

Welcome to the fifth edition of our monthly newsletter. With the New Year upon us, we had a nice pep in our step ready to embrace the resolutions and face the activities and teaching and learning that lay ahead. January may have felt like a long month, but with the amount of teaching and learning that was packed into this month alone, the time was needed. Having survived the first month of the year, which can often be a hard one, why don't you take a few minutes to sit back and relax and hear what we got up to!



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

It is time for the February birthday shout outs and we would like to wish the following children a big happy birthday: Reeve, Kate K., Ruán and Ben from Junior infants; Mark, Tyler and Noah from 1<sup>st</sup> class; Lorna, Hollie and Zoe from 2<sup>nd</sup> class; Chloe, Eoin D., Annie, Luca, Emily and James from 3<sup>rd</sup> class; Emily and Meabh from 4<sup>th</sup> class and Rory, Fionn, Amy and Arvin from 6<sup>th</sup> class. We hope you all enjoy your special day!!!



*"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!  
Happy birthday dear Reeve, Kate, Ruán, Ben, Mark, Tyler, Noah, Hollie, Zoe, Lorna, Chloe,  
Eoin, Annie, Luca, Emily, James, Emily, Meabh, Rory, Fionn, Amy and Arvin  
Happy birthday to you."*

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

Following three more workshops with Colum Kavanagh, our BLAST experience has almost come to an end. It has to be said, that the enthusiasm for this project was exceptional with the children eager to complete their work so diligently and move to the next phase of development of their comics with every workshop. Thumbnails were finished last Friday, marking the end of the planning stage. Work has now begun on the final stage, drawing out the comic pages themselves, with the children really taking their time and making the effort to put everything they have learned with Colum to good use. It will be a while yet before they are finished but be assured, they will be worth waiting for! Many thanks to Ms Taylor, Mrs Corrigan and Ms Hearne for embracing this project and we look forward to seeing the final product. Colum was so complimentary of the school and in particular, the classes and teachers involved in the project. He has promised to do his best to pop back out when the final drafts are complete. Many thanks to Wexford Education Centre for funding this project. We literally had a 'BLAST' and would highly recommend this project for other schools should they have an interest in comic writing as we did!

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

The final countdown is on and the competition deadline for the illustrator of our cover has arrived. The adjudication process will take place soon and we will announce the illustrator of this year's 'We are Writers' cover. The children are so excited about seeing their pieces of writing in print. Many thanks to the entire staff for their contribution and efforts in helping the children to get their thoughts onto paper in all classes. Thanks also to the parents who assisted the inputting process online. We appreciate that this may have taken some time, but we hope it also gave you an insight into the creative writing process that your child was participating in. We can't wait to see the sample arrive. Keep your eyes peeled for our posters that will be coming soon to promote our book!!

### **Swimming Success**

Congratulations to Daniel who recently put Piercestown National School on the map for swimming. Daniel's training regime had him in top form as he entered the Leinster Championship on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> January. The week prior to the competition saw Daniel swim an impressive 8,150m (363 lengths) in one week alone! All roads led to the National Aquatic Centre for Daniel and his family on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>. Not only did Daniel smash his personal best, but he rocketed home in 2<sup>nd</sup> place with the 'backstroke.' Congratulations to Daniel, the whole school is so proud of his achievement. Dare we say we have the next Michael Phelps in the mix? As the phrase goes, 'Watch this space' – we don't think we have seen the last of Daniel's success just yet.

### **Rackard League Handball 2023**

Congratulations to Annemarie Butler and Abbie Walsh who represented the school so well in their recent participation in the Rackard League Handball school's competition. They won on the day securing themselves a place in the next round – Leinster Championship which takes place today!! Best of luck ladies, we can't wait to hear how it goes!! While the boys did not secure the win the following day, nonetheless their participation in the event was well noted. Well done to Jack O'Hanlon, Sam Walsh and Eoin Walsh for representing the boys of Piercestown so well. Many thanks to Mick Lyng for all his work in handball in the local community.

