

Welcome to the May edition of our newsletter. The summer season has well and truly kicked in and reminds us even more of how much we miss our beautiful school grounds, our friends and our school community. May and June always kicks off the start of our summer fun of school tours, Sports Day, sunny lunchtimes and so much more. But we have to stay positive and make the best of what we can. Here is a look back at what May had in store for us and some updates as we get them.



Holy Communion Day – the original date

Saturday 16th May was supposed to be our Holy Communion date for 2020. Unfortunately, as you all know this was postponed. However, the 2nd class children and their families did not leave the day unmarked. Myself and Mrs. Corrigan were also sent an amazing video from this special group of children and it will live in our memories for a long time to come. We wish to thank all of the children and their families for their involvement. We were delighted to hear of the many ways that the 16th May was marked and we very much look forward to celebrating your new date with you as soon as we can. ******Our proposed date will be discussed at the Board meeting tomorrow night and confirmed by text to the 2nd class parents thereafter and updated on our school blog.**

Confirmation Day- the original date

Again, for 6th class children, May 28th should have been so much more than a day at home. However, the sun shone like never before and thankfully Ms. Hearne had given the day off school work too. I believe the BBQs were dusted off in many households and small social distance gatherings took place. In true Confirmation style, our Class of 2020, showed courage, bravery and understanding during these exceptional times. We continue to liaise with Fr. O'Reilly who is waiting for further information from Bishop's House with regard to rescheduling a date in the coming months. Myself and Fr. O'Reilly assessed the church during the week and feel that a socially distanced event ensuring the health and safety of our Confirmation class is a strong possibility. *****There will be further discussion at tomorrow's Board of Management meeting and consultation with Bishop's House thereafter. As soon as we have a provisional date we will be in touch with the 'Class of 2020'. As always, we thank you for your patience and understanding.**

Survey this Friday May 1st - results

Many thanks to all of those who took the time to complete the questionnaire. We had a response rate of 68% of the overall school population. The collated results of our school survey were as follows:

- 76% of responses felt that distance learning was working for their child ranging from 'fairly well' to 'extremely well'
- 64% of responses felt that distance learning was working for them as a parent ranging from 'fairly well' to 'extremely well'
- 56% of responses felt that their child was able to work independently ranging from 'fairly well' to 'extremely well' – this question is obviously most dependent on age, with the younger classes not able to work on much independently to the older children being capable of working by themselves
- 90.5% of responses found that your child was finding the work set for them each week ranged from 'neither easy nor difficult' to 'very easy'
- 71% of responses stated that on average their child spent from '30 minutes to one hour' up to 'over 2 hours' completing work
- 98% of responses felt that it ranged from 'neither easy nor difficult' to 'very easy to follow' the weekly plan
- Technology posed the following difficulties: Broadband/wifi 13%, accessing website 13%, number of devices 18%, printing 31% and 46% reported no difficulties
- 99% of responses ranged from 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' to 'very satisfied' regarding the range of work subjects and activities being provided
- Finally, regarding how often people were accessing the website for extra material the results were as follows: 79% once a week or less, 16% 1-3 times per week, with 5% accessing it 4 or 5 days. This resulted in a decision by management to reduce the extra material on the website.

Class teachers received their feedback also so any relevant adjustments could be made. Arising out of the survey and parental feedback, you will all have received a letter about a 'change to our work plan' as outlined here too.

Change of work moving forward - includes 'Fun Fridays'

Arising from the feedback we received and as a staff, knowing that June is always a 'different month' in school we wanted to amend our work plans to better suit the children and you their families. We hope that this new approach has eased the burden in even the slightest way. Overall, we aimed to reduce the work from English, Irish and Maths plus one other subject to just focusing on the two core areas of Numeracy and Literacy. This should lessen the workload considerably. This would take place as scheduled for all from Monday – Thursday. And we added in 'Fun Friday' for the last three weeks, Friday 5th focusing on Art, Friday 12th on Physical Activity and Friday 19th focusing on Mindfulness/Well-being.

