**St Patrick’s Primary School**

13 Castlewellan Road, Ballymaghery, Hilltown, BT34 5UY

Principal: Mrs Geraldine Smith

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**Progress Through Partnership**

14/01/ 2024

Dear Parents and Guardians,

**Happy New Year!**

Welcome back to a new term, which we will embrace with renewed commitment and resilience as a whole school community to ensure our pupils' experiences in school continue to be enriched and varied.

I would like to thank you sincerely for your support over the last term, and what a busy term it proved to be, with many celebrations and events!

**A summary of our celebrations and events since November**

* Anti-Bullying Week
* Ditch The Dark Week
* Progress tests and Parent/Teacher Meetings
* Shoebox Appeal – 138 collected in total!
* P.1 - P.2 trip to Palace Stables
* Friends of St Patrick’s Name the Elf competition
* Friends of St Patrick’s School Calendar
* Whole school attendance at Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception
* Christmas Dinner and Jumper Day
* School Choir singing in Buttercrane Shopping Centre
* Two amazing Christmas shows, with four performances.
* A Christmas Carol Service with our Parish choir
* St Patrick’s PS Christmas Card and Verse competition
* Well-being sessions with Anto for P1-P7

These events could not have taken place without your amazing support, and the dedication of our staff, pupils, and Parents’ Association. Thank you for this, and we look forward to a brand-new term of exciting experiences.

As we commence 2024, we have many more notable events taking place and dates for your diary. Please check the revised school calendar at the end of this newsletter.

**Friends of St Patrick’s Parents’ Association**

In term one, our parents’ association worked hard to organise and design a beautiful calendar which included every child in our school. They also arranged a ‘Name the Elf’ competition when Santa very kindly sent us a special Elf all the way from Lapland! 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. There are a small number of these beautiful calendars left so please contact the school office if you would like one.

**Christmas Concert Recording**

You can purchase a recording of the Christmas concert at the cost of £10 for a DVD or a HD Stream, or another option is that you can purchase both for £16, which means you can watch the HD Stream and also have the DVD as a keepsake with the cast picture and 6 pictures from the show on the rear of the DVD cover. A booking form will be sent home on Monday with payment accessed through the school money system. Sincere thanks to the pupils for learning their parts and songs and to the staff who had additional co-ordinating and organising duties to do to make everything run smoothly.

**P1 Open enrolment dates and times**

The P1 admissions portal opened at 12 noon on Tuesday 9th January. Please pass this information on to any parent who may wish their child to attend St Patrick’s in the next school year. Any parent needing any help or support with the enrolment process is invited to contact the main office on 028 40630061. The P1 portal will close at 12 noon on Friday 26th January.

**P7 Open Enrolment Dates and Times**

The post primary admissions portal for Primary 7 pupils opens at 12 noon on Tuesday 30th January 2024 at 12:00 noon and closes at 12:00 noon on Thursday 22nd February 2024.

Please check school criteria when selecting schools. This will be available on the EA website [www.eani.org.uk](http://www.eani.org.uk) from 11th January 2024.

**School Books Missing**

In recent years, a substantial amount of money was used to buy reading books for the whole school. Unfortunately, many of these books are not being returned, which means we are running out of full sets for our reading groups. These books are expensive to replace but are necessary for the development of your child’s literacy. **Please look around at home and send in any** **school books you have.** Our school budget is depleted, and we are having to use the money raised from our Friends of St Patrick’s P.A. fundraising for buying reading and other textbooks, instead of buying playground equipment and other much needed resources.

**Book Fair**

Our annual book fair returns this year on Thursday 25th January. Reading for pleasure is transformative for pupils’ academic success and personal wellbeing. More information will follow over the coming weeks. A parent or guardian must accompany children from P.1 to P.4 when choosing and buying books from the book fair.

**Catholic Schools Week**

The theme of Catholic Schools week 2024 is **Communities of Service, which will be celebrated from 21st to 27th January.** It is important that children learn how to be connected with one another by sharing their gifts and talents starting with family and friends, at home and in school, so that they can learn to grow in deeper relationship with one another, with God and with the community of the parish. We traditionally celebrate a Mass during Catholic Schools Week, however this year the diocese has arranged to have a celebration of our Catholic Schools with songs of praise and joy, interspersed with readings and prayers. Archbishop Eamon Martin will lead the service. We ask that all the pupils learn the hymns **at home as well as at school,** so that they can actively take part in the service which will be attended by some of our pupils in person, while every other child in school will participate during the live stream from the Church of St Therese, Banbridge on Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 10.30am.

The hymns chosen are:

1. This little light of mine
2. Brother Sister let me serve you.
3. Me without you.
4. You lead, I’ll follow.
5. Make me a channel of your peace.
6. Be though my vision. (In Irish)
7. Shine Jesus Shine.

All hymns have been loaded onto a dedicated YouTube channel.

Sing Praise- Dromore CSW

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCd4LRNgJEHYSMxfnl_u94KQ3P-zwMJ2S>

Please click the link and make it a favourite on your home page and with your help, our children will be able to fully participate in this joyful celebration of our Catholic Schools. Our families at home are invited to join the streamed broadcast from the Church of St Therese, Banbridge on Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 10.30am.

