



*Welcome to the first edition of the Piercestown Post for the new school year 2021- 2022. **The beginning of school year newsletter usually reminds us of the 'housekeeping' procedures at Piercestown National School and if you are a new parent, it may indeed answer some questions that you might have. We attached these on a separate document in an email yesterday, so that they didn't get lost in our news.** We hope that you all had an enjoyable summer despite the strange times we found ourselves in and we look forward to a new safe and productive year ahead.*

Welcome Back!

Welcome back to all the boys and girls. We hope you had a great summer and enjoyed your time off. We have a new school year ahead with lots of different learning activities already in the pipeline. We wish you an enjoyable and successful year with us. Best of luck to our new role models – 6th class, as they begin their last year of primary school. I'm sure they'll make us proud, showing good example to all the younger pupils.

Special welcome to our new pupils

A special word of welcome to all our new pupils. Twenty-eight new Junior Infant pupils started school this year and are already getting settled in. We welcome Bobby, David, Liam, Niamh, Oran, Donnacha, Pippa, Oisín, Ben, Kate, Richard, Reuben, Cara, Savannah, Lexi, Caolán, Eva, Oisín, Anna, Conor, Isaac, Millie, Nora, Daniel, Harry, Nuria, Cian and Joey. We hope you all settle in at Piercestown N.S. and enjoy many happy school years with us. The staff at Piercestown N.S. would also like to take this opportunity to send their best wishes to 6th class of 2020-2021 as they begin their journey in secondary school, especially in these unprecedented times. We also wish to welcome eight new boys and girls into our school, five into Senior Infants, one into 2nd class, 1 into 3rd class and 1 into 4th class. A warm welcome to Maggie, Mark, Holly, Grace, Elodie, Heath, Rogan and Jack .

What happened during Summer 2021

Summer 2021 was once again a summer with a bit of a difference. July 1st saw our new Junior infants to be, arrive to Piercestown to get a 'taster' of what big school had in store before they officially joined us after the summer holidays. Many thanks to Ms. Taylor and Teresa Roche Murphy who were on hand to give the boys and girls a warm welcome. July 2021 also saw our Summer Programme run for the second year and offer three groups of children some additional schooling over the summer holidays. Many thanks to all the staff both internal and external involved in making these three weeks a most enjoyable time for our children.

And despite all of the bad news amidst the pandemic, December 2020 saw Piercestown receive the news that its Summer Works application from 2019 had been approved and a large section of the school would have the roof replaced. With a short turnaround time, it literally was all hands and builders on deck as the roof was taken off, put back on, scaffolding went up, scaffolding went down and literally at the twelfth hour we were ready to re-open our doors on August 30th. Many thanks to the Board of Management for all their efforts. It is through their volunteer work that our school makes such progress from year to year. Special word of thanks to Fr. Aodhán who gave up many of his very few days off to attend site meetings especially in August as we endeavoured to get the project across the line.

Welcome our new staff

A very warm welcome to Mrs. Johanne Larkin who has joined us as a permanent member of staff and is teaching 1st class. Having had Mrs. Larkin in a temporary capacity last year while covering a maternity leave, we are delighted to welcome her on board in an official capacity. We also welcome back Pat Quigley who has returned to join us as a full-time permanent member of our SNA team. Mrs. Tracey Walsh was appointed as a permanent member of staff also. Mrs. Walsh however, was unable to return to work this year and Ms. Pauline Lehane has taken up this position in a temporary capacity. We are delighted to have them on board and look forward to working with them throughout the coming year.

Discovering Drama

Discovery Drama with Olga will take place once again this year. Olga is so excited and reopened her doors to our superstars on Wednesday 22nd September. Classes take place on Wednesday's - Junior and Senior Infants from 2:00 to 2:45, 1st to 3rd classes from 3:15 to 4:15 and 4th to 6th classes from 4:15 to 5:15. As with all involved at Piercestown N.S. Olga has adapted her classes to meet COVID/public health requirements. For further information please contact Olga on 0876858457.