### **Rugby returned – Tag Rugby tournament**

Tag rugby with Graham Barry returned to our school from the second week in January. This is open to classes from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> and all classes are really enjoying it. To add to the competitive edge and make it more exciting, a tag rugby blitz takes place on Friday February 10<sup>th</sup> in the Wexford Wanderers pitch, where the children in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class will take on schools in Wexford. Many thanks to Ms Hearne and Mrs Corrigan for their participation in this much enjoyed event.

### **Gymnastics to begin 14<sup>th</sup> February**

The children are literally counting down to February 14<sup>th</sup>, specifically for the return of the gymnastics coaches. Having not had gymnastics in school since 2020, the return of these expert coaches is very welcome. It also facilitates the teachers to upskill in the area of gymnastics so that they can feel comfortable and confident in teaching this strand of the Physical Education curriculum going forward. We look forward to welcoming the coach, Tommy Mahony, from Gymstars back into the building where he will host 6 weeks of gymnastics classes for all class levels, with the exception of 3<sup>rd</sup> class who will be embracing the aquatics strand and beginning swimming lessons on February 24<sup>th</sup>.

### **Swimming 3<sup>rd</sup> class**

Having prioritised classes last year who had missed swimming lessons during covid, we are now back on track with our whole school physical Education Policy, which sees 3<sup>rd</sup> class pupils attend a block of swimming lessons as part of the curriculum. Starting on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 3<sup>rd</sup> class will head off to the Maldron to take part in swimming lessons. A note will be sent home in the coming week with all of the finer details, costings and so forth. The children are looking forward to getting into the pool with their school friends and fine tuning their swimming skillset!

### **Hurling returned with Séamus Casey**

GAA coaching returned and this term sees the focus on hurling. All classes from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> are required to have hurleys and helmets. Junior infants are eagerly awaiting the arrival of their 'camáns' so that they can get stuck into the Camán Everybody programme that was launched in October 2022! For more information go to <https://leinstergaa.ie/caman-everybody/>

### **Credit Union Quiz Returns – January 29<sup>th</sup>**

We were delighted to give a big shout out to our two teams who were heading off to Enniscorthy on January 29<sup>th</sup> to take part in the much-enjoyed Credit Union Schools Table Quiz. Having been put through their paces in class quizzes, the following students qualified for the under 11 team; Joe Campbell, Jack Cadogan, Rogan Sunter and Charlie Devereux. Representing the under 13 team were Jack Sunter, Joseph Collier, Olivia Ponzi and Cillian Mooney! Well done to Olivia putting the girls on the map! They represented the school really well, finishing in the upper end of the leaderboard. Well done to all for their participation and to the parents for driving and attending on the day.

### **Say Yes to Languages!!**

This year sees us embrace another new venture, this time having successfully applied for the 'Say Yes to Language Module' sanctioned by the Department of Education and Skills last May. Having been approved, we were delighted to source an amazing tutor, Montse Walsh, a native of Spain to bring Spanish into the building. Once again, this is a 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class project (they are very busy classes this month!!) and will see the children taking part in a block of 8 weeks of Spanish lessons. The lessons kicked off on January 18<sup>th</sup> with the focus during the first lesson on how language connects us all. The children are extremely quick to pick up the new vocabulary and already they have learned colours and numbers in Spanish. A fun approach is being adopted with lots of games and activities, and the children have been

thoroughly enjoying the teaching and learning involved. Many thanks to Montse for giving her expertise and time to our school. It is wonderful to have a native speaker to help us immerse in another language.

### **Chess – Interschool Competition Awaits**

Our in-school chess competition continued at full swing throughout January, drawing to a tensely contested close this week. The best thing about this competition has been the buzz of excitement throughout the school at the mention of chess, with some of our junior and senior infants even ‘practising their moves’ during afterschool! Every child from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> class participated fully, playing at least nine competitive games of chess and every one of them delighted with their personal progress. All now enjoy a game of chess and agree that they are definitely better chess players at the end of this competition than they were before it began back in November. What a fun way to develop their thinking and problem solving skills!

