

St. Helen's JNS

Newsletter - December 2023



The Mobile Library

One of the highlights to start our week is the arrival of the mobile library bus which pays its weekly visit to Second Class each Monday. The children have absolutely loved the opportunity to choose a new book each week and explore the wide range of literature available to them on the bus. It is wonderful to listen to the children discussing the book they have read and/or which one they hope to pick next.

We would like to express our gratitude to Fingal for allowing us to avail of their mobile library service here in St. Helen's JNS.

2nd class teachers

Wellbeing in our School

In St. Helen's Junior School, we pride ourselves on our welcoming, happy, friendly and inclusive school where promoting the wellbeing of our school community is a fundamental element of each day. Our whole staff take great pride in providing a warm, caring, nurturing and safe environment for all the children.

It is widely documented and incorporated into the Government's revised Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice that "enhancing children's wellbeing can lead to a wide variety of other successful outcomes including increased academic performance, better relationships and increased resilience" - (Waters, 2011; Park & Peterson, 2008).

The "Welcome to Well-being" programme was delivered in our infant classes this term. The junior and senior infant children are familiar with the 2 colourful aliens called Mo and Ko who landed on earth to encourage them to accept and express all of their emotions in a positive way. Mo and Ko

aim to help the children to be happy, strong, kind, brave, loving and well. The children are working on weekly challenges designed to enhance their well being across all dimensions - social, emotional, spiritual, physical and mental. The first classes are feeling excited about starting the Mo & Ko programme next term.

In the second classes the children are completing the Weaving Well-being programme.

This programme provides children with the opportunity to weave positivity into their daily lives through a range of engaging activities. These fun activities allow the children to explore their own unique character strengths while learning a variety of coping techniques for times when they are not feeling ok. They journal their personal journey of discovery while listing their individual strengths in their treasure chest. The lessons within all of these programmes are part of the SPHE curriculum.

Andrea Smith



Fun gathering St Helen's Apple Harvest!





Northern Lights Ms Ahern 2nd class



Pottery Workshop Ms Manning 1st class



Cabhair Centre Social Programme

The children in the Cabhair Centre have been on many adventures during the first term of school. Each Friday the children take part in our school's Social Programme. We've taken visits to Dunnes Stores, the post office and some of our local playgrounds. These trips have many benefits for the children. They enable the children to practise social skills and interact with each other outside of the classroom. Exploring the local community also helps the children build on life skills, functional skills and self esteem.

In October a coach collected us from school to bring us to the Zoo at Leisure Plex. The children had great fun on the slides, exploring the ball pits and playing together in the Aistear area. We brought our lunch with

us and ate with our friends.

In November we got the H2 bus to Malahide and spent time in Malahide Library. The staff in the library arranged for us to use the function space upstairs. They put out toys for us and we had our lunch there. We had lots of time to explore the books downstairs. The children especially loved the sensory table and using the sensory pod. After we got the bus back to school.

Check out our Christmas video here: <https://www.sthelensjunior.com/news/christmas-video-a/>

Eimear Kane





Our projects on the solar system 2nd class - Ms Rae

For science week along with some experiments, we looked at the solar system and space travel. The pupils learned all about Mae Jemison and her exciting journey to space travel. We explored the different planets in our solar system including their climates, size and the different moons surrounding them.

The children worked in small groups to make their own 3D solar systems. Each student was given two planets to paint for their group. When they were dry, we discussed the order of planets and also the distance of each from the sun. The students measured out the distance with a ruler. Finally, we attached metal wire to complete our 3D solar systems. The two Finn's enjoyed presenting our projects at the whole school assembly.

Ms Phoebe Rae



Clay Christmas Decorations Ms Magee Junior Infants

Shared Reading

Wednesday is a very special day in Senior Infants in St.Helen's Junior School. Our school hall is filled with excited chat and laughter. As part of the senior infant programme, each class takes part in Shared Reading with the transition year students in Portmarnock Community School.

The children from Ms.O'Callaghan's and Ms.Rooney's classes have enjoyed getting to know their reading 'Buddies' this term. Each week for a block of six weeks, the pupils have a reading buddy and

have the opportunity to share many stories together. The children then draw a picture based on what they have read and discuss the characters and what they most enjoyed about the story. The children look forward to shared reading and it is so beneficial for them to read with other young people. We love to see our past pupils returning to us and being such good role models for the children. Ms.O'Mahony's class eagerly look forward to their turn in the new year!

Graceanne O'Callaghan



Team Teaching and SET support in all classes

We have enjoyed a successful 1st term in St. Helen's Junior School with all our classes experiencing varied approaches and learning styles throughout the term.

Our SET teachers and additional visiting teachers have worked diligently team teaching alongside the class teachers to ensure the best pupil/ teacher ratios for all our classes.

This approach increases the levels of engagement and the productivity for all our young children while promoting independence, good letter formation and sentence structure. This extra support also helps to sustain the attention of each child to help them to reach their potential.