Book bills have been issued

In Piercestown N.S. we recognise that returning to school can be an expensive time for parents and have therefore made every effort to keep costs to a minimum. It is important that all book bills are paid at your earliest convenience. **This year sees Piercestown National School continuing to work with you the parents to make life easier. This week, you will have received your book bill and a link to your payment. You can pay from the comfort of your home/office/wherever you may be!** Should people require extra time or wish to pay bills in instalments we are happy to assist with this, via an option on our epayments system. Full confidentiality is guaranteed.

Homework journals: 1st – 6th classes

Once again the children have received their own personalised homework journal. In previous years, these journals were sponsored by local companies that you would have found advertised in the journal and hence were 'free' for every child in Piercestown N.S. **Due to COVID-19 this was not possible this year and the homework journals cost €2.50 per child.** They contain other useful information such as the school calendar, tables, maps, the food pyramid etc. As outlined in our practices and procedures about absenteeism, this year we are **NOT** using the middle section for absences as we move with technology and use Aladdin Connect. Teachers will also **NOT** be communicating via the written word either as we are reducing unnecessary handling of items that are going between home and school. **Hence, teachers are embracing Aladdin Connect as the 'new' written format.**

Holy Communion

One might have been forgiven for mistaking the 18th of September for a May Day, when the sun shone and the boys and girls of now, 3rd class, gathered in their white dresses and suits for the Sacrament of Holy Communion. While covid had delayed this special occasion, all would agree it was worth the wait. The children were outstanding in their participation in the ceremony and there was a beautiful ambience created by Ms. Sinnott on the low whistle and Dylan's uncle Eduardo on the organ. Special thanks to Mrs. Larkin who was the teacher of 2nd class who completed the journey with the Holy Communion Class by continuing to prepare them in the weeks leading up to it. Thanks also to Mr. Murphy the current class teacher and Pat Quigley for all their hard work in ensuring the children were confident and excited about their special day. Some things are worth the wait!

Confirmation 2021

October 2nd saw the return of the 'Class of 2020/21 for the Sacrament of Confirmation. If there was any sense of apathy due to the wait, it dissipated within moments of the ceremony starting. From music to readings, to poems and gifts and powerful words by Fr. Aodhán reminding us of what it is all about. It was a wonderful occasion and historic in ways. The Class of 2020-2021 will be the only class to be confirmed as past pupils of our school. There was a wonderful atmosphere on the day, enhanced by the musicians Anita and John. It was wonderful to see the class back together again and see how much they have grown in the last few months. Special thanks to Ms. Hearne and Fr. Aodhán who facilitated a mid-week rehearsal to ensure all went smoothly on the day. Parents' Association as always ensured both Holy Communion and Confirmation had that extra special touch with lovely sweet bags on the day for all of the children and their siblings.

Piercestown N.S. team up with St. Martin's for the Walkathon

Our local club, St. Martin's rallied the troops of late for some much-needed funds for their GAA club. In doing so, they decided to extend the hand of generosity to our local school and return €2500 sports equipment for our use. This was a wonderful gesture and opportunity for our school community. To reap this reward, the school were asked to enter a Walkathon team and fund raise €1200. The 'walkathon team' put their heads (and later their feet) together and came up with the idea of a whole school Bingo. They worked hard to find sponsorship for prizes and Ms. Walsh studied

up to become a competent 'Bingo Caller'. On Thursday 23rd, all classes from 1st to 6th class played Bingo over zoom. The excitement was immense as the quality of prizes was amazing. One-line winners received foot golf passes, two line winners received Waffel House vouchers and Book Centre vouchers, with the winners of the full house heading for dinner and bowling (The Coal Bunker and Leisure Max) and shopping and to the cinema (Ken Black vouchers and the Omniplex). There were spot prizes up for grabs throughout the games too. Friday 24th saw Ms. Walsh play Bingo in the Junior infants class, Senior infant class and Ms. Sinnott's class. A full list of our sponsors and winners will be available on the website. Well done to everyone for their support. Rumour has it Ms. Walsh is keeping an eye out for a new job as a Bingo Caller! With the target reached, all that was left was for the 'team of walkers' to hit the track on Saturday morning at 7am! (Photographic evidence to prove!) Many thanks to the team for their part in ensuring our children enjoy the benefits of this generous effort. We are so lucky to have such good links with our local club.

