

Housekeeping Notes for a New School Year 2024-2025

Welcome to Piercestown N.S. Please find documented, a summary of our 'housekeeping' issues, that may be new to you, or reminders of our best practice.

Supervision before and after school

As always, in accordance with Allianz our school insurance company, the school yard will be supervised from 9.10am-9.20am in the morning. This now involves the front and back of the school to facilitate the safe entrance and exit system we have established for all classes. Work over the summer 2020 as covid required, ensured that each class has a zone for their 'bubble' that keeps each class as safe as can be. While we no longer refer to these as 'bubbles', we found that designated spaces lead to a safer and calmer arrival system.

School finishes at 3.00pm each day for 1st to 6th class and 2pm for Junior and Senior Infants. Infant classes are collected by parents from their exit doors. Senior infants have already embraced their independence and make their way around the back of the school themselves!

The school yard at the end of the day will be supervised from 3.00pm-3.10pm in the afternoon.

Parents who wish to have their children escorted home should make arrangements to meet them at the gate and the person to escort them should be at the school no later than 3.00pm. For the purposes of health and safety of all children, parents are asked to remind their children that they are only permitted on the grounds in front of the school during this time. Any child not collected at 3pm is reminded to wait in their designated zone. **After 3.10pm the school cannot accept responsibility for children on the grounds** unless they are engaged in an extra-curricular activity approved by the school.

*****As Discovery Drama has now relocated for the 3pm class to Knockingall Community Centre, to facilitate the expansion of Sunny Days after school, the children for the 3pm class meet at the school reception at 3pm and the school extends its duty of care and supervision to ensure that the children are crossed safely across the road to Olga and Andrew.***

Morning and Afternoon Zones and Procedures

To ensure safe entry for everyone into the school building, all children now have a designated zone for their class. They can chat to their friends in the mornings and have some fun in their zones. However, when the bell rings they line up and when collected by their teacher enter the school building. Junior Infant class is an exception to this rule, where their parents accompany them to their door.

On rainy days, the doors will be opened at 9.10am, children will enter through their 'usual' door and those who normally go around the back of the school are invited to come through the front door to avoid getting wet and supervision will take place inside. This cannot happen prior to 9.10am as the children would not be insured. A huge thanks to staff who, as a gesture of goodwill, make themselves available from 9:10 onwards on these mornings so the children do not have to stand outside in the rain if they have arrived a few minutes early.

Designated bus set down area

The Board of Management requests that the Bus Set Down area is always kept free. We understand that the morning time is very busy, however, now having three buses, this is more important than ever for health and safety of all children. In the morning, the set down area is used by the bus for our two ASD classes. In the afternoon, both the large bus for school and the two smaller buses require access at both 2pm and 3pm. We have staggered the bus departure times to facilitate this. Therefore, it is imperative that the area is free to ensure the safety of our pupils. On other occasions, there may

be excursions during the week and the bus set down area may be required also. We thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Sunny Days - before and after school care

Sunny Days Breakfast Club and After School Club operate breakfast and afterschool club. Sunny Days have expanded their business this year and now utilise both the school PE hall and Knockingall Community Centre to cater for more families. Places however are still limited. For bookings and/or enquiries please contact **Debbie on 089-2277151**. For further information, check out Sunny Days After School Facebook page.

Discovering Drama with Olga Conway

We are very fortunate that a privately run, after school Drama Club, has operated out of our school every Wednesday for the last number of years. Discovering Drama, under the direction of Olga Conway, offers opportunities for children from Junior infants to 6th class to participate in weekly Drama lessons. The Junior inf/senior infant class is currently full but there are spaces in the other ages groups should you wish to secure a place for your child. For further information, please contact Olga on 087-6858457 or visit www.discoveringdrama.ie. As mentioned earlier, the Jun and senior infants class runs in the PE hall, but to facilitate the expansion of the Sunny Days afterschool service, the 3pm and 4pm class have now moved across the road to Knockingall Community Centre. The school will ensure all children for the 3pm class travel safely across the road.

Teacher appointments to be made through office

At Piercestown N.S., we pride ourselves in our welcoming ethos in the school. We have always had an 'open door' policy and welcome input from parents regarding the children in our classes. In recent years, we have introduced Aladdin Connect, where we can have a 'virtual open door'. Our teachers consciously make the effort to connect with you by sending a message at the start of the week. They tick 'allow replies' so that if you need to contact them for any reason e.g. change of who is collecting, a dentist appointment, a child who didn't do homework etc. you can reply to this message. As always, you can contact us directly through the office also on 0539158854 or piercestownns@gmail.com. Should you require a longer meeting with a teacher, this can be organised through the office. While we are always happy to speak briefly, our duty of care is with the class once 9.20am arrives and therefore we cannot direct our full attention to a meeting during the working school day.

Communication for Parents – Aladdin Connect

One of the most effective methods of communication for the school has been text-a-parent. **2020 however, saw us upgrade to use Aladdin Connect.** As you will all be aware by now, Aladdin Connect is an app that is downloadable on all phones. It allows you to update absences, communicate with your class teacher, make payments, schedule PT meetings giving permissions and so on. This reduces the amount of paper transferring between home and school. This also supports our efforts as a 'Green School'.

Should you have changed your mobile number or email address or emergency contact numbers, please log into your Aladdin Connect app and update this.