Lift off for Fun Fridays 5th, 12th and 19th June

Friday 5th June saw 'Fun Friday' kick off with the subject area of art. There were several options available to the children and by lunchtime on Friday many emails had been received and there had even been painted stones left on our school steps! As a staff, this absolutely tugged at our heart strings as to how committed, dedicated and fun loving our school community are. **With the pictures sent in, we will hold a virtual art exhibition on our website, so if you have some photos of your art work don't forget to send them to principal@piercestownns.com. If you have already sent them to your child's teacher there is no need to send again, they will pass them on.**

Big Birthday Shout Outs for May!!

We missed singing and signing to our May students at normal assembly so without further delay we would like to wish the following people a happy birthday: Lauryn and Toddy in Miss Sinnott's class, Bobby and Jack F in Ms. Hearne's class, Matthew in 5th class, Joseph and Mia in 4th class, Tommy in 3rd class, Fionn in Senior infants and Niamh and Jack in Junior infants. We hope you all had a very special day at home celebrating with your families!



*"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!
Happy birthday dear Lauryn, Toddy, Bobby, Jack, Matthew,
Joseph, Mia, Tommy, Fionn, Niamh and Jack!
Happy birthday to you."*

July Provision – Update

Contrary to recent media coverage, the DES have still to make an announcement on July Provision. As of Friday June 5th and the Taoiseach's afternoon statement, we know that a provision for children with special education **has** been agreed, with the Minister to bring suggestions to cabinet early next week. We know that this is of utmost importance to many families within our school community. As soon we have a confirmed update from the DES we will be in touch with all families concerned. An update from IPPN (Irish Primary Principal Network) on June 5th was as follows: ***"The DES expects to present their recommendations to the Minister in the coming days and to have a decision next week. IPPN stressed the urgency of the decision for schools, parents and pupils as well as vital guidance before schools can even consider facilitating provision."***

Re-opening of School

Furthermore, we wish to inform our school community that we as a school have not yet been given any guidelines, bar what the Taoiseach and Minister for Education made at their recent press conferences. Management await further guidelines from the DES and will inform our school community as soon as specific confirmed guidelines have been made available to schools. We can assure you however, we are working very hard behind the scenes and will continue to do so to ensure the smoothest and safest transition back to school for our entire school community. With the acceleration of the phases in lifting of restrictions, we are hopeful that this may bring further good news for schools. Our latest update was that **"the DES were holding a further meeting on 5th June in relation to guidelines for the reopening of schools."**

Draft School Calendar 2020-2021

In preparation for the re-opening of schools, the staff have worked on the school calendar. This draft calendar will be brought to the Board of Management meeting tomorrow night for approval. ***It is of course subject to any decision made by the DES re: re-opening of schools.*** Following ratification from the Board however, we will send this calendar out via email for all parents to have. Many thanks for your co-operation, patience and understanding to date.

On the Blog!!! – Will you be the next face on our blog? <https://piercestownns.com/>

Sharing pictures and photos in order to stay connected has been a key strategy for our school community over the last few months and we continue to do this in the coming weeks. Teachers have worked very hard to update their class blogs from week to week with work samples from the children in their class. We also continue to share pictures and photos on our home page. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed and made our blog so successful over the last few months. Don't forget you can sign up to the blog to receive notifications on posts as they are made so you don't miss a trick!

Class of 2020 – Our Last Month Together.....(officially)

Since our last newsletter, you have continued to zoom, had an 'original' confirmation date, participated in your Transition to Secondary school programme and this week you will be completing your 'All About Me' profile for a graduation booklet. So, while we are missing in action the show is going ahead! Many thanks to Ms. Hearne who has ordered your Graduation Hoodies, and we hope to have them in the next two weeks. From the photos and emails I have seen, you are all in good form and being as courageous as can be! We are very proud of you. We still have another three weeks 'together' so we will be in touch often to keep you informed, as we do our best to give you some of the best memories you deserve! As we said, do not fret, there is plenty of work behind the scenes to ensure that when phases are introduced, we can get back together for a finale event!

