

St. Helen's JNS

Newsletter - December 2021

Thank you from Ms Lavin

A thuismitheoirí go léir,

I hope you are all well and looking forward to a rest over Christmas. Your co-operation has greatly helped in our efforts to manage what has been a very challenging term. The children have been terrific in complying with challenging requests and on behalf of all the staff here, I would like to extend a huge thanks to you and your children for understanding the situation and for doing as much as possible to keep the community of St. Helen's J.N.S. safe. We continue to navigate our way through these challenging times as best we can. As you can imagine, it has not been an easy so I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of staff for their commitment and wonderful work that has taken place over the term.

To the parents, grandparents, creche facilities and other minders, a huge thank you for adhering to all the control measures which have been put in place. We are all very grateful and appreciate being able to come to work every day knowing that we are in a safe environment.

We were delighted to be able to support our past pupils, 7 classes in total, to make their First Communion last September and October. I wish to convey our appreciation to the parish of St. Anne's and to Canon John Flaherty for their dedication and efforts to ensure that each of the 7 Communion ceremonies were made special for the children and their families. A huge thanks also to all the teachers, the Special Needs Assistants and to Marcella who attended these masses on this important occasion for our past pupils.

We have enjoyed making December as celebratory as possible for the children. Decorations were put up early and coach Ronan ensured we enjoyed festive music during outdoor GAA and PE!

Santa, helped by his team of elves, made his annual visit to us last Friday and delivered a fun and festive activity book to each child. The children (& staff) all donned their cheerful Christmas jumpers and dresses over the week for the recording of our Christmas shows. These can be viewed via aladdin and on the website.

Voluntary Contributions

On behalf of the Board of Management we would like to thank you for your huge generosity to the school. We look forward to investing in new resources and equipment for the children and making some essential refurbishments to help maintain and improve the school building in the New Year.



Penguins (Rooms 18)

Many thanks to our Parents' Association for their fundraising efforts this term. In October parents generously supported Cystic Fibrosis Ireland and raised €730 for the charity. We are extremely proud of and grateful to our 2nd class pupil Isabella Corry who explained to all our classes what Cystic Fibrosis is and how she was so excited that the school supported CF Ireland this year.

Sarah and the team organised for the children to partake in the personalised Christmas card initiative again this year which has proven to be another wonderful success and thank you to all parents who supported the school.

As always, you have been hugely and generously supportive of the Junior school in all its endeavours and we look forward with hope to a better 2022! We especially want to acknowledge your wonderful children who have been outstanding since we returned to school and whom never cease to give us such joy every day.

On behalf of all the staff and the Board of Management, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy, safe and peaceful Christmas. Nollaig Shona Daoibh go léir agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh!

Lorna Lavin & all the staff of St. Helen's JNS



Christmas Trees (Room 23)



Trees (Room 13)



Christmas Concert and Santa visit!

The children were busy as ever practising their Christmas songs and poems for an all fresco performance once again this year! As always they rose to the occasion and embraced performing their special concert in the Millennium garden. Santa sent a special message through his elves to let us know he would be returning on Friday 17th and appeared in the library area which had been magically decorated by Gerry and Gwen. Thanks to all our dedicated teachers and SNAs who have helped the children to make this a special fun-filled and safe Christmas performance.



Snowmen (Room 25)



St Helen's Junior School presenting cheque to Cystic Fibrosis Ireland

A word from the Chairperson

Happy Christmas – and congratulations to everyone for another term when the school stayed safely open thanks to everyone’s hard work and commitment, in particular the children.

The Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment are displayed inside the school in the reception area and have been posted on the school website. These were reviewed by the Board of Management in September. Lorna Lavin is the Designated Liaison Person and Andrea Smith the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. Teachers are made aware on a regular basis of their responsibilities as Mandated Persons. Catherine Treacy continues to be the school Inspector.

There was a huge amount of work carried out in the school over the summer holidays and I’m sure everyone has enjoyed the benefits of this and the fresh coat of paint over the Halloween break.

