



Welcome to the third edition of the Piercestown Post for the school year 2024 – 2025. We have hit the ground running since we returned after midterm with Science Week, return of tin whistle, full carol service preparation and much more. The dark evenings are upon us, but the magic of December is about to descend. So, if you have a few minutes before the festive fever begins, why not catch up with us over a cuppa! Enjoy!

Science Week 2024

Science Week was a whirlwind of discovery and excitement in our school! From science quizzes that challenged the minds of both our junior and senior pupils to engaging at-home STEM challenges with prizes for participation, everyone had a chance to dive into the wonders of science. The week was filled with hands-on learning at our vibrant science fairs, where students showcased experiments and explored fascinating concepts. A special highlight was the visits from parents who shared their expertise, offering inspiring insights into various scientific fields. It was a fantastic celebration of curiosity and learning, leaving everyone eager to explore even more!

One such parent, Sam Jordan, Daniel's father, an engineer, visited 4th, 5th and 6th class to share his expertise on electricity. Through engaging demonstrations, Sam taught students about the principles of electricity and how it powers our daily lives. His visit sparked curiosity and inspired many students to explore the world of engineering and science further. We would like to thank Sam for imparting some of his knowledge to us and his son Daniel for his creation that formed part of the demonstration! Well done, Daniel!

A thank you also to Siobhan Marcus, Mum to Emmet, Eve, Cara and Íde who gave up her time to come and talk to classes during Science Week. In her role as Dietician, Siobhán spoke to the children about healthy eating and the importance of making healthy choices. Siobhan provided the children with hands-on learning opportunities, by giving each child cereal boxes in order to discuss and compare the nutritional value of some familiar brands. Thanks to Siobhán for sharing her knowledge on such an important topic.

Reptile Visit

A friendly email from a junior infant parent ensured that the entire school benefited from the generous actions of Ms. Walsh who kindly arranged for the National Reptile Zoo to visit all the boys and girls in Piercestown National School. The junior end got to meet some scaly friends during science week and the senior end waited patiently, having heard they could meet some unusual reptiles up close and personal, until the 26th of November. They were greeted by giant snails and slithering snakes, to mention but a few. The knowledgeable keepers shared their expertise with us and many questions were asked! Perhaps a reptile or two has now been added to some of the Christmas lists!

What happened on the day -

- A zoo-keeper / educator from the NRZ visited our school with a range of animals, from giant pythons to lizards, tortoises and snails!
- Classes ran for over an hour based on the workshop selected and the children got close and personal to many of the animals (check out the blog for all the action shots)
- A unique learning experience which will last a lifetime was had by all
- Fully licensed and insured, all sessions were carried out by trained professionals (did you know that under the European Zoo Directive, that any organisation using exotic animals for shows or education, must hold a Zoo Licence?)

Have a read of what one 5th class pupils and Student Council members reported after their visit

The National Reptile came to visit our school. They brought some very cool animals. There were snakes, turtles and even some lizards. Each animal was unique. We met a Cornsnake called Popcorn – he was a carnivore – he only eats meat. We met John, a Snake Necked Turtle and Barry who was a Blue Tongued Skink which is a type of lizard. The way that he moved was so cool – he slithered across the table. It was great to see all the reptiles at school. I saw some very funny faces as children in my class touched them. The texture of each animal was so different. Thank you to all the teachers and the National Reptile Zoo for bringing the really cool reptiles to our school, it was an amazing experience.

By Emily Cooper

Junior Achievement Climate Change and You Programme

Fourth class recently had the opportunity to participate in the Junior Achievement Ireland programme, with Meave, Callum's mam, visiting to lead an insightful session on Climate Change. This engaging programme provided students with valuable opportunities to connect what they've been learning in class to real-world issues. Through interactive discussions and activities, the programme empowered students to think critically about climate change and understand how their actions can make a difference. It was a fantastic experience that helped bring classroom lessons to life and inspired students to become more environmentally conscious. Fourth class would like to thank Meave for all her work leading this programme.

Picker Pals 2024

1st Class received their Picker Pal pack this month. Through engaging and fun character-led songs, stories and educational world this programme equips and motivates children, alongside their families, to go on litter-picking adventures in their locality. Picker Pals gives young people the tools and positive motivation to develop stewardship of their local environments. The children are taking their environmental role very seriously and are looking forward to taking action and making a real difference in their local environments. Each week the children will take home their pack and go on their litter-picking adventure. They will report back to the class about where they went and what they found. I can already see some enthusiastic advocates for our Green School Committee in years to come. Thank you to the parents for their support with this initiative at home.