We also communicate on the school's webpage <https://piercestownns.com/> and we issue a monthly newsletter that will now be sent home via Aladdin Connect. The school can also be contacted by phone at 053 91 58854 or by email at piercestownns@gmail.com

Aladdin Connect for absences

Absent notes

In accordance with legal requirements, children should attend school regularly. Under section 21 of the Education Welfare Act 2000, **the Board of Management is required to submit an Annual Attendance Record with details of students who have been absent for 20 days or more.** A note of

explanation is required when a child is absent. This is now to be completed through Aladdin Connect and not through the old system of writing a note in the homework journal. **If for any reason, your child is collected early or brought to school later than normal, just buzz the door at reception and they will be signed in and out by Siobhán or Laura in the office.** We appreciate your co-operation with this matter.

Parent Teacher Meetings November 2024

Each year, we earmark November for this event, with the dates to be confirmed. PT meetings for the most part place in person this year. We did however take note of feedback from a parental survey where the option of a phone call parent teacher meeting was identified as a positive for some parents. We will explore this option further before making any decision around Parent Teacher meetings. Last year, you were able to schedule your meeting time through the Aladdin Connect app and this will be the format that we will once again use this year. We look forward to meeting/speaking with you and working to the best of our ability as a team to ensure your child reaches their potential and is happy at school.

Paperwork - POD/ Admin of medicines *New enrolments*****

At times, there will information that is required by the Primary Online Database from the Dept. of Education. If we are missing information, we will contact you by email.

Last year we were asked to request everyone's Eircode. We would appreciate your co-operation with this regard. You can add your Eircode on the Aladdin Connect app.

We will do the same if your child requires medication or has any health concerns and follow this up with any relevant paperwork that may be required.

Garda vetting for parents - Appeal

We value parents as partners in education and parental involvement is welcomed and encouraged in our school, e.g. parents often accompany classes on school trips, participate in some learning experiences e.g. literacy lift off, Maths stations, reading, travel to swimming lessons or matches. All those who volunteer must be garda vetted under legislation by the Dept. of Education and Skills. **For further information and/or a garda vetting form please contact the school office.** Many thanks to all those who have already completed their garda vetting. As garda vetting expires for all volunteers every three years, we are once again inviting parents to be garda vetted. If you are unsure if your previous garda vetting is still valid, please contact the office and we will be able to clarify this for you. **If you wish to be garda vetted, please ring the school on 053 9158854 and we will guide you through the process.**

Nut Free School

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of children developing anaphylaxis allergies (from nuts). All areas of society such as aeroplanes, restaurants etc. are taking measures to ensure the safety of all their customers, clients, staff etc. The Board of Management at Piercestown National School therefore **introduced the banning of nuts** in our school as we too have children in the school with anaphylaxis allergies. Piercestown N.S. has been a **'Nut Free School'** since 2014. The ban refers to the physical nut such as peanuts, monkey nuts, cashew nuts etc. The use of Nutella can also be extremely dangerous for children with an anaphylaxis allergy, so it is advised that people use alternative chocolate spreads without the nut content. The decision was made for health and safety reasons, to minimise the danger of an anaphylaxis reaction taking place in our school. We thank you for your co-operation in this matter. The health and safety of all of the children and staff at Piercestown N.S. is our priority.

Health Promoting School

Piercestown N.S. is a recognised Health Promoting School. This initiative ties in nicely with our other policies and practices, e.g. active school, healthy eating policy and Mindful Mondays. **Mindful Mondays will continue on the first Monday of every month - usual homework is suspended in favour of activities that encourage quality, screen free time with family. In the event of a bank holiday Monday, this will move to 'Tranquil Tuesday' that week.** In today's busy world it is more important than ever to promote the mental health and well-being of all. Now more than ever, we continue to work as a team to promote the Health of all in our school - physical, emotional, mental and social, during these unprecedented times.

Healthy Eating Policy – Treat Friday

We would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone of our Healthy Eating Policy in school. **We encourage all children to eat healthy lunches every day in school.** Reminder that Friday (or Fri-yay) as it is known in some classes is our 'treat' day. All other days, we do our best to comply with a healthy lunch policy.

As we are a Green School, children are encouraged to take their papers/wrappers etc. home in their lunch boxes.

Hot Meals

We were delighted to be sanctioned the hot meals service since last Easter. The deadline for changing orders each week is Thursday 6pm. We do our best to remind you weekly. If you wish to change order, query meals etc. you can contact Freshtoday directly on wexford@FreshToday.ie

New Staff

We are delighted to welcome new staff as well as new pupils this year. We welcome back Ms. Walsh from leave. We welcome back Ms Lyttleton in a fulltime capacity. We welcome back Ms. Roche and Ms Sheehan. We are delighted to welcome Becky Furlong to our SNA team to work alongside Pat Quigley in a job share capacity. We welcome back Ms Cooney who works part time with us as an EAL teacher. This year we also welcome Mr. O' Keeffe who is a teacher from Taggart who works parttime in our school as an SET teacher.

Website www.piercestownns.com

As many of you will be aware, we have our own school website. The home page is a blog style, where we try to update on whole school events. Under the heading blog, there is a drop-down menu where teachers add information about their class. Over the coming weeks, teachers will update this page.

Allianz Pupil Insurance

Last week, you will have received an email/ e-payment request about Pupil Insurance. This is an optional payment for parents. All details for this were communicated in an email with a letter attached. The deadline for payment was **11th September 2024 however if people missed this they can contact the office on Monday 16th September as the final date.**

With all the housekeeping information set out above, I would like to warmly welcome you all back. We have a very happy school, where our building is filled with fun, laughter, and lots of learning. Our usual newsletter, The 'Piercestown Post', is much more light-hearted, and in it we share with you what takes place from month to month within our building! Already, there is so much happening. Congratulations to our amazing Junior infants, new pupils and staff who have settled in so well.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are looking forward to a wonderful new school year 2024-2025.

“A new school year means new beginnings, new adventures and new challenges. The slate is clean, and anything can happen” – Denise Witmer