After more than 500 games of chess we are now preparing in school to crown our Chess Champion for 2022/2023 and to announce our gold, silver and bronze medal winners in each class. It was a tightly run affair and even took a tiebreaker to separate the two people at the very top of our leader board. We will announce these winners in our next newsletter, after we hold a prizegiving ceremony. In school Ficheall teams were also picked to represent our school in an inter-school competition next Thursday the 2<sup>nd</sup> February in Gaelscoil Enniscorthy. Many play-offs were needed to finalise these teams. The Buds team from 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class is Meabh Ahern, Rogan Sunter, Tiarnán Quigley, Daniel Jordan, Santiago Fortune, Eoin Durnan, Donagh McGee and Jack O’ Hanlon. The Masters team from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class is John Kenny, Charlie Tenanty, Tommy Codd, Luke Kelly, Arvin Boodhoo, Fionn Wilson, Joseph Collier and Jack Sunter. Well done to all for making their respective teams and best of luck in this competition. For everyone else, just because our chess competition draws to a close it isn’t the end of chess being played in our school. For the month of February our chess club will continue in the PE hall every Thursday at lunchtime and each class will continue at times to ‘brush up on their moves’ playing games within their classrooms. Many thanks to Ms Hearne for organising chess within our school and encouraging the children’s interest in this fantastic game.

### **Sacraments**

It will be all systems go for 2<sup>nd</sup> class and Ms Sinnott’s class this month as they make the final preparations for the Sacrament of Reconciliation on March 8<sup>th</sup>. We will be in touch in the coming weeks as we make our way towards this event, which forms an important part of our journey towards the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

### **Class of the Month**

The month of January has been a long one and so too has the competition for Class of the Month. Our final score will be taken this Friday, February 3<sup>rd</sup> and the winner of ‘Class of the Month’ for the first month of 2023 will be revealed at our assembly on Tuesday, February 7<sup>th</sup> as Monday 6<sup>th</sup> is a bank holiday!

### **Aldi Schools Rugby Poster 2023**

Aldi offers schools a chance to win €50,000 and ten schools a chance to win €5,000 towards developing their sports facilities. As in previous years, The Aldi Play Rugby Sticker Competition (Aldi Play Rugby) is now back in action. The competition commenced on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January and will finish on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April. If you shop in Aldi, don’t forget to collect your vouchers and send them in to school. The Aldi Rugby poster is on display opposite the school office in the reception area. The children are busy adding their stickers daily. As soon as the poster is full, Ms. Walsh will be quick to fill in the form and return the poster by submitting a photograph so that we are entered into the competition. For more information on the competition go to: <https://www.aldi.ie/playrugby-terms>

Thanks in advance for all your help. Check out our photos to see how quick off the mark we were! <https://piercestownns.com/> Hot off the press, Ms. Walsh already submitted one photo of a complete poster last week and the children are busy filling out second poster!!

### **Catholic Schools Week 2023**

With an original misprint of dates on the diocesan calendar, Catholic school’s week landed one week earlier than we originally anticipated. Nevertheless, resources were in situ and the children took part in some nice reflective activities.

6<sup>th</sup> class attended mass during the week, with many other classes holding informal prayer services. The themes of walking together in faith, love, hope, transforming our world and celebrating grandparents (and other special people) were celebrated around the school. We decided to postpone our Special persons day, that has been a tradition in 6<sup>th</sup> class, for a few weeks to give the children time to enjoy it fully, as between BLAST, Spanish and We are Writers we had a very tight schedule! Watch this space for an update.