Literacy Lift Off

Since our return in November Senior Infants have been even more of a hive of activity than usual. Literacy Lift Off (LLO) is a very successful intervention that we run annually in our school in senior infants, in collaboration with our Special Education team. With all the preparation put in before midterm break, we were ready to kick off straight away on our return. This intervention runs for an hour a day, four days a week, for a five-week period and is focused on five specific areas of the children's literacy development: Phonics, Phonological Awareness, Handwriting, Sight words and Reading. Many thanks to Ms. Roche, Mr. Furlong, Ms Sinnott, Bryan and Tash and the SET team of Ms. Caldicott, Mrs. Newport, Mrs Corrigan and Mrs. Ryan and Ms. Walsh, who have ensured the continued successful running of this initiative. The difference such interventions make for all children in a class is huge. The children are working extremely hard and they should be so proud of their progress.

Parent Teacher Meetings 2024

Many thanks to everyone for participating in our recent parent teacher meetings. It is always lovely to touch base as it is by working together that we achieve the best outcomes for our children. We as a school pride ourselves on developing positive working relationship with our parent community. Ms. Walsh will follow up with all staff this week and any further follow ups or actions will be completed in the coming weeks. As always, if you have any concern about your child, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Class of the Month November 2024

Following the completion of a busy first half term, there were now many close contenders for November's 'class of the month'! The children are always excited to win the coveted homework pass and pizza party as well as seeing their class photo on the wall! With each class having identified their specific target at assembly, there was emphasis on kindness, teamwork and hard work! And following the announcement at assembly this morning, we are delighted to announce, with less than a full term under their belts, Mrs. Larkin and Junior infants were the lucky winners! Huge congratulations!

Join Us for a Magical Evening! 🎄 – Our Christmas Carol service

The festive spirit is in full swing at Piercestown National School as our students and staff get ready for this year's annual carol service. We warmly invite you to share in the joy and music on December 17th at St. Martin's Church, Piercestown at 7pm. You will receive an email closer to the time with the finer details. On the night all the children (except Senior Infants) will be asked to wear Christmas jumpers/colours, without going to any extra expense. The children will all be located on the altar to allow as much space in the church as possible for you, the school community to join us. It can also be viewed live on the church webcam. The sound of carol singing is already infecting our corridors and with our musical maestro Ms Sinnott leading this service you are in for an evening to treasure, nothing spells Christmas like the sound of children singing, acting and enjoying themselves. Don't miss this special evening filled with fun, laughter, and festive cheer! We can't wait to see you there!

Enrolment for the school year 2024 2025 has opened

It is hard to believe but enrolment for the next school year has officially opened on November 18th. Application for admissions will close on 3rd February 2025. Our Open night will take place on January 15th at 7pm in our school, we will send you a reminder closer to the date. This is a great opportunity to come along to hear what our school has to offer. For further information go to our website www.piercestownns.com and click on policy and admissions policy. Alternatively, call the office on 0539158854.

Daithi Waters Lunchtime league:

Over the past two months, our school was buzzing with excitement as our lunchtime league Gaelic football competition brought energy and enthusiasm to lunchtime. Organized and refereed by our dedicated 6th class pupils, the league saw eight teams and over seventy children taking part, showcasing fantastic sportsmanship and skill. It was tremendous to see kids who play and do not play with the club enjoy the competition and getting out and enjoying their football. The grand final was a nail-biting affair, with Team 5 emerging victorious by the narrowest of margins – a single goal – to claim the coveted Daithí Waters Cup. We were delighted to have Daithí Waters himself on hand to referee the final, adding an extra layer of excitement and inspiration for our young players. Congratulations to all involved for making this such a memorable event and we cannot wait until the hurling in the spring.

FRESH today – 365 Hurling Skills Challenge Competition for 3rd and 4th Class

Our Hurling 365 school team were delighted to begin the Fresh Today Hurling skills competition with 3rd and 4th class. With some amazing prizes on offer for the overall winner in the county (a family trip to Center Parcs) the excitement was palpable in these classes. The first skill – the high catch was demonstrated on video by our very own Rory O'Connor and it was obvious when it came to the school competition part that plenty of practice had taken place at home, with some students scoring very high scores from their six attempts. Skill 2 – ball control has been sent to all pupils and we are giving them an extra weekend to get more practice in before we hold our school competition of this Monday and Tuesday. The Club have kindly given us some sliotars and club socks that we can use to reward some of the participants throughout the competition and to ensure we can continue to have so many people participate during all six skills.