Book Rental Returns – we need your help!

On March 12th, as well as work packs, many children were sent home with their book rental books. These are books that are used from year to year in a particular classroom. We upgrade these from year to year and work hard to ensure the most up to date programmes are in place. **In order to be ready for the new school year, book rentals are always gathered up by teachers at the end of the year so that they are ready to go for the start of the new school year.** This year, we want to be as prepared, if not more prepared, due to our extenuating circumstances. **Therefore, we will be contacting parents this month to organise the return of schoolbooks in the safest manner.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are specific guidelines on the return of books, namely:

- All books to be returned in a sealed/tied plastic bag
- All bags to be placed in an area and untouched (in quarantine) for at least 72 hours.
- We will be contacting any classes with book rental books at home and guiding you as to what books and when to return them. We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

We will be in contact with you shortly offering available time slots for the return of the books. Many thanks in advance for helping us with this. We hope to have the hoodies for 6th class available at the time of their book rental return – two birds, one stone as they say!!!

'We are Writers' - Order now!

We have decided in collaboration with Scholastic to progress our orders for the 'We are Writers' book with the hope of getting an order in before the end of the school year. Please see the text which will be sent out early this week. We have a facility to order and pay online. Please read your email for full instructions/directions. If you have a query as to having previously ordered a book please email siobhan@piercestownns.com

Active Week 2020 – winners roll call!!!!!!

'Walk, run, jump or skip COVID-19 didn't make us quit!'

Following on from the success of our Stay at Home Active Week, we wish to announce the winners roll call:

Day	Lunchtime Activity	Daily Challenge	Parent Prize
Monday	Hoopng	TJ Reid Hurling with a toilet roll challenge	

Winners	Mia Whelan Crosbie	Eve Cullen	
Tuesday	Skipping	'Pick up Paper'	'Pick up Paper'
Winners	Leanne Butler	Kelly Power Rianna Gooden	Cathy Fox
Wednesday	Yoga	Plank	Plank
Winners	Lorna Kelly Chloe McCluskey	Conor Newport	Enda Newport
Thursday	Hurling Athletics Challenge	Keepy Uppy	Hurling Athletics challenge
Winners	Amy Power Amy Newport	Charlie Conway	Brendan Roche Suzanne Connolly
Friday	Wellythrow	Slow Bicycle Race	Slow Bicycle Race
Winners	Paddy Walsh	Riley Murphy	Alan McCluskey Declan Walsh

Additional Awards	Funniest video	Micah McMahon
Additional Awards	Best Active School Motto Video	Kiara Lacey
Additional Awards	Most creative video	Abbie Walsh
Additional Awards	Dance Award	O'Mahony Family
Additional Awards	Most committed	Matthew Philips O'Connor

Once again huge thanks to our entire school community for their commitment and participation. It gave a much needed lift to our school community in very difficult times.

Incredible Edible – Senior Infants

Well done to Ms. Rea and her amazing class of Senior Infant boys and girls who have earned Piercestown National School the status of 'School of the Week' on the Incredible Edible website. <https://www.incredibleedibles.ie/>

Check out the incredible edible website to see a video of their wonderful work. They had only just started their project when COVID-19 forced us to close our doors. But Ms/ Rea's class were NOT going to be deterred and they continued their efforts at home reaping the reward of this much deserved title. If we were holding assembly this month, they would be receiving a huge congratulations and BUALADH BOS from us all in person, but as we are not together to do this, I ask that you all give them a virtual clap from home!!! Three cheers for Ms. Rea and her Senior infant class. Hip hip, Hooray! Hip hip Hooray, Hip hip hooray!