Despite all the challenges of the year, ‘the show must go on’ and there has been a number of celebrations in the school. Congratulations to Ms. Fleming and family on the birth of baby Jack. It seems strange to be thanking all the staff for the virtual Halloween celebration and Christmas concert but it’s great that these options are available and that staff get so invested in these opportunities.

There has been a lot of very successful fundraising work over the year with the ‘Halloween Dress’ up in aid of Cystic Fibrosis and the Parents’ Association Christmas fundraiser. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all families for the Voluntary Contribution, which is a vital part of the school funding.

Michael Gaffney, the school caretaker for 20 years, has retired and we wish him health and happiness in his retirement. Gerry Hennigan has joined the school as the new caretaker and we wish him well in his new role. Adrienne Moore has taken early retirement and I’d like to wish her all health and happiness.

I’m delighted with the announcement that the Department of Education plan to invest in HEPA filters which will be installed in each classroom early in the New Year to help mitigate the spread of Covid.

Prayers continue for Alex, son of Ms Lambkin, who underwent bone marrow transplant recently in Crumlin. Alex is doing very well and we send good wishes.

Finally, a huge thanks to all the children for doing all they have done in adapting to all the new Covid rules as they come and, a huge thanks to all the teachers and staff in St Helen’s Junior School who make the school such a safe and happy place for our children. A particular thanks to Ms Lavin, the Principal, who, with the help of the school staff, keep the show on the road – Thank you.

Wishing all our families and staff a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year.

Celine O’Connell - Chairperson of the Board of Management



Reindeer (Room 17)



Snow and Trees (Room 11)



Elves (Room 14)

Ceol sa chlós... Calóga sneachta

This term our junior and senior infants enjoyed participating in a 6 week period of outdoor singing to begin their Wednesday mornings. Mr. Paul Maguire and Mr. Vincent Conway, both former principals, accepted our invitation and volunteered to share their passion of music with our young pupils. This brightened up many a cold November morning and before we knew it the children, and adults, were reciting and singing aloud in the yard to “You must wear your woollies and wellies.. that’s right”!!!!

Louise Rooney





Stockings (Room 20)

A word from the Parents' Association

As we near the year of another unusual year we have so much to be grateful for in our wonderful school community. We have had many challenges and worked together to overcome them. On behalf of the Parents' Association I would like to thank Lorna and all of her dedicated staff for all of their hard work and efforts to keep the school running as safely and efficiently as they have. We are very lucky to have such a team!

We held our annual AGM last week and are delighted to be welcoming four new members to our PA.

We have had many fun exciting days in our school with dress up day for Halloween raising fund for CF Ireland thank you to Isabella and Johanna Corry for accepting donation their behalf.

The Christmas Cards made by the children again this year proved a massive success and thank you to all the parents and guardians for their support on this. Santa and his elves visited and we all had another magical day within the school during which all public health guidelines were followed.

Thank you to all who have completed the Cycle to School Survey last June. This initiative continues to be on the agenda of the school's Parents Association and Board of Management since September. We are engaging with Fingal to explore and assess what options may be feasible for the future. For the moment however our avenue is too busy and therefore the use of bikes or scooters are not permitted for health and safety reasons. We thank all parents for their cooperation.

Wishing you all a happy safe and peaceful Christmas and we look forward to seeing you all in the new year which we hope will be kind to us all. Thank you all most sincerely for the support with our PA.

Sarah Murphy

Chairperson Parents' Association

News from the Cabhair Centre

Our new renovation



Over the summer break, we had extensive work done to upgrade our classrooms and common areas in our special classes in the Cabhair Centre. Our lighting and electrics got a much needed revamp and this has made a phenomenal improvement to the children's learning environment. The softer lighting has decreased visual overload for the students. The sound dampening ceilings have made the classroom a calmer and quieter environment. The classrooms and corridors are aesthetically pleasing with beautiful new display boards, visual schedules and calming wall colours. New adjustable furniture was also acquired which can grow along with the children. Now all of the classrooms have a chill out room and a storage area. Our gross motor room now acts as a multipurpose room, allowing for children to practise crucial skills such as core strength, balance and co-ordination. It also acts as a space for regulation and calming. The works have given students and staff a brighter more inviting environment, creating a wonderful happy place to work and learn in.