### **Primary Language Curriculum – Confirmation of school closure date in term three**

In accordance with DES guidance and following discussion with the Board of Management, a decision was made to combine the half day school closure in term two, with the half day school closure in term three to make one full day closure. This date was voted upon and communicated via Aladdin. School will be closed for professional development in the area of the Primary Language Curriculum on Friday May 12<sup>th</sup> 2023. We will remind you coming up to the week of this also. Many thanks as always for your understanding and co-operation.

### **iPads upgrade - Staff and Pupils delighted!**

The Digital world has taken a massive leap in Piercestown National School in the last two weeks. Along with having a new improved set of iPads, where all iPads are of equal quality and connectivity, we now have taken internet safety and the whole class teaching and learning with iPads up a gear. Having brought the apple classroom into the school, we are now in full control of all activities, apps and progress from the top of the classroom via the teacher iPad! This has improved teaching and learning no end! There is now no limit to the work that can be done. Special word of thanks to Ms Sinnott, our IT guru, who demonstrated the use of this new approach to all class levels so all teachers including the SET team could access these approaches. We are now able to redistribute the 'older' iPads for other uses within the school to meet individual needs and to be deployed into SET settings. Keep an eye on the blog in the coming weeks for our thank you video to the Parents' Association. Without their Trojan efforts of fundraising, we could not have made this further step towards becoming a 'Digital school'. We look forward to continuing on our journey as we make our way towards 'Internet Safety Day 2023' which takes place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

### **Agreed report from the Board of Management Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2023**

- The Board of Management would like to wish the school community a Happy New Year and look forward to continuing their work in supporting the school community in the year 2023
- The Board of Management wish to thank the Parents' Association for financing another 16 iPads
- The Board of Management wish to congratulate the school on the Carol Service 2022 (the last Board meeting was before this had taken place!)
- The Board of Management wish to thank Ms Hearne and commend the school on keeping the tradition of chess alive and wish the Masters and the Bud team the best of luck in their upcoming tournament
- The Board of Management wish to commend the school on their participation in several new initiatives at the minute, namely the BLAST programme, 'We are Writers' and Say Yes to Languages
- The Board of Management will hold the next Board meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023

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

January may have felt like a long month to many, but it needed to be long at Piercestown National School for all that the children were involved in. From the BLAST programme to Spanish lessons and 'We are Writers', the buzz around the building in the first few weeks has been palpable. Such was the enthusiasm for the BLAST programme, a query was put to Ms. Walsh about how to go about getting the Artist in Residence, Colum, to continue coming to us even when the project had ended. Junior infants are growing up fast and it is hard to believe that we will bid the 'Class of 2022 2023' farewell in the near future! It is the enthusiasm of the classes and the staff, that makes the days, weeks and months so enjoyable. For you the parents, the pace of the New Year kicks off too, with chess tournaments, table quiz and Handball tournaments, to name but a few. Often, we go through the motions surviving from one end of a manic week to the next, but when we do pause (if possible) let us take the time to remind ourselves how grateful our children are and will be, for all that we do and continue to do for them. Times have changed and while some elements are easier, there is no denying the pace of life can make many elements harder. But our goal as parents and educators is a shared one, a vision that we can create the best opportunities for our children that will make them the adults that they will become in the future. And for all of this effort, on behalf of the staff and Board of Management, we thank

you for working with us and sharing this vision together. We can't wait to see final comics, final books and much more of the activities and teaching and learning that lies ahead in the coming months! Watch this space!

*"When parents and teacher work together well, everyone wins!"*

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

- GAA coaching continues with hurling on Tuesdays (from Jan 17<sup>th</sup>) until Feb 14<sup>th</sup> (then changes to Mondays)
- Ficheall Tournament Thurs 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023
- School closed for public holiday for St. Brigid's Day Monday 6<sup>th</sup> Feb
- Safer Internet Day Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2023
- Tag rugby Blitz for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class Thursday February 10<sup>th</sup>
- 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
- School is closed for midterm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> and Friday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2023
- Scholastic Bookfair will arrive to the school on 2<sup>nd</sup> March to the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (First Confession) 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023