School Report Time

School reports are in the final phase of editing and approval. Many thanks to the staff for their hard work and continued commitment and dedication during these difficult times. The report cards are 'different' than other years. We will attach an information letter to parents about the parameters of the reports; the main ones being as follows:

- Teachers are reporting on **your child's progress specifically from Sept – March 12th 2020**
- As per DES guidelines **no standardised test results were to be included** as standardised testing did not take place. The exception of this being 6th class reports, which normally included 2nd, 4th and 6th and this year include 2nd, 4th and 5th class.
- Any assessments included are to be treated with caution due to the school closure
- A COVID-19 box is included to evidence the continuity of education during the school closure
- This year sees SET support during the school closure referenced also

As always, reports will be posted out in advance of the end of the school year. They should land in your homes approximately Mon 22nd / Tues 23rd June. This allows, in accordance with circular 0045/2014, for you to contact your child's class teacher via their professional email address to arrange a phone consultation, should you have any questions or concerns.

Education Passports for 6th class

As 6th class get ready for the transition from primary to secondary, we have some paperwork to organise. A passport is sent from primary to secondary schools, once each individual secondary school confirms in writing your child's enrolment. The passport comprises of three elements, your child's profile form which they complete themselves, the

parent version of your child's profile form filled in by the parents and then the school report. Many thanks to the children and parents for completing these remotely and getting them back to us in these unusual circumstances.

Transition to Secondary School

Well done to all those in 6th class who attended the three zooms dedicated to a programme on the Transition from Primary to Secondary. Thanks to Wexford School Completion for providing some of the material. We hope that all the children took at least one nugget of information from our interactive sessions. Ms. Hearne and I were very impressed with your participation and are confident in your readiness to fly the nest!

Liaison with Secondary schools

In a normal school year, secondary schools would contact primary schools regarding transfer of information. Just to reassure, we do not transfer information without consent. We also wish to reassure you that our professional lines of communication remain open between ourselves and secondary schools in the current situation.

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 If you know of anyone looking for further information or who would like to contact our school they can also email on principal@piercestownns.com

Virtual Board of Management meetings

The next Board meeting is scheduled to take place tomorrow, June 9th. I will update you all with an email of the agreed report thereafter.

A Word from the Principal

On the 12th of March, I never once thought that we wouldn't return together as a school community by the end of this school year. We had so much to do and so much planned, but fate had a different journey for us. And while it was not the ending we hoped for, certainly not for the 'Class of 2020' or our new classes Miss Taylor and Miss Sinnott's, we always look on the positives. As a school community, our teamwork and comradery are to be commended. While for many of us, there were good days and maybe some not so good days, always Piercestown N.S. remained connected and together, and for this I thank you all. And it must be said that this chapter is not over yet, we have the month of June to enjoy and while the official end of school year is June 26th, any outstanding events will be held by hook or by crook over the summer. On this note, I thought the Taoiseach's quote on Friday was most apt,

***"In the end, it's only a passing thing this shadow, even darkness must pass.
A new day will come, and when the sun shines, it'll shine out the clearer." J.R.R. Tolkien***



******On a personal note, I would like to inform you the school community of my own good news, November 2020, fingers crossed, will see a new arrival to my family. With this news announced, I always wish to reassure you that I remain, fully committed to my job as principal and ensuring our smooth and safe return in the new school year. I look forward to seeing you all; you will all be taller, (I will be a little bit bigger) in the coming months! Many thanks for making my job so rewarding even in the hardest of times. It is a privilege to be the principal of a school, and to be the principal of Piercestown N.S. is one of my greatest honours to date.

Here are some dates for your diaries:

- June 9th – Virtual Board of Management Meeting
- June 12th – Physical Activity Day
- June 19th – Mindfulness/Well Being Day
- June 22nd/June 23rd arrival of report cards
- June 26th – end of school year