

Piercestown Post March 2020

Welcome to the March edition of our newsletter. Unfortunately, as this newsletter is put together, we do so from the comfort of our own homes and in the discomfort of life as we now know it, full of uncertainty, lack of contact and a frenzied media and social media overload. To try and ground ourselves and keep in contact with our school community and remain united, I continue this newsletter update as if we were together in school. The hope is that it will at least distract us from the 'strangeness' of the present situation and give us a few moments, COVID-19 free, to remind ourselves that we work together as a team in Piercestown N.S. and always with the good of our school community at heart. Even though our month was short (a mere 12 days inclusive of weekends), as usual we packed a lot into this short space of time. So sit back, relax, and from the comfort of your own homes, let's have a look at how March kicked off in our school.



Little Medics Arrived

Monday 2nd March was a hive of activity. As part of Engineers week this year, Little Medics team arrived at our school to prepare some of our future doctors today! Little did we know, how much our health service would come to the fore in a mere matter of days. All junior classes from Miss Sinnott's up to 2nd class, were kitted out in their white coats and provided with the essential tools for the job. The children learned about taking blood pressure, using a real stethoscope, what an x-ray is, what various different parts of the brain are used for and so much more. This learning was further enhanced for the infant classes who had all participated in the theme of the 'Doctor' during Aistear. The children learned how the stethoscope had originated in its most basic form as a rolled-up piece of paper and tracked its evolution through to its appearance today. All children had a chance to role play and learn with each other and from each other. It was a truly wonderful experience by all classes. So the question on everyone's lips is, who will be the doctor from the class of 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017....watch this space!

Zeeko visited – Internet Safety

Internet safety day saw all the children in Piercestown N.S. design invitations for their parents to a parent evening. Not only were the parents being offered education in the area of Internet Safety but so too were the children. Zeeko, lead by Lesa, hosted a series of workshops from 3rd class to 6th class around the whole area of internet safety. The teaching was also based on evidence that the children themselves had provided Zeeko, through the school, in the form of a survey. While we were very close and, in some cases, better than the national norm, there were a few eye opener moments also, not only for the children but so too for the teachers who also participated in CPD after school and indeed at the parent information evening. When we discussed it at assembly later in the week, the children identified their key areas of learning as follows: the T-shirt rule – don't put anything online you wouldn't be proud to wear on a T-shirt; people online are NOT your friends; over 18's is over 18's and children should NOT be playing these games; it is good to have a 'chatbudi' somebody you can confide in; your digital footprint has an impact on your reputation and possibly future employments, travel, visas etc.; the 3 P's - your profile should be on priate setting, never use a picture that identifies you and finally use a STRONG password. Before the end of the year, we hope to host a quiz to reinforce their learning in the hope that the majority of the teaching is internalised. In the meantime, Common Sense Media is an excellent site to check apps and games in terms of age appropriateness.

The DREAMM is still alive...

Assembly on Wednesday 4th March, saw our DREAMM Creative Cluster project continue with gusto. We worked on two songs as a whole school, Scooby dooby dooby doo doo doo doo and the well known Fáilte Isteach, by Wexford songwriter Sue Furlong. Our amazing Students Council added another new song with Lámh to our repertoire, in this case 'You can Count on me' by Bruno Mars. We look forward to performing some of our Lámh songs at future events and posting them on our school website. The aim of our DREAMM is to make singing fun and part of our every day school lives. Research has shown how it enhances both learning and well-being. For the month of March, teachers had been given a DREAMM calendar, to remind them to sing for at least five minutes every day. Our school will be bringing some extra resources in to help us in the coming weeks and we will join our partner schools together on June 10th in Clonard Church at 11am for a project performance. So in the meantime, 'I'm gonna sing, sing, sing.....'!!!

5th class blasted off at the ESB Science Blast 2020

Congratulations to Ms. Farrell, Teresa Roche Murphy, Miss Twomey, Dr. Anna Fenelon for her inspiration and guidance, and finally the most important people, 5th class themselves for an outstanding presentation at the recent Science Blast. They blasted out of bed at an ungodly hour to be at the RDS in time to show case their project. Ironically, the project for 2020 was all about hygiene. 'The Invasion of bacteria - how clean is our school?' was to become a burning issue in the following weeks. We used the expertise of 5th class and had them demonstrate excellent handwashing skills to all the children in Piercestown in our fight against COVID-19. Hopefully, we will reap the rewards of their work in the coming weeks. Congratulations to 5th class and their amazing team. Take a bow. Keep an eye on the blog over the coming weeks as we continue to upload positive events to keep us all going!