County Final Champions 2024!!

We are the Champions rang through the hallways and the school was awash with the colours of maroon and white as we welcomed out own local heroes, the local St. Martins hurling senior team and county champions, back into the building on Tuesday the 5th of November. With over twenty past pupils on the panel, it was lovely to welcome them back and hear their words of wisdom to their excited young supporters. Many of them had sat there in the audience as we welcomed back teams in the past and now *they* were bringing the RJ Bowe Cup back to their local school. It was the fifth time in the Clubs history to be crowned county champions, with many in the audience hoping that in their sporting future they'll get to return to our school as a sporting hero!!! The cheers got all the louder when the team captain, Conor Firman, got up to give his words of wisdom and announced that in celebration the whole school had the rest the week off homework, this was met with surprise by all, even Ms Walsh!!!! The team then took time out to visit each classroom for photographs and to sign some memorabilia. A huge thank you to the team, their management and club officials for helping us enjoy this special occasion with them.

Rackard League Handball Tournament

In conjunction with the school, St. Martin's Handball club are running a Handball tournament. This tournament has two age groups, under 11 boys and girls and under 13 boys and girls for children from 4th to 6th class. The 1st place singles winner will play in Rackard league handball tournament 2024 and 2nd and 3rd place will play doubles in the Rackard league handball tournament. Round 1 took place on Saturday the 23rd of November with round 2 having taken place last Saturday the 30th of November. Good luck to all who are vying to represent our school in the upcoming Handball competition and many thanks to Mick Lyng and the Handball club for organising this competition.

Tá an Nollaig buailte linn...tá áthas in san aer!

Tá an Nollaig buailte linn! Tá gach duine an-ghnóthach na laethanta seo ach is fiú anáil a tharraingt ó am go h-am agus b'fhéidir go bhfuil sé in am machnaimh a dhéanamh ar chroílár na Nollag taobh amuigh den siopadóireacht agus na hullmhucháin ar fad. Ná déanaigí dearmad cuairt a thabhairt chuig comharsan nó smaoiniamh a dhéanamh ar na daoine atá tinn ag an t-am seo den bhliain.

Christmas has arrived and everyone is very busy with preparations but it is worth taking time out and perhaps reflecting on the true meaning of Christmas apart from all the hustle and bustle. Don't forget to visit a neighbour in need or think

about those who are sick at this time of year.

Seo beannachtaí a bheadh úsáideach an mhí seo mar níl sé ró-dhéanach na cartaí Nollaig a chur sa phost!

It is not too late to send a Christmas Card and so, if you are looking to use some Gaeilge, here are some festive phrases to use.

Nollaig Shona! *Happy Christmas!*

Nollaig mhór mhaith duit! *Merry Christmas/Happy Christmas!*

Nollaig faoi shéan agus faoi mhaise duit! *Merry Christmas/Happy Christmas!*

Guím gach rath agus séan ort san athbhliain. *I wish you a happy and prosperous new year.*

Athbhliain faoi mhaise duit! *Happy New Year*

Keep an ear out for a new Irish addition to the song sheets at the Christmas Carols!

Christmas Card Creations!

The children were excited to see their Christmas creations in print with each child making their very own Christmas card. They are all now printed artists!!! These were given out to each child with an option to purchase a box(es) of their own creation. We look forward to delivery of these in the coming weeks and will be given out as soon as they arrive. Keep an eye out for a message telling you of their arrival. Thank you to Siobhán for all her work ordering and organising these.

Input from Mr. Lehané and 2nd class

Second class have begun the Roots Of Empathy programme. We got to meet baby Lana for the first week, our eight-week-old teacher, and everyone was delighted and are looking forward to meeting her again going forward. In preparation for First Confession and First Holy Communion we will be attending Mass fortnightly on Tuesday mornings. Many thanks to Fr Aodhán for facilitating this element of our preparation!

Sing Out Loud!!!