Additional guidance, encouragement and writing prompts have given all the children a boost and the delight on their faces when they admire their finished piece of written work is heartwarming. Literacy stations and numeracy games

within all classes allow for peer learning opportunities and turn taking during pair work and group work.

Pupils in each of the second classes are benefitting from new Chromebooks purchased from IT and assistive technology grants. These are enabling children to access the curriculum in new and exciting ways such as introducing touch typing and using dictation and text to speech software.

Pupils who have recommendations from Occupational Therapists are benefitting from morning movement breaks organised by the SET team and facilitated by the high energy and enthusiasm of our wonderful SNAs.

We wish to thank all our parents & guardians for the continued time and energy given to support your child/ children with their homework.

Andrea Smith, Philip Horan, Yvonne Cummins, Teresa O' Donnell



Naughty or nice



Santa's elves



Happy with Santa's visit



Parents' Association 2023

As we come to the end of yet another fantastic term in our school, we are so grateful for our wonderful school community.

In October we were invited into the school to decorate the porch for all the children and staff which was very spooky and created a fabulous atmosphere within the school. It was great to see all the children and staff of course dressed up for Halloween, walking up the avenue was great to see the excitement in their faces. The Parents Association called into each of the classrooms to deliver some goodies for the children for all their hard work during the term. On Dress Up Day the children brought in a donation for our chosen charity UNICEF. Thank you to all who supported this. We held our AGM in mid-November where our Chairperson Sarah Murphy stepped down after 5 years. We would like to thank Sarah for all her dedication and commitment she has so generously devoted to the school for which we are all grateful. We also welcomed some new members to our PA on the night which was amazing and we are so grateful to have such a great team on board.

The Christmas card project made by all the pupils this year was yet again a great success, thank you to all the parents and guardians for the support with this. When printed, the children were very proud to take their own special festive cards home.

On Thursday Santa and his elves visited the school. It was a magical day and created a great atmosphere within the school.

On behalf of the Parents' Association, I would like to thank Lorna and all the staff for their amazing work they do for our children and thank you to the parents and guardians for all your support to the PA. Wishing you all a peaceful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Ger Keogh, Chairperson (Parents' Association)



Victoria from Bonnybrook Pharmacy talks to our pupils about nasal flu vaccine, 17 October 2023

Children of the Eucharist

The children in Second Class have begun their preparation for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and First Holy Communion. We are very thankful to have Norma Morrisson, one of our parents, delivering the Children of the Eucharist programme with the children. The children are enjoying the sessions in the library with Norma and she has given us lovely art work to complete in class. Norma and Father John look forward to seeing any of our pupils who can make the Christmas Eve mass at 4pm in St. Anne's Church. The children have been practising some of the hymns that will be sung also at this special mass.

Claire Ryan 2nd class



Moving Words

We were delighted to be one of the chosen schools that had applied to host the workshop Moving Words, a workshop sponsored by Fingal Arts Office. The Arts Office facilitated two artists to visit our school in October to perform Moving Words for our four second classes. This exciting performance and workshop was created by artist Selma Daniel.

'Moving Words' is a performance for children that combines the art of contemporary dance with reading and storytelling. The children showed great interest and enthusiasm for this opportunity where they were encouraged to explore dance, reading, speech and self expression. It was a most enjoyable and interesting experience for all.

Ag foghlaim na Gaeilge trí spraoi agus cluichí

I Scoil Néamh Léan is breá linn an Ghaeilge! Is breá linn ag imirt cluichí as Gaeilge, ag foghlaim dánta agus ag canadh amhráin. Ach, an rud is mó a thaitníonn linn ná labhairt na Gaeilge! Tá a fhios againn cé chomh tábhachtach agus atá sé an teanga a úsáid gach lá chun ár líofacht a fheabhsú. I Rang a hAon, Seomra 14, déanaimid ár ndícheall foghlaim na Gaeilge a dhéanamh spraiúil agus chuireamar an bhéim ar an nGaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil. Laistigh agus taobh amuigh den seomra ranga, ag baint déanaimid ár ndícheall labhairt lenár múinteoirí agus lena chéile

trí Ghaeilge. Chomh maith leis seo, inár gcruinniú maidine bímid ag caint faoin aimsir, laethanta na seachtaine, na séasúir, ár gcaitheamh aimsire agus ár mbricfeasta (is é leite an bricfeasta is fearr liom!). Breathnaigh ar na buachaillí agus na cailíní i gcomhrá...

We hope you enjoy our little video!

<https://youtu.be/KEWTVwUgKbE?feature=shared>

Mr. Jennings agus rang a h-aon



Green School

We had a Green School Assembly to mark "Walk to School Week", which took place from October 2nd to October 6th 2023. The Green School's Committee reminded us about each of the St. Helen's Green School's Flags and how important it is to keep up all of the good work associated with each. St. Helen's has been awarded 6 Green School's Flags already. This year we have started working towards the 7th flag, Global Citizenship Energy.