Book fair arrived

The book fair arrived on March 6th. There are murmurings about its ability for dramatic events to follow it. In recent years, we have had a storm, a large snowfall and now this crisis!!!!!! The much-loved event however, was a HUGE success with the children chomping at the bit for it to open each morning and afternoon. The PE hall was cordoned off as a reading zone, following on the success of last year, and each class was timetabled for 30 minutes reading a day, chilled out on mats, the floor, with cushions, etc. Miss Sinnott, Ms. Rea and Miss Taylor's class had storytime with Ms. Walsh and incorporated some activity into one of the stories 'Yoga Babies' by Fearne Cotton! As our book fair coincided with Seachtain na Gaeilge, dé Máirt chuaigh gach duine go dtí an halla chun léithoireacht a dhéanamh. Luckily, our school has an array of Irish books and Ms. Hearne had visited the library at the weekend also to ensure we had more than enough material. Once again Ms. Walsh was on hand to 'léigh leabhar mór' to Miss Taylor and Miss Rea's class. To mark World Book Day, a giant quiz from 1st to 6th class took place in the hall where all the questions focused on your knowledge of books! Congratulations to Aaron, James, Eoin, Georgia and Trinity who took first place and all got to choose a free book from our Book Fair! For fun this year, a display was located outside the book fair, where each staff member had to be identified by their favourite books! We had just sent out the 'We are Writers' order forms when the world had different plans. As we were forced to close our doors on Thursday 12th March, we contacted Scholastic to seek reassurance that our authors will indeed be able to avail of their books upon our return. We have been assured that we can order when we go back. In the meantime, while stuck at home, why not go on many an adventure from the comfort of your armchair. In the words of Dr. Seuss, 'You can find magic wherever you look, sit back and relax, all you need is a book'.

Story Telling with Billy Roche

A highlight of the book fair was once again the storytelling evening with the one and only Billy Roche. Billy Roche is a famous author, actor, playwright but more importantly for us in Piercestown, grandfather to Kate, Cora, Lily and Tess. Billy hosted two sessions on the night, one for the juniors who all arrived in their pyjamas with their teddies in tow, and one for the senior classes. He took us on adventures with Rusty the dog and two lucky children won a golden ticket, one at each event. Congratulations to Chloe who will be coming to school in September and Joseph in 4th class who took home the golden ticket and prize of a book voucher for the Wexford Book Centre. Billy, we can't thank you enough. How lucky are we to have someone so great in our midst! Míle buíochas!

SNAG 2020

Seachtain na Gaeilge 2020, while taking place in a week that will go down in history books in years to come, took off with the enthusiasm of every year. There was a competition board for both the junior and senior end of the school inviting children to take part in mini activities as Gaeilge every day. The 'Gadaí Gaeilge' was on the loose each day with the children ag cuardach an gadaí agus ag cur ceist ar gach duine, "An tusa an gadaí gaelach?" Mr. Murphy led a circuit of well known activities from Guess Who to Twister, with all children playing them as Gaeilge. Many classes set up a pictúirlann and rumour had it some were even treated to some 'grán rósta' while they were enjoying some Gaeilge ar an 'teilifís'. The Lá Gaeilge was also the highlight of the week and this year was no exception. While, we had to halve our capacity to facilitate social distancing, every class produced an amazing performance as Gaeilge. From rince gaelach by Miss Sinnott's class, to rang a dó ar an bhfeadóg stáin agus rang a cheathair ag déanamh rapadóireacht, there literally was something for everyone. Check out the blog over the coming days to see footage of the delights to which we were treated. Congratulations to the winners of the junior quiz - Arvin, Tiarnan and Lucia and senior Tráth na gCeist winners – Charlie, Amber, Dylan, Chloe, Tom and Toby. In the wise words of our rappers, "Is fearr Gaeilge briste ná béarla cliste!" A home activity to brush up on the Gaeilge while we are off school would be to look at some cartoons on Cúla4. Bain triail as!

