

Piercestown Post December 2023

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Piercestown Post for the school year 2023-2024. December in Piercestown hit great heights with festive fever. It is not cliché to say that around children, it literally is 'the most wonderful time of the year', which needs to be embraced. From classrooms under elf surveillance, to carol service rehearsals in full flight, active schools leading the way to our next flag, arts, crafts, and all things festive AND we even managed to fit in other teaching and learning in between. Hopefully, the break will have offered everyone some recovery time from all the excitement in the lead up. With New Year upon us, why not take a few minutes 'me time' and look back to see what your children were up to inside the walls of Piercestown National School this December.



Modular Update – nearly there!!!

With December upon us, and our original deadline for completion/handover, Ms Walsh was waiting with bated breath. We have reached the finishing stages, but we have to await approval from the DES and handover of insurances etc. The project manager and the team arrived on Thursday 14th December to complete the final stages of their paperwork for submission. Unfortunately, as the holiday season was upon us, the turnaround time for the completion of the paperwork and hence the right to occupy the building is delayed. The DES has granted us two more weeks rental of our local community hall when we return to school on January 8th. Many thanks to Knockingall Community Centre. We will issue an update within the first week and hope to have the transition made soon after our return from Christmas. We will of course prepare all the children for any such transitions in advance of them happening. Many thanks to you all for your patience and understanding. The interim plan has been successful with all classes settling back into school with a high standard of facilities after the summer. 6th class have assured us that their first term in 6th class was made even more enjoyable and memorable with their different location! Variety is the spice of life as the saying goes! Many thanks to the staff and you the parents and pupils for their flexibility. We look forward to the New Year and the new beginnings this will bring.

Wellbeing and Nutrition talk – 2nd to 6th class

It might have been the festive season, but FRESH today were on hand on December 6th with nutritionist Kiara Donegan to give talks to all classes from 2nd to 6th class on nutrition and well-being. Kiara not only offered insight into how to achieve healthier lifestyles and make healthier choices, but she was also able to relate her theory to the children's own lives and her life to offer guidance for their choices in the future. Kiara fully supported our 'healthy eating policy and treat day' and offered sound rationale as to why good choices are better for the future. Often, as parents or teachers, our advice can seem disappointing, but advice from an outsider with good examples always goes down well with the children. The children were quick to remind some of the staff to not avail of too many caffeine related products! This may be included in some of our 'new year's resolutions'.

Crest Updatenearly there

December's assembly was the unveiling of the draft of our crest to the pupils. As you will now all be aware, our draft was shared with all stakeholders from parents to staff to Board of Management and the pupils themselves. Many thanks to everyone who took the time to submit their feedback to us. All feedback was taken on board for further discussion at student council level and with the design company and our final crest was delivered via email on December 22nd! We have now moved to the jersey design phase. Our student council members Donagh, Aoibhinn, Sean and Kelly, Izzie and Meabh are currently working with two companies on 'designing' the jersey on which our crest will be placed. When we return, the jersey choices as submitted by the students' council, will go to our pupils and wider community for vote. The New Year will see our new crest and new jersey completed in the coming weeks! How exciting! We cannot wait for this launch. We feel our crest will give us our identity and uniqueness that we treasure in Piercestown NS. Once again, thanks to our PA and students' council who fundraised for this design and purchase!

Class of the Month December 2023

At the time of breaking up for holidays, Ms. Walsh had collected the last scores for December and all will be revealed when we return after the Christmas break! Who will be the winner of the next 'Class of the Month' award?! Watch this space!

Christmas Carol Service – Dec 13th 7pm in St Martin's Church

Our much-loved annual event took place in St. Martin's Church at 7pm on Wednesday, December 13th and it did not disappoint. The church was literally packed to the rafters and every inch of space on the altar was utilised. A huge thank you to Fr Aodhan who supported our preparation for this event, down to removing the altar in a temporary capacity for comfort levels. The service proved to be a resounding success on many levels, enjoyment wise, taking time of the busyness of the season wise and an opportunity to remind us of what the festive season is all about. Inclusivity remained at the forefront of our ethos with much lámh used throughout, all classes involved at levels accessible to them, and the addition of our Ukrainian community and the performance of 'Carol of the Bell's' was very touching. We hope that you enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed rehearsing and participating in it. Huge thanks to Ms Sinnott who gave it her all to help our school pull off yet another 'showstopper' performance! Special shout out to Junior infants for their first performance at our carol service, to Ms Sheehan's class for acting out the 'Story of Christmas' narrated by 6th class and to 6th class for their participation in their last ever carol service! It is nights like this that live in the memories of both staff and teachers for years to come.