This month, our amazing 5th and 6th class students took to the stage at the National Opera House in Wexford for *Sing Out Loud*, and what a performance it was! They joined three other schools for a fantastic concert filled with music, fun, and plenty of energy. Our students were not only brilliant singers, but they also showed incredible manners and good behaviour, both on stage and backstage. We couldn't be prouder of how they represented our school with such enthusiasm and respect. A big shout-out to everyone involved for making this an unforgettable experience especially Mr Murphy and Ms Lehané and all the backstage team on the night! Sing Out Loud! WE LOVED IT!

Swimming

The children in 3rd class are nearing the end of their 10-week block of swimming lessons in Ferrybank Swimming Pool. They have enjoyed the weekly breaks from the classroom and the trips on the bus to the pool. More importantly, however, they have worked hard in each lesson to develop their swimming ability, an important life skill. Ms. Lyttleton is especially proud of the great behaviour and manners displayed by each child every week. Well done 3rd Class!

School Photographer - 20th and 21st November 2024

Individual, sibling and class photos were taken when the school photographer landed in our school. Ms Walsh had the day carefully organised to ensure all who wanted had their photos taken. You will get a message (thanks Siobhán) when the proofs arrive in school and information re how you can purchase these if you want to. As always, the purchase of these photos is voluntary.

Chess Competition Update

Following on from some practice sessions in October, November marked the beginning of our in-school chess competition. Every child from 3rd to 6th class participates in this competition and as the weeks progress the competition gets tighter with many children hoping to make our school chess teams, 'The Buds' (3rd and 4th Class) and 'The Masters' (5th and 6th Class). At present we have currently completed round 2 and everything is still to play for.

Who will be the new champion for 2024/2025 and go home as the third winner of the Eamonn Barrett Chess trophy? It is still anyone's guess. It is great to hear of so many children practising their skills at home, with many using apps such as Chess.com or Chesskid and another recommended site to practise their moves is <https://lichess.org/>. It is also lovely to see that many like to challenge their parents or their siblings to a game. Our chess club runs on wet lunchtimes allowing anyone who chooses to come to the hall and enjoy a game with a classmate.

Junior infant Hearing Screening 6th and 8th November, Junior Infant flu vaccine 11th November

Our routine hearing screening carried out by the HSE took place for all infants on Wednesday the 6th and Friday the 8th of November in our school. The school facilitates these screening tests and any relevant follow up is carried out by the public health nurse. Following on from the rest of the school any of the Junior infants that wanted to avail of the Flu vaccine received their dose on Monday the 11th of November

Big Birthday Shout Outs - December!

We would like to wish the following children a big happy birthday: Íde from Junior infants; Robyn from Senior infants; Fianna, Rory and Chloe from 1st Class; David, Harry and Nuria from 2nd class; Méabh, Páidí, Gracie and Christopher from 3rd class; Saoirse from 4th class; Arina, Eve and Ella from 5th class; Mia, Emmet, Maya and Lily from 6th class: We hope you all enjoy your special day!!!



*“Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!
Happy birthday dear Íde, Robyn, Fianna, Rory, Chloe, David,
Harry, Nuria, Méabh, Páidí, Gracie, Christopher, Saoirse,
Arina, Eve, Ella, Mia, Emmet, Maya and Lily,
Happy birthday to you.”*

*Lá breithe shona duit
Lá breithe shona duit
Lá breithe shona gach duine
Lá breithe shona duit*

Folens Christmas Annuals

Many thanks to those who ordered and collected their Folens Christmas Annuals. With the arrival of the December madness, the sales will now be completed this week with only some 5th and 6th class annuals remaining. Thank you Siobhán for keeping this much-loved tradition of annuals going in the school.

Elf Mania

Today, Monday started like all other Mondays until Ms Walsh entered the school doors and found that there was something amiss, with many pesky elves having arrived over the weekend and classrooms having suffered from their mischievous ways. We will all have to be a little more cautious over the coming weeks as we are all under the watch of the elves but we are sure they will be bringing back great reports of the hard work and kindness that they see on a daily basis inside our doors.

Christmas tree decoration appeal

Once again, we will embrace our green school status and resurrect our Christmas tree and Snowman made from old tyres. Once these are placed outside our doors, we will put a shout out for anyone who would like to add a decoration to our tree. Please ensure any decoration you donate is not of any sentimental value as many get whisked away in the winter weather. It is always lovely to see the children add to the tree and to make this a school community Christmas decoration that we can all enjoy.