Visit from the Diocesan Team

Wednesday 11th March saw Mr. Brian Doyle from the Diocesan team arrive to Piercestown N.S. Mr Doyle visited both 2nd class and 6th class and was delighted with their efforts to date and preparation towards their upcoming sacraments. Well done to Mrs. Corrigan and 2nd class and Ms. Hearne and 6th class for all their preparation to date.

CPD in the Primary Language Curriculum

Teachers continue to work hard in embracing the new Primary Language Curriculum. Wednesday 11th March saw PDST advisor, Ciara O Reilly visit the school and work with our SET team and the senior classes. Ciara shared lots of resources and ideas with our teachers and was highly complementary of our current practices and commitment to this new curriculum. We look forward to continuing our work with Ciara over the coming months in this area.

Chess success... Masters and Buds are registered and ready to 'make their moves'

Chess has played an important part in Piercestown N.S. for many years. This year we introduced a new plaque as the Cup that has been used in previous years can no longer be engraved. After over 400 games of chess, March saw us crown our in-school chess champion for 2019/2020 and the first to hold our new trophy, our over-all winner for the second year running was Séan Collier. In joint second place were Peter and John Kenny. Our class winners and runners-up were also crowned. In 3rd class we had three silver medallists - Charlie Tenanty, Tommy Codd and Eve Howlin, and receiving his gold medal was John Kenny. In 4th class our bronze medallist was Lisa Crotty, our silver medallist was Sam Scallan and receiving the gold medal was Conor Newport. In 5th class Matthew Philips O'Connor received a bronze medal, Chloe McCluskey silver and Séan Collier gold. In 6th class Jack Feery received his bronze medal, Kevin O' Mahony silver and Peter Kenny gold. A huge congratulations goes to all class winners and runners-up and also to every single child from 3rd to 6th class for the sporting way in which they played their games and for their full participation in this competition. The only remaining question is... can Séan make it three in a row next year?

On the 10th of March the top of our school chess leaderboard travelled to Bunscoil Rís in New Ross to participate in our local ficheall 'Masters' and 'Buds' competition. It proved to be a very successful outing with our Masters team, made up of Séan Collier, Peter Kenny, James Quirke, Kevin O'Mahony, Sarah O'Mahony, Chloe McCluskey, Paddy Walsh and Tadhg O'Leary, narrowly missing out on first place by only half a point. Our 'Buds' team consisting of John Kenny, Eve Howlin, Charlie Tenanty, Sam Scallan, Conor Newport, Tommy Codd, Jack Mernagh and Lisa Crotty went one better and won out their section of the competition. Well done to all for representing our school to such a high standard. Thank you to all the parents that supplied lifts on the day and to Ms. Cooney also for accompanying the children.

And the whistle blew for the throw in!!!

As the Rackard League hurling and camogie season began in March, an army of boys and girls took to the field in preparation for the upcoming battles. We began collective training during lunchtime and after school to prepare for our first competitive outings. The boys' first game was against a gallant and talented Rathangan side in the St. Martin's GAA pitch. Our Rackard League and Rising Stars boys' teams put on an impressive display, showing speed, skill and style, to win their respective games. The girls travelled to Barntown for their first outing and they too proved too strong for their opposition. These wins leave both the boys and girls in a strong position in the group stages. With the unscheduled break, it is important for the boys and girls to continue to practice and hone their skills. This could be done by using the tips found on the hurling 365 website or by following some of our hurling and camogie heroes on social media and completing their challenges, but always in a safe way, in line with current recommendations.

Camogie	Hurling
March 2-6 Rathangan versus Piercestown March 9-13 Piercestown versus Kilmore and Piercestown versus Barntown	March 2-6 Piercestown – BYE March 9-13 Piercestown versus Rathangan March 16-20 Horeswood versus Piercestown

March 16-20 Piercestown versus Castlebridge March 23-27 Piercestown BYE	March 23-27 Cushinstown versus Piercestown March 30-April 3 rd Piercestown versus Glynn
----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Class of the Month – Senior infants (for the second time this year)

Congratulations to senior infants who were the worthy winners of the much-loved Pizza Party, homework pass and certificate of achievement for the month of February. This is the second time this year senior infants have won, proving the authenticity of our reward system. Keep up the good work everyone, there are still a few pizza parties up for grabs for the remainder of the year!