Philip Horan, Yvonne Cummins and Claire Mc Hale



School Self Evaluation Update

The focus of our School Self Evaluation for this School Year is Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil. This focus was selected through a process of whole staff reflection on aspects of teaching and learning within our school.

Our School Improvement Plan centres on:

- Using and displaying Frasaí na Coicíse (Phrase of the fortnight) throughout the school.
- Creating a focus on the use of informal Irish during daily classroom activities and other subject lessons
- We have created a set of Cartaí Gaeilge for each year group to be used at home. Please see our School Website : <https://www.sthelensjunior.com/parents/gaeilge/>

Health and Safety Statement

After our Summer Works we have started to update our School Risk Assessments and Health and Safety Statement. This Statement combines many other school policies such as the First Aid Policy, Fire and Emergency Management and the Anti-Bullying Policy. The staff who are being supported by Peninsula Ireland and by Aidan Fitzgerald from our Board of Management have worked collaboratively assessing each room and corridor of the school. We will continue to prioritise Health and Safety in the New Year.

Susan Kavanagh Assistant Principal



Christmas (Room 7)

Gratitude for Our Friendly Pupils!

Each morning, we have staff members at both gates and at the end of the avenue to support the children coming into school. It has been my pleasure to supervise the Senior yard gate. This morning routine has become one of the best parts of my day. Every day our pupils cheerfully say 'Hello', or a friendly 'Happy Tuesday or even 'Maidin Mhaith'!!

I am treated to their stories of the cheeky escapades of 'elves on shelves' or excitedly shown new schoolbags or hair bands or runners!

It is a credit to the parents in our school community how polite and mannerly the children are and the effort they make to say a friendly hello.

I want to thank each and every one of the children for starting my days off so well this term!

Ms. O'Callaghan

Christmas holidays

The school closes on Wednesday December 22nd for the Christmas holidays and reopens on Thursday 6th January.

We will operate our staggered dismissal times as usual.

11:30am – Cabhair Centre classes (taxis)

11:45 Junior Infants

11:50 Senior Infants

11:55 1st classes

12pm 2nd classes



The whole school community extends their condolences to all those who have lost dear members of their families over the past few months.

We remember very specially during this season of Advent the family of Karl Nugent from N Zone. Karl was a very committed and valued member of the St Helen's school community for years when he brought and collected children to and from school each day.

Karl was always very special to all the children and staff here in the Junior school.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his family at this sad time. We will miss him dearly.

May all those whom we have lost recently rest in peace.

Calendar 2021-2022

December/ January

Christmas Holidays

Wednesday 22nd December

- School will close early on a staggered basis

School closed 23rd – 5th Jan incl.

School reopens Thursday 6th January

Mid-term break

21st – 25th February 2022 - School closed

School reopens Monday 28th February 2022

St. Patrick's Day

Thursday 17th March + Friday 18th March

- School Closed

Easter Holidays

Friday 8th April – 22nd April (incl)

- School closed

School reopens Monday 25th April

May bank Holiday - Monday 2nd May

June Bank Holiday – Friday 3rd June

+ Monday 6th June 2022

Summer Holidays

School closes on 30th June

*First Holy Communion date tbc in the New Year

Well-being

Promoting the wellbeing of our school communities is a fundamental element of the Department of Education's overall plan to support a successful return to school as we continue to manage the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are living through exceptional times and this impacts on the wellbeing of everyone in different ways, at different times.

