

St Patrick's Primary School

13 Castlewellan Road, Ballymaghera, Hilltown, BT34 5UY

Principal: Mrs Geraldine Smith

Phone: (028) 406 30061

Email: info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk

Web: www.stpatrickspshilltown.com

Twitter: @StPatricksPS57

Progress Through Partnership



5th April 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Spring term has been a busy term, packed with lots of learning activities for our children. Thank you for your support over the last term, it is vital that we work together to help your children achieve their best. This newsletter is a summary of some of the things that have taken place and also of things are still to come. Please have a look at our website to get an even bigger picture of what is going on in our school.

Improvements to school grounds

As you know over the last few weeks, we have had a little disruption to our outside play routine due to the grounds maintenance works going on. Two of our yards needed repair and the fence around the lower yard had been significantly damaged and required replacement. Thankfully most of the work is completed. However, we are still waiting for everything to be finished, including yard markings. Thank you for your understanding and patience in adhering to the temporary drop off and pick up arrangements. Everything we do is in the best interests of our children, and we will continue to update you with photos of the completed works as soon as everything is done.

Friends of St Patrick's Parents' Association

Our Parents' Association has been working very hard supporting our Market Day with a Sweet Treats stand and 'Name the Easter Bunny' competition. A massive thank you goes to them for their hard work and dedication in giving up their time to arrange these fundraisers, which will contribute to improving our pupils' learning experiences.

Primary 1 2023 – 2024

Parents will be informed of the outcome of their application to primary school. There will be an information meeting for all parents of children starting Primary 1 in St Patrick's in September 2023 on Wednesday 10th May, 9:30am to 10:30am. Please pass on this information to any parents of new Primary 1 pupils.

Primary 7 Open Enrolment

Primary 7 pupils will be informed of the school they will be attending in Year 8 on 20th May. As our Primary 7 pupils embark on their last term of primary school, we wish them well and encourage them to continue reading and working to improve their literacy and numeracy skills ahead of end of year testing.

Anti-Bullying Survey

Thanks to those parents who responded to our survey which closed on 29th January. We are continuing to work on a revised policy which reflects new legislation and ensures all our children's needs are respected and protected. A big part of anti-bullying is firstly dealt with through our Positive Behaviour and Special Needs

practices, and it is important that our children know to report any behaviour that is a concern to them. Please remind them of this so that we can ensure any misunderstandings can be sorted out as soon as possible.

Reading

Thank you for supporting our annual book fair. Please continue to listen to your child read every day. Reading with your children from Primary 1 to Primary 7 is transformative for their academic success and personal wellbeing. We conducted the Boost Reading Programme over the last two terms and are delighted to inform you 25 pupils accessed this support and were rewarded with certificates and a treat for their hard work and achievement in the programme.

End of Year Testing

Primary 3 to Primary 7 pupils will be taking part in standardized assessments which will be reported in the Summer Reports. Please support your child in revising topics taught over the year in literacy and numeracy.

Market Day

To support our global goals in support of Fairtrade Fortnight, our Rights Respecting, ECO and School Council teams held a charity fundraiser for Trocaire on Thursday 2nd March and what an amazing day it was! Thanks to all our local traders who supported us and helped us raise £290.15 for Trocaire!

Bake Sales

Our boys and girls love baking at home and did extremely well, baking lots for our bun sales. Thanks to our families in Primary 5, 6 and 7 for the delicious, sweet treats we all enjoyed. They were simply delightful! Primary 5 and Primary 6 raised £1141.10 for Trocaire, and Primary 7 raised £760 for the Irish Pilgrimage Trust, Group 93. Thank you for your support and generous donations.

Parent Internet Safety Workshop

Our parent online internet safety workshop took place on 7th February with the largest attendance of parents for the facilitator. We have added the PowerPoint to the Internet Safety section of our website for anyone who wants to see how they can keep their child safe online.