**Warrenpoint Feis Primary Section**

Warrenpoint Feis will run from 21st February to 22nd March 2024. We have a number of children enrolled in the music feis, which takes place from 21st February to 24th February and 26th February to 29th February. The poetry feis will take place from 11th to 16th March and 19th to 22nd March.

**Breaktime Snacks/Water Bottle/Lunches**

St Patrick’s follows a Healthy Breaks Policy – this consists of water **(not flavoured)** and pieces of fruit/vegetables. No juice is allowed in class. We ask you to be mindful of the amount of sugary treats included in lunchboxes and please remind your children they should not share or swap food items because of allergies! Several children have severe nut allergies. **Please do not send any food with nuts into school.**

**Sickness**

If your child is unwell or has vomiting and diarrhea, please keep them at home for 48 hours.

**Attendance and Punctuality**

Our overall school attendance for last year was 93.6%. It is our aim that this will increase to above 95% by the end of 2023-2024 and there will be special awards for all those children whose attendance is above 97% at the end of year awards ceremony. Last year 5 children received cinema vouchers! We look forward to awarding many more children this year!

Please ensure your child attends school when they are well enough to do so. Missing school means your child is missing making relationships with other children, staff, and of course learning, therefore it is extremely important that your child does not miss school unless they are ill or have an exceptional reason.

All absences must be reported on the **first day** **and each day thereafter,** either to the general office or by email to info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk . When a child returns to school, they should have a written note explaining the reason. The Education Welfare officer will be contacting parents of children whose monthly attendance is below 85% and where there are concerns. Every effort is being made to help develop your child’s learning experience with a focus on well-being from when they enter school, so it is vital your child arrives punctually. The buzzer gate opens at 8:00am for breakfast club and 8:30am for all other children. It closes at 9:00am sharp.

**Assemblies and Prayer Services**

Each month a class has been leading an assembly with the whole school, and a prayer service for their parents and family members. Thank you for attending, it is great to have your support. Well done to the classes who performed theirs. **Please note Mr. Trainor's has been postponed to Friday 26th January 2024.**

**Sacrament Dates**

First Penance is taking place on **Wednesday 7th February at 1:30pm** for our Primary 4 children. **All parents should** **accompany their children.** Further details will be sent in the coming weeks.

First Holy Communion will be celebrated on **Saturday 27th April at 10:30am.**

Confirmation will be celebrated on **10th May at 4:00pm**. School will close for all pupils at 1:00pm on this date. We are looking forward to preparing our pupils for the various sacraments and working with you during this preparation process.

**Midterm Break**

Our first part of winter term finishes for pupils on Friday 9th February 2024. School will be closed from Monday 12th to Friday 16th February and will reopen on Monday 19th February.

**Uniforms and coats**

Our school uniform should be worn on the three days your child does not have PE. PE tracksuits should only be worn on the PE days teachers have shared with you already. Please make sure all items of uniform are clearly labelled with your child’s name. As we go through the winter months all pupils should wear a coat to school every day.

**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.

**Bus Lay-by**

Please **DO NOT** park or turn your vehicle in the bus layby 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 help 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 for entering and exiting the church car park. Please show respect and **DO** **NOT** **STOP or wait in the YELLOW BOX** at the top of the car park. This is a major safety risk, and it inhibits our staff, support agencies and other families arriving and leaving on time. Please park in a space to drop your child off and remind your children they should not climb on or over the walls at the Parochial House. Your children’s safety is our top priority!

**School dinners**

**All** school dinners must be booked and paid for through the **online SchoolMoney system.** Families entitled to **free school meals** **must also** use this system to book for the week ahead. All dinner orders must be booked no later than 12:00 midnight. If for any reason you are struggling to log in, please contact us immediately. Please let us know if your mobile number or email address changes by emailing the school at info@stpatricks.hilltown.ni.sch.uk.

**After-School Clubs**

Our extensive variety of after-school activities began last week. Please check the SchoolMoney app for information on dates, times, and cost. Gaelic football for P7 girls and boys and camogie for P6 and P7 girls has been added. Please check the timetable below for date and time. \*Please note Karate for P1-P3 finishes at 2:45pm.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ClubClassTime | MonKarate\*P1-P3 | MonSoccerP2-P3  | MonGirls Gaelic P7 | TuesArt P1&2P4&5 | TuesCamogieIndoorP6&7 | WedBee ActiveP1&2P4 – P7 | WedArtP3P6&7 | ThursSoccerP2&3P4&5 | ThursBoys GaelicP7: 3-4pm  |

**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.

**Age-Appropriate Apps**

Please ensure you are aware of the content of the apps/games your child is using. Check out our Safer School App on the school website, and <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/> for guidance on parent controls and age limits.

**Classroom queries**

If you have any general queries or concerns, please contact the relevant teacher in the first instance, by phoning the office on 028 40630061. Please be aware it may be a few days before they can reply. If the matter is urgent, please state this when calling the office and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

As we embark on another term, we want you to know we are here to support your children and you in any way we can. We hope to have more excursions and trips which we know may add an extra expense to already tight budgets, so if there are occasions when activities or events become a burden, please contact me and we can work together to ensure every child gets the best opportunities in school.

On behalf of the staff and governors I would like to wish you a healthy, joyous, and peaceful 2024.

Kind regards

Geraldine Smith

(Principal)