Kindness Advent Calendar

To get the true meaning of Christmas up and running, Mrs. Tracey Walsh (class teacher of 1st class) has set up a ‘Kindness Advent Calendar’. This is on display near to our reception, but we will post pictures on the blog. Each day, a member of our Students Council will open the door of the kindness calendar and read it aloud over the intercom! In the final week of school before Christmas holidays (Monday 16th-Fri 20th Dec inclusive), homework will change to only ‘kindness homework’. We will send you a reminder email as always closer to the date. Many thanks to Mrs. Tracey Walsh for this initiative. We love the idea of sharing the magic and kindness that Christmas is truly about!

Piercestown Parents’ Association – Christmas Bazaar! Friday 6th December 3-5pm

Pyjamas at the ready? We are all on the countdown to the much-loved Toy Show. To get us all in the mood and add to the excitement (and chocolate levels!), our wonderful Parents’ Association will host their ‘Mini Christmas Bazaar’ this

Friday Dec 6th across the road from our school, in the Knockingall Community Centre. Many thanks to all who have donated chocolates and treats in many shapes and forms over the last number of weeks! There is a raffle on the day, with tickets being sold at €2 or 3 for €5. There is a turkey and ham up for grab sponsored by Londis! Now wouldn't this be nice! KC Waste has also donated two hampers for the hampers. Many thanks to Kieran Crane for all his support to the school. Last year the event was such a success that it finished early in a full 'wipe out'. So, to avoid disappointment, get there early!

Piercestown Parents' Association AGM

The Parents' Association AGM took place on Tuesday November 12th. The following were the elected officers for the year 2024-2025; Chairperson Stephanie Quigley, Vice Chairperson Gill Devereux, Secretary Sharon Finegan and Treasurer Suzanne Connolly. Many thanks to the officers elected on the night and to all committee members and parents who participate throughout the year. If you are interested in helping, but cannot commit to regular meetings, the door is open for one off events and support at various events. We greatly appreciate your support in any way.

Agreed report from the Board of Management

The Board meeting took place on Tuesday November 5th and the following was the agreed report:

- The Board of Management wishes to congratulate the St. Martin's County champions on behalf of the school community.
- The Board of Management wishes to congratulate the Rising stars team and the Rackard league team on their gold medal winning performances before mid-term break
- The Board of Management are engaged with the design team and working through the process of phase one for our new build.
- The Board of Management ratifies the appointment of Ms Michelle Hearne to the post of acting deputy principal.
- Arising from this appointment, a subsequent APII posted has been advertised and will be interviewed in the coming weeks.
- The Board of Management wishes to thank Lisa McDonald and Peadar Dempsey on the recent arrival of the pencil bollards outside our school and the painting of the crossing. This has undoubtedly enhanced both the safety first and foremost and the aesthetics of our school.
- The Board of Management wanted to wish 5th and 6th class all the best in their upcoming performance at Sing out Loud on November 15th and thank the staff involved in the preparation.
- The Board of Management ratified without modification the annual child safeguarding statement and antibullying policy. Both are now available on the school website
- The Board of Management updated and ratified the Critical Incident Policy for the school year 2024-2025.

A Word from the Principal

With December upon us, the festive fever is about to set in! It truly is a 'wonderful time of the year' for children and a privilege to work in a school setting more than ever! However, we are also aware that special occasions, such as Christmas, can bring challenges, pressures and emotions to families. Christmas can be the strong reminder of loss of loved ones who have passed away or moved away, changes in circumstances or the pressures of commercialism and marketing today. We hope that the coming weeks can offer fun, kindness and memory making to your children in our school community for little to no additional cost. Ultimately, presents and cards aside, it is the memories we make that add the meaning to Christmas. We hope that our Christmas carol service, can offer you all some time out and moments of 'Christmas Spirit' when you see your children partake. As always, in the coming weeks, if we can be of assistance in anyway don't hesitate to ask us.

"It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air." - W.T. Ellis.

Dates for your diaries so far this year:

- Mindful Monday 1st December
- Wednesday December 4th – final swimming session for 3rd class
- Parents' Association Toy Show event 'Christmas Bazaar' Friday 6th December 3-5pm Knockingall Community

Centre (across road from school)

- Christmas Carol Service Tuesday December 17th 7pm in St. Martin's church
- Open Night January 15th, 2025, 7pm
- First Confession – Thursday 13th Feb 2025
- School closure Primary Maths Curriculum April 3rd, 2025
- Confirmation – Friday 11th April 2025
- First Communion – Saturday 10th May 2025