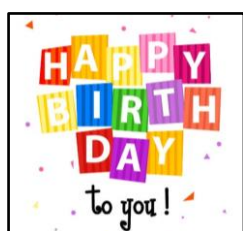




Welcome to the fourth edition of our monthly newsletter. With December completed, we were tired from the busy term but excited for the upcoming festive season! A huge thanks to you the parents, for your support in term one. As the final touches were being put to the newsletter, every member of our school community was looking forward to a well-earned rest, especially the boys and girls who had worked so hard on so many fronts over the last few weeks. We have no doubt, that Santa was going to be a busy man all around Piercestown and further afield, ensuring that all of our pupils were rewarded for their best efforts this year. Why don't you take a few minutes to remind ourselves what December brought to our school before we look ahead to the plans for the New Year 2023!!!

### **Big Birthday Shout Outs - January!**

With the New Year a few days in, we would like to wish the following children a big happy birthday: Fiadh, Eva and Savannah from Junior infants; Caolán, Cian, Joseph and Millie from Senior infants; Holly and Grace from 1<sup>st</sup> class, Síne, Kiefer and Mae from 2<sup>nd</sup> class; Aidan, Katie S and Santiago from 3<sup>rd</sup> class; Harry from 4<sup>th</sup> class and Teegan and Kayla from 6<sup>th</sup> class. We hope you all enjoy your special day!!! Special shout out to our New Year's babies, Síne, Holly and Grace- we hope that your first day of 2023 was as special as you are!



*"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!  
Happy birthday dear Fiadh, Eva, Savannah, Caolán, Cian, Joseph, Millie, Holly, Grace, Síne,  
Kiefer, Mae, Aidan, Katie S,  
Santiago, Harry, Teegan and Kayla  
Happy birthday to you."*

### **BLAST - 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> classes**

As a follow on from last month's newsletter, our BLAST programme kicked off in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of December. Colum Kavanagh, our artist in residence, and comic writer, brought the BLAST programme, Bringing Live Arts to Students and Teachers, to Piercestown NS for the very first time. The children were so enthusiastic, particularly those with a special interest in this area! In the first workshop, Colm introduced the art of comic writing and talked to the children about the different genres and essential elements of storytelling. During the second session, the focus was on character development as he helped the children to come up with interesting ideas for characters. The children were then asked to draw their characters, including any special powers or items they will need in the story and to make notes on their personality. There will be three more sessions this term, Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> and the hope is that by the end of the programme, the children will have produced their very first comic! Rumour has it, one of the first ideas to be brought to a student council meeting will be the option to create a 'Comic Book' Club that could run at lunchtimes!

### **'We are Writers' ....or we will be soon!**

It is 2019 since our last 'We are Writers' book was published. 2023 will see our third ever book. This is a Scholastic production, that allows every child in the school to see a piece of their very own writing, published in a book! We will open a competition for the illustrator of the front cover, with Ms. Walsh giving us all this information at assembly today. The book sample will be available to browse at the annual Book fair, in early March to mark 'World Book Day' with an option for the books to be ordered shortly afterwards. With comic writing and book writing taking place in all the classes, the talent is endless. We have no doubt that the next 'Billy Roche' or 'Colum Kavanagh' is currently part of our school community! How exciting will it be for us to read their first ever published piece in a 'We are Writers' book from Piercestown N.S. in years to come.

### **Open Night 2022**

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> of December saw the return of our Annual Open Night, after going virtual for two years, during the pandemic. While Ms. Walsh was a little nervous, as there was no room for 'edits' with a live audience, she was delighted to be able to welcome people in person into the building and show them what our school is all about. Both