In St. Helen's Junior School we have introduced "Welcome to Well-being", the newly devised wellbeing programme by the author Fiona Foreman in our Junior and Senior Infant classes. The children met 2 colourful aliens called Mo and Ko who landed on earth to encourage them to accept and express all of their emotions in a positive way. They enjoyed weekly challenges designed to enhance their wellbeing across all dimensions – social, emotional, spiritual, physical and mental. It is widely documented that "enhancing children's wellbeing can lead to a wide variety of other successful outcomes including increased academic performance, better relationships and increased resilience" – (Waters, 2011; Park & Peterson, 2008)

The children in our First classes will engage in the Fun FRIENDS programme next term. This programme will follow on from their completion of the Mo and Ko series last year and earlier this term. The FRIENDS acronym stands for:

- F - Feelings**
- R - Relax**
- I - I can try**
- E - Encourage**
- N - Now reward yourself**
- D - Don't forget**
- S - Stay calm and happy!**

Second classes the children are engaging in the Weaving Well-being programme. This programme gives children the opportunity to weave positivity into their daily lives through a range of activities. These engaging activities allow the children to explore their own unique character strengths while learning coping techniques for times when they are not feeling ok. They complete a journal which guides them on their personal journey of discovery. The lessons within all these programmes are designed to be implemented within the framework of the SPHE curriculum.

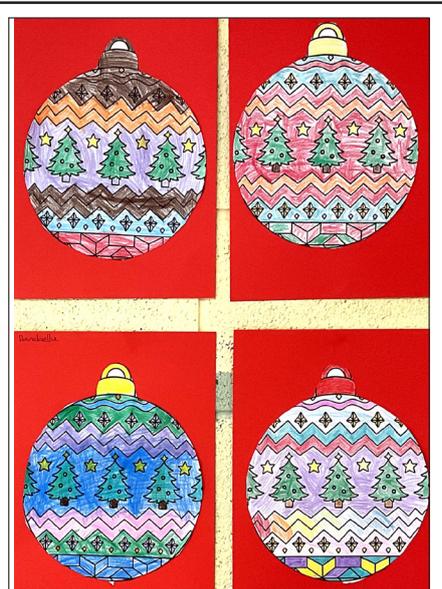
Andrea Smith Deputy Principal



Christmas Trees (Room 12)



Elves (Room 15)



Baubles (Room 19)



Christmas Art (Room 24)



School website

We hope you are all continuing to enjoy our school website. As well as being an effective communication tool for parents and the whole school community, it's also a lovely way of viewing photographs and videos of the children's work and what activities they are doing in class. (sthelensjunior.com)

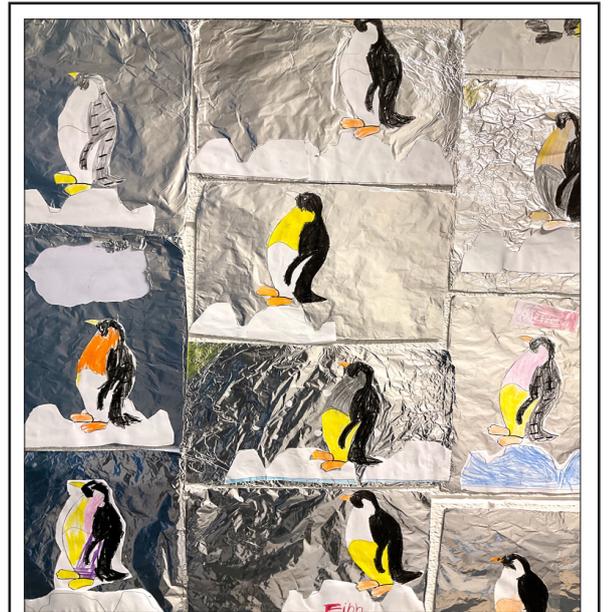


Christmas Collage (Room 6)

IT News...

This term we made lots of IT upgrades around the school. In the hall, a new sound system and projector were installed. The children have enjoyed using this space for learning. Each class attended a special Advent assembly with Ms Lavin last week and many classes have been using the system to teach the dance strand of the PE curriculum. New projectors were also purchased for many of the classrooms. All children have now been set up on Google Classroom. Thank you all for engaging with our Distance Learning Policy and Google Classroom.

Eimear Kane



Penguins (Room 21)



Class Photo (Room 16)