Festive Fever in Ms Sinnott's and Ms Hearne's classes

On an enchanting Monday 18th December, the combined forces of Ms. Hearne and Ms. Sinnott's classes embarked on a festive expedition to the North Pole, cleverly disguised as Enniscorthy. Their arrival was met with the delightful presence of Elf Angie, a mischievous and vivacious elf (whom we are sure is one of Santa's favourites). A lively disco unfolded, featuring the iconic Minnie and Mickey Mouse, followed by an awe-inspiring visit to Santa's grotto. The day reached its zenith with a bubbly celebration and an exclusive glimpse into the sleeping quarters of the hardworking elves. The students even caught a sneak peek into the workshop where the magic of crafting our presents comes to life. Undoubtedly, it stands as an unforgettable and extraordinary day for all involved!

Enrolment for the school year 2024 2025 – Open Night Jan 24th 7pm

New year and new enrolments for the next school year officially opened on December 4th. Our Open night will take place on January 24th, 2024, in our school. Come along to hear what our school has to offer. We will be excited to showcase our new modular on the night too, all going to plan. For further information go to our website www.piercestownns.com and click on policy and admissions policy. Alternatively, call the office on 0539158854.

Sporting update from Mr Murphy

In an action-packed month, our school witnessed thrilling moments in the Gaelic football lunchtime league finals. A damp start to the game didn't hold back from some super scores and excellent teamwork before the rest of the school got out to watch the second half. St Martins emerged victorious in a high-scoring showdown against the Shelmaliers, adding excitement to the field with special guest referee just home from Australia Barry O'Connor. Many thanks to Mr Murphy for taking the baton from Ms Hearne and running the lunchtime league this year. Thanks to 6th class who officiated at matches throughout the league to ensure all was above board. Congratulations once again to the victorious St. Martin's team who lifted the 'Daithi Waters' cup. Lunchtime league is a wonderful opportunity to allow all our pupils to participate, with or without experience. Both teams in the final received medals for their efforts! We are looking forward to hurling season in the New Year and the hurling lunchtime league to see who the team will be to lift the 'George O'Connor Cup'.

Active Schools Update- renewal for 2024

Embracing an active spirit this Christmas week, we embarked on the "12 Days of Fitmas" challenge on Monday, infusing our classes with energy and enthusiasm. The following days featured lively dance exercises set to music, promoting both fitness and festive joy led by our amazing and enthusiastic active school team.

Highlighting the holiday cheer, the entire school joined in a merry Santa Dash, where laughter and Christmas music filled the air as we circled the pitch. These engaging activities not only celebrated physical well-being but also fostered a sense of community and joy among our school.

The Active Committee have been flat out this year and this will go towards the renewal of our flag. We received word on December 23rd that our flag is due to expire in 6 months and an invitation to renew our Active Flag School Status. With an array of activity under our belt every month since we returned, we have no doubt that this renewal is on the cards. Fingers crossed for continued success as we head towards our third Active School Flag at Piercestown N.S.

FRESH today – 365 Hurling Skills Challenge Competition ‘The Pick Up’and the winner is....

FRESH TODAY, who deliver our snack service in Piercestown NS, teamed up with Wexford GAA and offered a skills hurling challenge for all 365 hurling schools. The competition was open to 5th and 6th class to partake in a challenge. The challenge was as follows: Line of Cones 4 metres apart 8 balls along the middle. Player Runs, Jabs Lifts Ball, carries past line of cones. Turn, run and jab another ball. Repeat till all balls are removed from the middle. Player who completes the task in the fastest time is the winner. The winner from each school would be invited to a training session with the Wexford hurlers! Congratulations to Seán Power in 6th class for his success in this activity. We can't wait to hear all about his prize!

Rackard League Handball

Following on from a successful outing in the handball Rackard League competition last year and in liaison with Micheal Lyng and the St. Martins handball club it was decided to run off a competition where every child from 3rd to 6th, whether members of the handball club or not, could put their names forward to take part in the competition to choose those who go forward to represent our school. On Saturday the 9th and the 16th of December the St. Martin handball club, held a tournament for all those wishing to participate with the winners going forward to represent the school in the singles competition and the 2nd and 3rd place representing the school in the doubles competition. As this is a Rackard League competition this is also done in conjunction with Murrintown school. There was a girls and a boys under 11 and under 13 competition. At present the girls competition has concluded with the winners still to be announced and the final of the boys' competition is due to take place this Saturday the 6th of January. Good luck to the 9 boys from Piercestown NS who are still in with a chance of being chosen to represent our school in the Rackard League handball. We look forward to announcing the winners in our next newsletter and in following their progress as the winners go forward to represent our school. Many thanks to Mick Lyng and the St. Martins handball club for running this competition.