Warrenpoint Feis success and Spring Concert

Congratulations to the many competitors who participated in Warrenpoint Music and Poetry Feis. We had quite a successful range of winners across all classes and sections. What a great way to build confidence and resilience in our children. Thanks to our parents and staff who helped prepare the children with a special mention to Mrs Clarke, Mrs O'Neill, Miss McAnulty and Miss Craven who taught the children the songs.

Choir Success

Congratulations to our choir who came second in the Under 12 Cup and Under 12 Church Music section of Warrenpoint Feis. They will also perform for Holy Communion and Confirmation Services. Thank you for your support of our choir and thanks to Mrs Clarke for her commitment in teaching our choir throughout the year. There will be no after school choir club in Term 3.

St Patrick's is a Nurturing School

As a Rights Respecting School, part of our School Development Plan is developing the principles of nurture. We believe children have the right to feel safe in school. Every classroom now offers a safe place in the form

of a 'Calm Corner'. This is a quiet space which all children are welcome to use to help them feel regulated and ready to learn. Each safe space offers soft furnishings, sensory toys, weighted blankets, mindfulness activities and calming music. All children can thrive and reach their highest potential through a nurturing approach.

Article 24

Calm Plan

St Patrick's PS prides itself on a Positive Behaviour Policy. Teachers have received training in the 'Calm Plan' approach. 'Calm Plan' helps adults recognise dysregulation in themselves and their pupils. We have developed an understanding of how to help pupils feel safe and connected. St Patrick's understands the process of developing a supported calm plan based on nurture principles and trauma informed practice.

Football Update

The boys' football team had two outings recently. They played in the Cumann na mBunscol indoor finals and gave a great account of themselves. Unfortunately, they were knocked out in the quarter final. They also had a playoff with Carrick in the Canon Esler competition. Again, they played well but missed a few scores which allowed Carrick to get a lead, and despite a great effort, St Patrick's could not recover.

They will now play St Ronan's, Newry in the Shield final which will take place after Easter.

Rock Red Friday

Samantha, from the Children's Heartbeat Trust, visited our school to receive a cheque for £500 for her charity! The money was raised from our Rock Red Friday event. Florence, one of our P.3 pupil's, inspired the fundraiser when she talked about her own heart condition. An amazing young lady indeed! Thank you to everyone for your contributions!

Afterschool Clubs

Please check the school app and SchoolMoney notifications for enrolling in the relevant afterschool club.

Swimming

Learning to swim is part of our PE curriculum and we are delighted to give our Key Stage 2 children the opportunity to learn to swim. Primary 5 will commence swimming on 20th April and every Thursday thereafter.

Sacramental dates/class times reminder

Confirmation will take place on Friday 12th May at 4:00pm and First Holy Communion will take place on Saturday 20th May at 10:30am.

Congratulations to our Primary 4 children who received the Sacrament of First Penance 24th February and to our Primary 7 children who celebrated the Service of Light on 31st March. Both occasions were very special ceremonies, with our children singing and reading beautifully. Well done boys and girls.

School Photographer

There will be a photographer in school on Monday 15th May to take photos of the Primary 7 children in their Confirmation outfits. More details will follow after Easter.

Spelling Bee

Congratulations to all our super spellers. Over the last few weeks everyone was very busy learning lots of spellings. As well as learning the spelling of new words for the spelling bee, the children were introduced to

lots of new vocabulary and the meaning of these words. Everyone worked very hard and learned the spelling of lots of words. We look forward to seeing great spelling in all your literacy activities. Every child received a spelling bee certificate for participating in the competition. Our children who came first, second and third received Easter Eggs.

Visit from Deacon Gerry

Deacon Gerry paid our school a visit on the 23rd March to see the wonderful work our pupils have been engaging in Religious Education. The children sang songs and listened attentively to what Deacon Gerry said. Deacon Gerry reported that it was very evident that as a Catholic school there was lots of excellent learning going on at school and at home to help our children live a Christian life.