staff and children had worked hard to make sure our school was looking its best, with art displays and videos of the children on in every classroom. Ms. Walsh spoke to the attendees and showed them videos such as “A day in the life of a Junior Infant pupil”, and ‘There’s something for everyone in Piercestown NS’, to give them a flavour of who we are and what we do. But the highlight of the information session was from the children themselves. A team of volunteer pupils from 6<sup>th</sup> class gave speeches which they had written themselves, to tell the ‘real story’ of what goes on in Piercestown N.S. Hats off to them – they did a fantastic job! Congratulations to Teegan, Alex, Gigi, Olivia, Kayla, Rory and Cora for their first official public speaking event. Ms. Walsh was glad that she had gone first as they would have been an impossible act to follow! We congratulated our 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils at our Christmas assembly and gifted them with a selection box as a small token of our appreciation for their PR efforts, but most of all for showcasing themselves as the wonderful children that they are. Their parents deserved to be so proud of them. Many thanks also to the Parents Association who were on hand on the evening to provide refreshments for everybody.

### **Enrolment for the school year 2023 2024**

The deadline for enrolments for the school year 2023-2024 is imminent. For those who could not make the Open night, please do not hesitate to contact us. An appointment can be made and an information pack is also available. Many thanks to those who have already submitted their application forms. You will receive formal confirmation of your place in Piercestown N.S. in the coming weeks. Any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us on 0539158554 or email the office on [piercestownns@gmail.com](mailto:piercestownns@gmail.com)

### **And we were back! Christmas Carol Service 2022**

Anyone passing by St. Martin’s church on the evening of Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> could be forgiven for thinking it was filled with the voices of angels, as the children were singing so sweetly at their Christmas Carol Service. The church was packed and the atmosphere was magical as family and friends were treated to an evening of Christmas music, drama and poetry. Junior Infants made their debut performance with the A to Z of Christmas while Senior Infants, all dressed in their costumes delighted us all with their Nativity play. On the night there were traditional favourites such as Away in a Manger and The First Noel, and more contemporary pieces such as White Winter Hymnal, Do you Hear What I hear and a Frozen Medley. Many parents commented both on the night and afterwards, that for them the highlight of this year’s carol service was the level of inclusivity. Not only were all children from every class taking part on the night, but along with singing, a universal language of Lámh was used for many of our songs. Reference to the challenges that Christmas poses were also acknowledged and in a touching performance, Imagine by John Lennon, by 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class children, awareness of the real difficulties from around the world, particularly in Ukraine were raised on the night. This piece, with its important message, was made more special by the fact that the children were accompanied on the keyboard by Jane Babina, a Ukrainian student who joined our school earlier this year. A huge thank you to Ms. Julie Sinnott, our choir mistress for all her hard work in the run up and for directing the children with such energy and enthusiasm on the night. A huge bualadh bos to the children also, they were amazing! All in all, it was a wonderful night, enjoyed by adults and children alike, and the perfect way to kick off the festive season this Christmas.

### **Ms. Sinnott’s Christmas Trip**

Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December saw the students in Miss Sinnott’s class head off to Santa’s Winter Wonderland in Enniscorthy. They were greeted by elves, helped Mrs. Claus find her lost key and even fed the resident reindeer! Without a doubt, the highlight of the trip was meeting Santa Claus in his magical grotto. Santa knew lots about the boys and girls at Piercestown National School and even checked in on the siblings of students from Miss Sinnott’s class!

### **Picker Pals**

1st Class pupils are taking it in turns to take home the Picker Pal pack and lead their family on a litter picking adventure in their local environment. There has been great excitement around this initiative. When the children return the Picker Pal pack they tell their friends all about their litter picking adventure and talk about the rubbish they have found. The boys and girls are taking their role very seriously. The children are making a real difference on the ground. Thank you to the parents for taking the time out to complete this initiative and for sending in your lovely photos so far. Well done to Mrs. Walsh for taking on this initiative with her class.

### Swimming Success!

Congratulations to Daniel Jordan in 4<sup>th</sup> class, who has been 'making waves' with his swimming progress outside of school. Daniel has been making great achievements at an individual level and will go on to represent Piercestown N.S. at Leinster level, in the coming week, on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> January. In preparation, Daniel has been training extremely hard. To put it into context, he swam 8,150m (363 lengths) this week alone. The whole school will be supporting Daniel and we can't wait to hear how he gets on. He is already a winner in our eyes! Best of luck Daniel!

