Bank Holiday)

Tuesday 12th & Wednesday 13th: End of year school plays (times TBA)

Thursday 28th: School closes for Summer Holidays at 12 midday

We will re-open for the new academic year on at the end of August 2018 (date TBA)

PLEASE REFER TO THE SCHOOL WEBSITE FOR UP TO DATE NEWS AND INFORMATION

www.stfrancisns.ie



We are thrilled to have been awarded the Scoilnet Star Site award this month.