Strike Action by teachers

Teachers from all four teaching unions in Northern Ireland have been instructed to take a day of strike action on Wednesday 26^h April. This will mean St Patrick's PS will be closed for pupils on this day. Unfortunately, teachers, along with many other public sector services are having to make a stand because of pay conditions and funding cuts to school budgets which are having a major negative impact on our pupils' education.

Attendance

Please contact the school either by email or telephone call if your child is absent. A letter explaining absences should be sent to school on your child's return. Reasons must be reported to the school office.

School App

Please make sure you have an updated version of the school app. If you are not getting regular notifications, please delete the app from your devices and download the app again, selecting the relevant onscreen options. Please let us know if your mobile number or email address changes by emailing the school at info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk.

Bus Lay-by

Please DO NOT park or turn your vehicle in the bus lay-by or along the front of the school. This area must be kept free of all traffic to ensure our children's safety. The pedestrian gate is open to facilitate children walking to and from school and is not for children getting dropped off or picked up by car. Please respect these rules. The lower church carpark should be used for parents/guardians to drop children off and pick children up.

Dropping Off and Picking Up

Thank you for following the one-way system on entering and exiting the church carpark. Please DO NOT STOP or wait in the YELLOW BOX at the top of the carpark. This is a major safety risk, and it inhibits our staff, support agencies and other families arriving on time. Please park in a space to drop your child to school and remind your children they should not climb on or over the walls at the Parochial House. Your children's safety is our number one priority at all times!

School dinners

All school dinners must be booked and paid through the online SchoolMoney system. Families entitled to free school meals must also use this system to book for the week ahead. If for any reason you are struggling to log in, please contact us immediately.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Team Update

In St Patrick's we believe that an ethos of caring permeates all our activities. All our staff and volunteers have been subject to appropriate background checks and are informed of school procedures regarding child protection issues.

Our safeguarding team consists of our Mrs. Reavey (Designated teacher), Ms. McNeill (Deputy designated teacher) and Mrs. Smith (manager). Please contact the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if you have any safeguarding concerns, through the school office on 028 40630061 or by emailing info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk.

Please take a note of the revised dates list below;

Thursday 6th April - School closes at 11:00am and reopens Monday 17th April for Easter Holidays

Monday 17th April – School opens for Term 3

Thursday 20th April – P.5 swimming lessons commence

Wednesday 26th April – School closed all day due to teacher strike action

Thursday 27th April – 2023/2024 Primary 1 pupils get notification of placements for school

Monday 1st May 2023 – School closed Bank Holiday

Monday 8th May 2023 - School closed Bank Holiday

Wednesday 10th May – New intake 2023/2024 Primary 1 meeting 9:30am – 10:30am

Thursday 11th May – Love for Life Programme for Primary 7

Friday 12th May – Confirmation at 4:00pm

Monday 15th May – Tempest Photographer to take Confirmation Photos

Thursday 18th May 2023 – Local Election Day, School is used as a polling station

Saturday 20th May – First Holy Communion at 10:30am

Saturday 20th May – Primary 7 receive notification of school placement for Year 8

Monday 29th May 2023 – School closed Bank Holiday

Tuesday 30th May 2023 - School Closed – Baker Day

Wednesday 31st May 2023 - School Closed – Staff Development Day

Wednesday 7th June – Connor McConville Tournament

Friday 9th June – Sports Day

Monday 19th June 2023 - School Closed – Staff Development Day

Monday 19th June 2023 – New P1 intake to attend school for induction session to school

Thursday 22nd June – P.1 and P.2 trip to Fort Evergreen

Friday 30th June 2023 - School closes for summer holidays at 11.00am

As we embark on another term, we want you to know we are here to support your children, and you, in every way we can. Plans are in place for many of our school trips for this term. If there are occasions when activities or events become a burden, please contact me and we can work together to ensure every child gets access to the best opportunities in school.

On behalf of the staff and governors I would like to wish you a Happy and Holy Easter.

Yours sincerely

Geraldine Smith
Principal