### Happy New Year - Kicking off the New Year with Resolutions – Healthy Eating

With all the turkey and selection boxes finished, it is time to embrace 2023 with all our renewed energy and set ourselves a few goals. With this in mind, we would like to remind the school community that we are a Health Promoting school and we have a healthy eating policy. Monday to Thursday, all children and staff operate on a healthy eating policy, with Friday being recognised (and celebrated) as 'Treat Day'. **At a staff meeting, pre-Christmas, we revisited our Healthy Eating Policy, and to be fair to all classes, we move forward with our united approach. If children bring a treat to school, Monday to Thursday, they will be asked to bring it home.** We feel a fair approach is the best option for the school community. At assembly today Ms. Walsh spoke to the children about 'Healthy eating' and examples of healthy lunchboxes.

### Recycling initiative by our wonderful Parents' Association – Pre-loved Christmas Jumper and Halloween Costumes Collection

It is the time of year when the decorations and festive clothing is lovingly packed away, or in some cases recycled! The Parents' Association are undertaking a used Christmas Jumper Collection (Adults and Children) and Halloween costume collection. These jumpers/costumes will be collected and recycled next November. Further details as to how/where/to whom these will go will be shared closer to the time. ***The collection will take place from today, Monday January 9<sup>th</sup> to Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2023.*** There will be two black bags one for Christmas gear, and one for Halloween costumes located in each classroom for the week. The children can drop the unwanted jumpers/costumes into the bags. Many thanks to Suzanne who visited school on Friday with the black bags which are in all classes as you read this newsletter. We appreciate you supporting our Recycle, Reuse Green School Initiative.

### Chess

Throughout December, our school hall was buzzing at lunchtimes with all the children from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class participating in our much loved in-school Chess Competition. As we completed round 6 in the run up to Christmas, over 300 games of chess have taken place so far and the competition is really heating up. It was great to hear that chess boards made the Christmas list for many of our pupils and we are looking forward to seeing if their practice over Christmas will pay dividends. The next few weeks will see our Chess champion for the year 2022/2023 crowned, each class will also have class gold, silver and bronze medal winners and the school Ficheall teams picked for the interschool chess competition that takes place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February in Gaelscoil Inis Córthaidh. Regardless of their place on the leader board, it is great to see all of the children enjoy learning the game of chess. At present we have two pupils on the top of the leader board, John Kenny, 6<sup>th</sup> Class and Santiago Fortune, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, and another five pupils within one point of these. With over 50 pupils' names on our chess leader board it is all very much still to play for as we head into the final rounds in January. Who will be crowned champion? It's all very much up for grabs!!

### Sacraments

It will be all systems go for 2<sup>nd</sup> class, Ms. Sinnott's class and 6<sup>th</sup> class in term two and three as they make their journey towards the Sacrament of First Confession, Holy Communion and Confirmation. Preparations have been underway with regular visits to the Church since we returned in September. We look forward to sharing this special occasion with all of the children and staff involved alongside their families and the parish community.

### Class of the Month – 3<sup>rd</sup> Class

Congratulations to Mr. Murphy, Lena and 3<sup>rd</sup> class who had their 'Class of the Month' success confirmed at the last assembly of the school year, on December 21<sup>st</sup>. 3<sup>rd</sup> class and Mr Murphy will look forward to being rewarded with their certificates, pizza party and availing of the 'homework pass' in the coming days.

### **Primary Language Curriculum - additional one day school closure in term three**

In accordance with DES guidance, school closed on 16<sup>th</sup> December to take a half day for staff to participate in Primary Language Curriculum webinars. As per last month's newsletter, the option for two half days each term, or a combined one full day in term three, was to be brought to the Board of Management for a decision. The Dept has confirmed that the webinars will be available after Easter. The Board has sanctioned a full day to be taken in term three. This date will be confirmed this week by text.