Virtual Bingo, outside gatherings and much more to come

This year we continue to think outside the box and not losing the lovely elements of our school due to changes in circumstances. Last week was virtual Bingo for 1st – 6th class. The children loved seeing each other from class to class. The intercom has been used for announcements including the most recent Class of the Month. We were blessed with the weather when our Camogie Champions arrived allowing us to gather as a whole school socially distanced outside and celebrate their Croke Park heroics. We are committed to keeping the best part of our school going in whatever way we can. Keep an eye on the blog for updates from time to time.

Class of the Month

2021, saw history being made with 6th class winning 'Class of the Month' for the second year in a row. What brilliant role models we have! The winners were announced over the intercom and Friday and 6th class enjoyed a pizza party and movie afternoon as well as having the coveted 'Homework' pass. Keep up the great work!!

COVID champions!

As well as 'Class of the Month' we continue this year with our COVID reward to help us all to remember how to keep ourselves safe during these times. During our school day, we remind ourselves of how to be safe during these COVID times - sanitise our hands, stay in our pods, keep our bubbles separate, line up 1 metre apart, use appropriate coughing and sneezing etiquette and keep our belongings in our baskets. Congratulations to Senior infants who were the worthy winners announced on Friday last.

School Photographer - Image Masters – CHEESE! - 11th November

We have booked our photographers into school for Thursday 11th November to take official individual photos of our newest members of school, Junior Infants. We can in this instance, **while observing all COVID guidelines, allow photos to be taken of Junior Infants pupils with their siblings, if it is wished for this to take place.**

Class photos to happen this year!

Last year, we were unable to take class photos due to restrictions. While restrictions remain the same, we have thought outside the box and come up with a creative way of having class photos taken and capturing these strange historic times. This year, class photos will be taken by using the pod system and designing a contemporary style class photo using photos of the students in their pods. We look forward to this creative approach and seeing the final product hang on our walls. We will remind you all closer to the time so the children can have their best smiles at the ready!

Active School

2021 saw Piercestown N.S. renew its Active School Flag for the second time. In accordance with public health guidelines, most of our activity takes place outdoors at present. GAA coaching and rugby are back up and running and being offered to all classes from Junior infants to 6th class this term. While Rackard league and mini 7s continue to be on hold in the current climate, we have no doubt that Piercestown will manage to remain as active as ever!

Lunchtime League 2021

Twenty-two 6th Class children, ranging from the seasoned hurlers to beginners, have opted to participate in our hurling lunchtime league. Three evenly matched teams have now completed the round robin stages in this fiercely competitive competition, with no more than a goal separating the teams in any of the group matches. One team has already booked their place into the final on goal difference. The remaining two teams will play their semi-final next week, both hoping to secure their place in the final. Well done to all on their talents, sportsmanship and participation. A special well done must go to the inexperienced hurlers, whose talents are progressing every week and without whom a competition like this couldn't fully take place. Our hurling lunchtime league champions will be announced in our next newsletter. Many thanks to our club GPO, Seamus Casey for refereeing these games.

Congratulations Lisa Firman , Lettie Whelan and Ella O'Connor

Congratulations to past pupils Lisa, Lettie and Ella on bringing home the Kay Mills cup. After a nail biting performance versus Armagh, Wexford were worthy winners of the Junior Camogie All Ireland championship. We were privileged to have the girls in to show off the cup, sign autographs and offer some words of inspiration for our future hurlers! Keep an eye on the blog for some snippets of the day.