Enrolment for School Year 2020-2021

Piercestown N.S. are now taking enrolments for the school year 2020-2021. For further information, contact the school on piercestownns@gmail.com

Eason's Spelling Bee Competition....and the winner is

Eason's spelling bee is celebrating its 10th anniversary. 5th and 6th class took part in our in-school spelling bee competition on Wednesday 11th March. Twenty-six children from 5th and 6th class took part. After several rounds, there were only two left - Tadhg O'Leary, 6th class and James Quirke, 5th class. But there could only be one winner and that winner was... Tadhg O'Leary, 6th class who was delighted to be crowned the Piercestown Spelling Bee 2020. Tadhg will go on to represent our school at the County Spelling Bee competition. This final has been postponed and we look forward to it taking place when our lives return to 'normal'. Congratulations Tadhg, a title for the CV in the future!

World Down Syndrome Day - March 21st

While we couldn't rock our socks together as planned on Friday 20th as a school community, never to miss an opportunity to celebrate a school related event, some of the staff and their families (and pets) came together, while staying apart, and donned odds socks on Saturday 21st, to share on our website. Maybe some of you at home joined in! If so, feel free to send us a photo through our school email and we will upload it to our blog. To check out our celebration footage go to <https://piercestownns.com/2020/03/21/lots-of-socks-day-2020/>

Epilepsy Day - March 26th

Similarly, we hope to get our purple on this Thursday March 26th to celebrate Epilepsy Awareness Day. Maybe your child could do one of the following purple activities on the day:

- Make a purple handprint
- Do a scavenger hunt and find 10 purple things at home
- Use purple fingerprints to paint a bunch of purple grapes
- Build a purple lego tower
- Make a purple giant out of purple playdoh
- Take the alphabet and list as many words as you can that are associated with the word purple
- The answer is purple. Write 5 possible questions?

If you came up with something else, feel free to email your idea into us as principal@piercestownns.com

Piercestown National School Website has gone live!

Many thanks to Ms. Rea who has transformed our website into a more colourful and user-friendly page. We will continue to work on updating all material over the coming months, but for now we are so happy to use it as a medium to stay connected with our Piercestown school family in these strange times. If you haven't already logged on go to <https://piercestownns.com/> and check out our new look!

A Word from the Principal

Little did we know, when we returned after the February mid-term break the uncertainty that lay ahead. While we watched COVID-19 from a distance and then get closer, we worked as hard as we could to ensure the safety and health of our school community. But alas, this crisis was much bigger than us and unfortunately will go down in history. As I write this newsletter, we are a mixture of hope, fear, anxiety, sadness and uncertainty to name but a few emotions. Our catchphrase from last month's newsletter is now more important than ever, though we must

now preface it with 'Be safe and be kind'. As teachers and parents and a school community we will continue to work together as a team. We will prioritise our children first and foremost. We will complete work on days that we can, and on days when we can't this too shall be ok. We will structure our days in the best way we as individuals can, knowing that each and everyone one of us is on our own journey through this. Let there be no pressure regarding school work. Learning takes place in many formats. Reading, going for walks, baking, playing with lego, watching TG4 are all as valid as any comprehension task / maths activity you may complete.

As teachers once we return, we assure you that we will meet your children wherever they are at in their learning and bring out their best potential as we always do. We will continue to provide material in our efforts to support you and your child as best we can. But be assured we are confident in your decisions and your actions and no judgements on work completed or otherwise will take place. Your mental health and well-being are crucial through this crisis and even though it may not feel like it right now, 'This too shall pass' and in time, the school bell will once again ring and we will be standing there eagerly awaiting your return to journey with you through the recovery of COVID -19. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me on principal@piercestownns.com

*"We are not a team because we work together, we are a team because we respect, trust and care for each other".
(Vala Afshar)*

Here are some dates for your diaries:

- World Autism Day Thursday 2nd of April 2020- Keep an eye on the blog.

At the time of going to our website, our return date has yet to be confirmed, the Dept of Education has issued the following statement:

All schools, pre-schools and further and higher education settings will remain closed to students until 19 April 2020.

As we hear more, we will keep you updated!