Hurling 365 Piercestown NS style coming in the New Year

As outlined in last month's newsletter, with the absence of GAA coaching during school time, our staff have put their heads together to create their own plan to get us back up and running for hurling season post-Christmas. With an enthusiastic staff committed to continuing the good work evident at Rackard league, Rising Stars and Mini 7s level, our staff have decided to offer our own version of Hurling 365. ***Our hurling 365 will involve offering hurling sessions on our own fields before school starts in the mornings. We will offer sessions for the junior end of the school and separate days for senior end of the schools. More info to follow.*** Our 365 hurling team are looking forward to getting this new initiative for our school up and running and continuing to promote GAA within our school and local community. We will have an update for you when we return next week and assess the building site in school and the return of our play spaces. Many thanks for your patience.

Hot meals update – Making of lunches to be a thing of the past!

The tendering process is underway in the last number of weeks for the hot meals scheme. All going to plan, this term from January to Easter should be the last term for many parents making lunches the night before or morning of going to school!! We will be sending all information once the tender process is complete and as always we will ask for your patience as we take on another new initiative in Piercestown N.S. With any process, the first few weeks are always trial and error, but we have no doubt that this will be a major success for our school and a game changer for many households!

Cost of Living Grant – Circular 0001/2024

The first circular of the new year issued to schools on January 2nd, 2024, brings good news for schools and parents alike. The Dept has issued schools with a once off 'cost of living grant' to help schools navigate their way financially through increased day to day running costs and heating in particular. All information is available by going to circular 0001/2024 on the DES website. Like last year, the idea behind this grant, is that schools are now asked not to request voluntary contributions that in previous years were essential to support the school in their day to day running costs. On behalf of the Board, I would therefore like to confirm that for the school year 2023 -2024, the school will NOT be asking parents for voluntary contributions. Many thanks to families who over the years have been able to support us in times of need and continue to do so via the support for many of our school fundraising events.

World Book Fair 2024 - Coming soon End of Feb/Start of March

The much-loved book fair will return to our school at the end of February/ early March. Believe it or believe it not, our book fair is due to land on the extra day of the year, February 29th! Following the end of the pandemic, we were delighted to return to normal and open our book fair to the public last year. This usually runs over a few mornings before school and our wonderful Parents' Association support us in holding an evening event to cater for working parents. Last year, saw the wonderful Mr Billy Roche host a story telling event on our evening book fair. In the last few years, when our book fair is here, we work hard to promote it during the school day to further promote reading, by hosting a design a book cover door competition, world book day quizzes and so forth to create momentum for all things book related during this week! We will update you in the next week or so with the finer details.

Chess Competition Update

Our annual in-school chess competition is in full swing. Who will be the second name on the Eamonn Barrett Chess trophy and write their name in Piercestown NS history books. We have just completed round 5 of this competition and currently have 4 students on maximum points and another 13 only a point behind. It is all very much still to play for with over 70 pupils on our updated leaderboard. Up to Christmas we have hosted over 250 competitive games of chess as well as many more practice games. It is great to see every child from 3rd to 6th class take place in this much-loved competition. Medal places in every class is still very much up for a grabs with fierce competition as to who will be the chosen 8 for the buds (3rd and 4th Class) and the masters (5th and 6th class) to represent the school in the fícheall competition later in the year. It is great to see all the children hone their chess skills from the absolute beginners to the game to those who have been practising for years. What a fun and engaging way for all to improve their problem solving and critical thinking skills. We are told that chess boards have made many a Christmas list and we look forward to resuming our competition after the Christmas break and maybe the Christmas practise will pay off for some. Remember "You may learn much more from a game you lose than a game you win" – Jose Capablanca

Big Birthday Shout Outs - January!

We would like to wish the following children a big happy birthday: Saoirse and Jack B from Junior infants; Fiadh, Eva and Savannah from Senior Infants; Caolán, Joey, Cian and Millie from 1st class; Holly and Grace from 2nd class; Síne, Mae and Kiefer from 3rd class; Aidan, Katie S. and Santiago from 4th class; Harry from 5th class;. We hope you all enjoy your special day!!!