Games Promotion Officer from St. Martin's – Piercestown N.S. welcomes back Séamus Casey

Piercestown N.S. is delighted to welcome back our GPO, Séamus Casey, to our school. The emphasis is on fundamental movements, helping children to move better as opposed to specific skills development. This will ensure that coaching in this area will take place ALL year. This month sees a new initiative being launched 'Camán Everybody'. An information notice on Camán Everybody will have go home next week with all parents of Junior and Senior infants today. Camán Everybody is a programme aimed at introducing the fundamental skills of hurling from a young age. This will take place annually in Junior infants, but due to covid it was postponed last year, hence 2021 sees us bringing this initiative into Junior and Senior infants. On Tuesday 19th October, Ms. Taylor and Mrs. Ryan's class will receive their camán. All parents have been asked to pay €3 towards the camán but it is being subsidised annually by the Kirby family. Without subsidy this cost would be €5. Going forward the programme will run from Junior infants to 1st class as the camán's are rolled out. Many thanks to the Kirby family for this kind donation. For more information on the contents of the 'Camán Everybody' programme please go to <https://leinstergaa.ie/caman-everybody/>

Curriculum Priority

Last year, at Piercestown N.S. we took a different approach to the use of our SET team in the first month. Due to its success on the ground, we continued this practice for September 2021. They worked in collaboration with our mainstream teachers to establish where children were at in terms of their learning, working together on specific gaps in learning that were identified. We will reassess before Halloween to see if the gaps have narrowed. By the end of September our SET teachers were returning to their adapted SET timetables, incorporating individual children's needs and small groups, as well as continuing to work in class. Our SET team have been assigned specific classes and withdraw pupils for the most part from those classes, to minimise interactions with bubbles. The DES has also allowed for some extra support hours under the CLASS (Covid Learning and Support Scheme) programme, to offer additional support to groups most impacted by COVID closures as the school sees fit. We have upgraded literacy resources with additional graded readers and our staff have upskilled in new initiatives such as Six Bricks to enhance the learning experiences of our children. 2021-2022 like every other year will have new and exciting things to offer. Watch this space!

Parents' Association – Mystery Gift

Our Parents' Association are second to none in their generosity, creativity and new ideas. This week sees a 'Mystery Gift' for each class being presented to the boys and girls and their teachers before midterm. This will be a wonderful opportunity for the class to receive a gift that will enhance their learning experience. Some classes will receive specific sport equipment, others will receive art supplies, others musical equipment and others even some costumes. Keep an eye on the blog for the update. A HUGE thanks to the Parents' Association for this new idea! We simply can't wait!

Date for your diary - Parents' Association AGM Oct 20th 7pm

The **Parents Association AGM will be on Wednesday October 20th @ 7pm at Piercestown National school**. Prior to the meeting we would like to invite parents wishing to take a position on the committee to submit your name and preferred position to Amanda on 087 4419140. We are looking for: Vice Chairperson and a number of new Committee Members. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Halloween Fun COVID style

Our Annual Freaky Friday Walk as a whole school will not be an option this year but never fear, Halloween WILL take place. The children are invited to dress up as they normally would on the last day before midterm (Fri 22nd Oct) and safe Halloween fun will be ensured for all bubbles!!!

A Word from the Principal

It was my privilege to return to school on July 1st and meet all the new infants who were excited about big school. While it was a busy summer, July provision and a summer works programme allowed me settle back into the school environment and plan for the year ahead as we return amidst continued restrictions. It is hard to believe that our children in 1st class have NEVER spent a full year in school and the children in 2nd class haven't spent a full year in school since Junior Infants. However, we are blessed with the work ethic and attitude of our school community, always willing to go the extra mile and find new ideas and supports to continue to get the best holistic education that we can. And 2021-2022 offers glimmers of hope, we can see elements of normality ahead, there is light at the end of this tunnel. We have walked this journey together since 2020 and look forward to completing it as a team with our best foot forward.

"A new school year means new beginnings and new adventures" – Denise Witmer

Dates for your diaries so far this year:

- Maths Week 18th – 22nd October 2021
- Parents' Association AGM 20th October
- Halloween Fun! COVID style Fri 22nd October
- School closes for mid term Mon 25th – 29th Oct inclusive.
- Image Masters 11th Nov
- Science Week 7th-14th November
- Parent teacher meetings dates to be confirmed November 2021 (different format as mentioned in the newsletter)
- Exceptional day closure Nov 26th NCSE
- GAA Coaching continues on Tuesdays for infants to 6th class post midterm