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**October Newsletter 2023**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It is hard to believe that we are already at the midterm break and fast approaching the winter season. I hope all our families get to enjoy the Hallowe’en break which begins this Friday 27th October with school closing at the usual time and re-opening on Monday 6th November.

**Board of Management**

The current Board of Management will complete its term of office on 30th November. On behalf of everyone in the school community I wish to thank the members of the current board for their voluntary commitment to our school over the last four years. A new Board of Management will take up office on the 1st of December.

The process to establish the new Board is now in motion and this week parents and guardians are asked to cast their vote to elect a father and mother. Ballot papers must be returned by at latest 2pm this Friday 27th October. A count of the votes will take place in the school office at 2.45pm.

The Board undertook its annual review of the school’s Code of Behaviour and Anti-bullying policies at its latest meeting. Both policies are available on the school website. The Board also spent considerable time looking at school finance. Unfortunately, the recent budget did not address the day to day funding of primary schools and the gap between primary and secondary school funding increased from €133 per child to €145 per child for the same day to day costs. With the ending of Covid grants and no decision by the Department of Education with regard to maintenance or ICT funding the financial outlook for primary schools this year is very bleak. In light of this the Board of Management has struggled to agree a budget for this year and has had to reduce a number of services including cleaning and caretaking. Parents are urged to raise this issue with politicians who to date have chosen to ignore all representations made to them.

**Parents Council**

The Parents Council recently held their AGM in the school. Many thanks to the parents who attended on the night and to the other parents who were unable to attend but have offered their support. We wish our Chairperson Sarah Kelly and her committee every success this year. The committee have already been busy and have organised the following:

* School Calendar: The annual school calendar is now sold out. A big thank you to all our sponsors:
	+ GTL Life & Pension Consultants,
	+ Conor Bergin Kitchens & Carpentry,
	+ Walsh Draughting Services,
	+ Sheerans Potatoes,
	+ Treacy’s Bar & Restaurant,
	+ Michael Bowe Heating & Plumbing,
	+ BG Building General,
	+ JJ Tynan Plastering,
	+ Whelans Auto Dismantlers,
	+ Taylor Conroy Osteopaths
	+ JK Autos
	+ The Heath GAA
	+ Dunkeen Oil
	+ Greenfeet Lawncare
	+ Caffe Latte
	+ Carneys Midland Outdoor Equipment
	+ Foamstream Ltd
	+ Clonad GAA Club
	+ The Portlaoise Plaza
	+ Brownes Animal Supplies
	+ Price Waterhouse Cooper
	+ Newell Consulting Engineers

Please support these businesses, the majority of which are owned by parents and local families, whenever you get the opportunity.

* Clothes Collection: A clothes collection will be held on Monday 13th, Tuesday 14th and Wednesday 15th November after the midterm break. Bags can be dropped to the school on any of these days.
* Hallowe’en Disco: All parents should have received a flyer with regard to the Hallowe’en Disco this Friday 27th October in The Heath Hall beside the church. The junior disco for Junior Infants to 2nd is from 6pm – 7.15pm and the senior disco for 3rd to 6th is from 7.30pm – 9.00pm. Entrance is €2.

**Payment for School Resources**

The €80 payment for school resources is now due. The school would be grateful if the small number of outstanding payments could now be paid. If any family has genuine difficulties please contact the school office.

**Team Hope Shoe Box Appeal**

Team Hope are again running their annual Shoe Box appeal which sends Christmas presents to children in developing countries. If you would like to support this appeal you can drop a shoebox with appropriate contents into the school office by Friday 10th November.

**HSE Junior Infant Vaccinations**

A letter will issue to junior infant parents this week from the HSE Vaccination Team with regard to vaccinations for their children. The Vaccination Team intend to visit the school on Friday 10th November to administer the vaccinations. Parents who would like to avail of this opportunity should complete the form, once received, and return to the school. The HSE will provide appointment times for parents and children will go home with their parents after the vaccination.

**Swimming**

Swimming for 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th classes begins after Hallowe’en. The children will swim every Wednesday for six weeks. 1st and 4th class will swim from 11.15 to 12.00 and 2nd & 3rd class will swim from 12.00 to 12.45. Junior infants, senior infants, fifth and sixth classes will swim in the New Year. Parents are reminded that swimming is part of the curriculum and as with all areas of the curriculum all children are expected to participate unless there are medical reasons to prevent them from doing so. Should your child have a medical condition which prevents them from swimming please provide a doctor’s letter to the school before swimming starts. The cost of swimming this year is €50 per pupil which includes transport and entry to the pool. Payment can be made at any stage during the month of November through the school app or at the school office. All pupils will require swimming togs, a swimming hat and a towel. On swimming days children should wear their school tracksuit and smaller children can wear their swimming togs underneath coming to school. Arrangements for infant swimming will be issued in the December newsletter.

**Irish Dancing Classes**

After Hallowe’en Junior Infants, Senior Infants, Fifth and Sixth classes will have an Irish dance class each week for six weeks while our other classes are swimming. 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th will have dance classes after Christmas. As per last year Orla Byrne will teach the classes. Orla is also teaching a class every Friday after school from 2.30 to 3.30 in the school hall. If interested contact Orla on 086-2025906.

**Computer Classes**

Our computer classes with Riomhaire Tech are up and running for 3rd to 6th class. The classes as usual will run for 26 weeks in total. The cost per child is €50 which parents can pay at any stage up until Easter.

**Football**

The Cumann na mBunscol Football leagues are now drawing to a close. Well done to all the boys and girls who participated and sincere thanks to the teachers involved. Our two boys teams are still involved and will play at the finals which will be played after Hallowe’en. Once the date is confirmed it will be sent out on the school app.

A big thank you to The Heath GAA for providing the school with our new football coach, Paul Whelan. Paul has been taking all classes for a football session every week this term and we look forward to working with him for the rest of the year.

**Cross Country**

Cross country races will commence at lunchtimes after Hallowe’en for 1st to 6th classes. There will be one race each week for six weeks with a little distance added each week. We hope that all children will participate and enjoy the runs.

**School Conkers**

The conkers leagues have been running at break-times through October and are now down to the final stages. Well done to all the children who have participated in recent weeks.

**Reading Month**

The month of November is reading month. The school encourages children and parents to get reading for the month. Activities in school will include book swaps, daily challenges, quizzes, an online book fair and paired reading. With regard to the paired reading infant parents will be invited to come in on Thursday mornings from 9.05 – 9.30 to read with their child. Full details of the activities taking place will issue when school re-opens after Hallowe’en.

**School Mass**

Fr. Simon is our new school chaplain. He has visited the school every week and will say mass for the children in 2nd to 6th this Thursday at 10am in the school hall.

**Fancy Dress**

Our annual fancy dress day takes place this Friday 27th October. Children are welcome to wear in a Hallowe’en costume. Children who do not wish to participate should wear their school tracksuit.

In conclusion we wish all our families a relaxing and happy midterm break.