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

Elections for the Board of Management 2023-2027 update

Following on from the completion of the election process, the new six members held their first meeting on December 11th to elect two community nominees. The community members elected and happy to take up their voluntary role on the Board of Management are Mrs. Brigid Cadogan and Mr. Pat Murphy. We really appreciate both members coming on Board. We look forward to working together and following on from the wonderful work of our last Board over the last four years. In accordance with the guidelines, the first meeting should be held within one calendar month of the Board being put together. Therefore, the official meeting of the new Board is scheduled to take place next Tues January 9th 2024.

Condolences

The Board of Management and staff of Piercestown NS would like to offer their heartfelt condolences to Mrs Corrigan on the recent loss of her father at the start of the New Year. Our deepest sympathy to Mrs Corrigan and all the Davitt family. We are thinking of you at this very difficult time. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

Reminder re Primary Maths Curriculum Training – School closure confirmed March 7th 2024

As flagged in our previous newsletters, we have been awaiting confirmation of the school closure date for the Primary Maths Curriculum training for teaching staff. This closure has been confirmed just on January 3rd by email and will take place on **Thursday 7th March**. This is World book day hence our World Book day celebrations will take place the day previously on March 6th. School will NOT be open on this **day (Thurs March 7th)** for pupils as all staff are required to attend training in the Wexford Education Centre on this date. Many thanks for your co-operation. We look forward to seeing what the new primary maths curriculum entails and bringing any new learning to our school.

Sacraments

2024 will be an exciting year for 2nd class who will continue their preparation towards the sacrament of reconciliation (date to be confirmed) and their first Holy Communion on Sat 25th May. This is an exciting time in the parish and school community. Friday 10th of May will see pupils from 6th class make their Sacrament of Confirmation. Many thanks to Fr. Aodhán and Ms Farrell, Lena and Mr Murphy who continue to support the children in their preparation and journeys towards these celebrations.

Catholic Schools Week Sun 21st-Sat 27th Jan 2024

In supporting our school ethos, Catholic schools' week will be supported from Sun 21st-Sat 27th. As part of the ethos of our schools, we are also supportive of other faiths and none and this will continue to be supported during this week.

Piercestown Parents' Association Update – New Year Clear Outs

At their last meeting before the Christmas holidays, the idea of recycling of clothes was revisited. Last year, we had our 'Cash for Clothes' collection. This year a few other ideas such as a 'pop up shop' are being explored. One such idea, is a pop-up shop for 'gently worn' sports clothing such as sportswear, jerseys, football boots, runners, helmets, hurls and so forth. So, if you are currently in the mood for a clear out, clear out those closets but hold your fire until next week when we will receive an update from our wonderful Piercestown Parents' Association as to what donations are requested. Watch this space but let the clear outs begin! Many thanks as always for your support.

A Word from the Principal

Hopefully, the Christmas break offered our school community an opportunity to enjoy some down time, some family time and to recharge the batteries after a very busy, and successful term one. As we enter the new year, new opportunities will arise. As a school we are looking forward to the completion of the modular. Ms Sinnott's class will look forward to moving into their new room, we look forward to 6th class returning on site. Ms Hearne and her team look forward to returning to their much-loved original space. 6th class will prepare to fly the nest and set their sights on the next chapter in their lives! We hope to renew our Active schools. We look forward to designing our own jersey set and the launch of our new crest! We look forward to the new Maths curriculum! We look forward to seeing what new building ventures will arise! So instead of thinking of a new year's resolution, my hope is that we continue our journey of growth and learning together as we always do. New year's bring new opportunities and new opportunities offer further experiences for teaching, learning, growth and memory making!

"We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day" – Edith Lovejoy Pierce

Dates for your diaries so far this year:

- School will reopen for the second term on January 8th 2024
- Mindful Monday Jan 8th will offer us a good start to the New Year!
- Open Night for Piercestown NS 2024 Jan 24th at 7pm
- Catholic schools Week celebrated from Sunday 21st – Saturday 27th January
- Public holiday school closure Monday 5th February (St. Brigid's Day)
- Pancake Tuesday 13th February
- Midterm break School will be closed on February 15th and 16th (Thurs and Fri)
- School closure for pupils for Primary Maths Curriculum March 7th 2023

- Book Fair due to arrive Feb 29th (TBC) until March 7th 2023
- World Book Day Thurs 7th March (celebration of this day will be marked on Wed 6th due to school closure above)
- First Confession – TBC
- Confirmation – Friday 10th May 2024
- First Communion – Saturday 25th May 2024