### **iPads are on their way - many thanks to the Parents' Association**

As part of our journey to becoming a 'Digital School of Excellence' we are constantly auditing and upgrading our infrastructure. As a result of the wonderful fundraising last year, our Parents Association are in a position to fast forward our purchasing of another half set of iPads to compliment the half set bought at the start of the pandemic. This half set, ensures we now have an up-to-date fully functioning set of iPads for a full class. The Parents' Association were on hand to present the school with the grand sum of €6691.20 to fund the purchase of the iPads! Watch this space for the launch of our new improved sets of iPads in the coming weeks!

### **Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

Eileen Godkin, Wexford Area President, wrote to the school this week, on behalf of the Wexford Area Council of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, to thank all of the school community, for their very generous food donation before Christmas. She noted that 'a little help at the right time can make all the difference'. Well done to all the boys and girls who showed such generosity and kindness especially around the season of Christmas. Many thanks to Siobhán Berry for organising for us to give a little something back to the community.

### **Agreed report from the Board of Management Dec 6<sup>th</sup> 2022**

- The Board of Management wishes Ms. Taylor and her fiancé Shane Byrne all the best in their upcoming nuptials. May they live a long, happy and healthy life together.
- The Board of Management ratifies the updated Admissions Policy in accordance with recent legislation and guidance.
- The Board of Management sanctions the two half day school closures being combined to make a full day closure for Continuing Professional Development of the Primary Language Curriculum. The date will be confirmed early in the new year to give parents as much notice as possible.
- The Board congratulates all of the staff, parents and children on a very successful first term in school.
- The Board of Management congratulates Ms. Hearne and all the pupils from 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class who participated in the lunchtime league, with the winners being presented with the 'Daithí Waters Cup.'
- The Board of Management wishes to congratulate Ms. Hearne and the girls football team on reaching the Rackard league Roinn A football final.
- The Board of Management sanctions the use of Parent Association funds for the purchase of another half set (16) iPads to upgrade a full class set.
- The Board of Management wishes the entire school community a happy and peaceful Christmas.
- The Board of Management looks forward to the return of the Christmas Carol service 2022.
- Next Board of Management meeting is confirmed for 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

### **A Word from the Principal**

With term one over, it is time for a well-earned rest. But time off also allows an opportunity for reflection. Reflecting on term one, is not difficult. 2022 has brought us back to the pre pandemic norm with the bonus of some of the best practices, that we learned along the way! Within our school community, 2022 has shared some sad moments, as well as some uplifting moments. We move forward into a New Year as we always do, with hope, excitement and renewed energy as to how to strive to create further new opportunities for everyone in our school community. Sadly, we lose two pupils who are relocating. We wish Michaela and Leon the best of luck in their new school and thank them for being part of our school community. Each pupil, staff and family member adds something unique to our school community and makes us the great team that we are! We look forward to 6<sup>th</sup> class pupils making their mark over the

next few months as they get ready to fly the nest, we look forward to meeting our new pupils for 2023 2024 and we look forward to working together to continue to make lots of memories from now until June! As we are about all things 'writing' this term, I will finish on a New Year's quote by Brad Paisley:

*"1<sup>st</sup> January is the first blank page of a 365 page book. Let's write a good one!"*

**Dates for your diaries so far this year:**

- Today is Mindful Monday Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 2023
- GAA coaching continues with hurling on Tuesdays (from Jan 17<sup>th</sup>) until Feb 14<sup>th</sup> (then changes to Mondays)
- Rugby begins for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class on Thursdays from Jan 12<sup>th</sup>
- Junior infants immunisation programme Thursday Jan 19<sup>th</sup>
- BLAST programme 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class, 13<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> Jan
- Catholic Schools Week Jan 29<sup>th</sup>-Feb 4<sup>th</sup>
- School closed for public holiday for St. Brigid's Day Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb
- Gymnastics for 6 weeks on Tuesdays from Feb 14<sup>th</sup>
- 3<sup>rd</sup> class swimming lessons to begin on Feb 24<sup>th</sup> – info to follow
- Rugby begins for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> class on Thursdays from Jan 12<sup>th</sup>
- School is closed for midterm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (First Confession) 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023