Ms Ahern Room 6



Christmas Trees Room 23 Cabhair Centre



Penguins Ms O'Mahony Senior Infants

A Word from the Chairperson...

The Christmas holidays are almost here, following a very busy term with good attendance by all. The new Junior Infants have all settled into school and the Parents' Association were a wonderful support providing refreshments (and tissues!) to Parents on the first day!

Congratulations to Claire Nolan on her appointment to the staff in the role of Special Needs Assistant and Shauna McGahan on her appointment to a fixed term teaching position, both for the 2023-2024 school year.

The school policies are regularly reviewed, updated and available on the school's website. The Child Safeguarding and Risk Assessment Statement was revised, at the outset of the school year, in line with the Department of Education requirements. The Designated Liaison Person is our Principal, Lorna Lavin, with our Deputy, Andrea Smith, the Deputy Designated Liaison Person.

The staff have also completed a review of the Code of Positive Behaviour Plan in consultation with the Parents' Association and BoM. More information will be provided to the whole school in January as this vital policy can only be implemented effectively with the support of the whole school community.

The Parents' Association AGM took place in October. I'd like to thank all those who have stepped down this year for their years of dedication to the school and I'd like to welcome those new volunteers who have stepped forward this year. The PA consistently supports the school over the term. They have already provided valuable support, such as both the Halloween and Christmas celebrations as well as Fundraising initiatives: The Halloween Dress-Up Day in aid of UNICEF and the Christmas Card Fundraiser to support the purchase of new sensory equipment for the school's new nurture room.

I would also like to welcome our new parent representatives to the Board of Management, nominated at the PA AGM and sanctioned by the board. Current members of both the 2023- 2034 Parents' Association and 2023-2027 Board of Management are available on the school website.

The Nursing Home development is really taking shape now. Orpea, the builders, have been working with both the Junior and Senior schools on an Art project and initiatives and improvements which will benefit our school communities.

Fingal County Council have collaborated with both schools and completed works to date on footpaths (Paddy's Hill side). We aim to ensure that our focus on a 'Safe Route To School' to include an additional access path into the junior yard continues to be a priority for all shareholders.

Maintenance of the school building is ongoing, surveying the roofing, a new exterior yard door (senior yard) and a new internal door to the millennium garden. A former store/cleaning room is being converted to a new Nurture Room, which will be a valuable space for all our children. A deep clean and polish to hall and corridor floors took place during the mid-term break. We owe our wonderful school caretaker Gerry, who diligently keeps on top of maintenance and ensures the grounds are kept in excellent shape, a huge thank you.

Staff are always upskilling and engaging in training. The Principal and Maths Co Ordinator both recently attended in-service training in the New Primary Maths Curriculum. There will be a whole school staff in-service in Maths in the New Year.

Christmas shows 2023, once again a huge effort by all, especially our young pupils, who have given tremendous joy to parents throughout the past week. A huge thanks to teachers and SNAs for their encouragement and hard work in supporting the children to provide such wonderful performances enjoyed by all.

Wishing all our families and staff a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year.

Celine O'Connell Chairperson BOM



Maths Week in Room 19

On 'Maths 4 All Day', we had some really interesting discussions about shapes, patterns, colours and numbers, all inspired by our lovely 'Maths Clothes'.



Friendship Week in November

We celebrate Friendship Week every November as part of our annual review and commitment to implement our Anti-Bullying Policy. We reinforce the themes of friendship which address kindness, sharing, listening, including one another and playing with each other. To support our younger pupils the junior and senior infants have been learning a range of playground games. This is providing them with the opportunity to practise the skills of following rules and taking turns. We have been promoting friendship in class and in the yard. It has been wonderful to see the positive influence this is having on their play in a busy junior yard.

Ms Walsh, Ms Magee and Ms Fleming

Thank you from Ms Lavin...



A thuismitheoirí go léir,

Thank you all for your co-operation and support over a busy but very successful term in St. Helen's JNS. The children have been terrific and we love to see them skipping into school each day. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of staff for their commitment and wonderful work that has taken place over the term.

To the parents, grandparents, creche facilities and other minders, a huge thank you for your cooperation in keeping our school safe at all times. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Claire, our traffic warden for always prioritising the safety of our young pupils every morning and afternoon. We are all very grateful and appreciate being able to come to work every day knowing that we are in a safe environment.

I wish to convey our appreciation to Canon John Flaherty and the parish team of St. Anne's including Norma Morisson for their dedication and efforts to date in assisting us to foster and grow the catholic ethos in our school.

At Friday assembly we have enjoyed coming together as a whole school to share with and learn from each other about our academic class projects, achievements and many individual talents. Assembly also gives us a special opportunity to discuss many important themes to promote the holistic and spiritual development of all our young pupils. Weekly GAA and soccer sessions with coach Ciara and Jamie were a favourite for the children over the term.

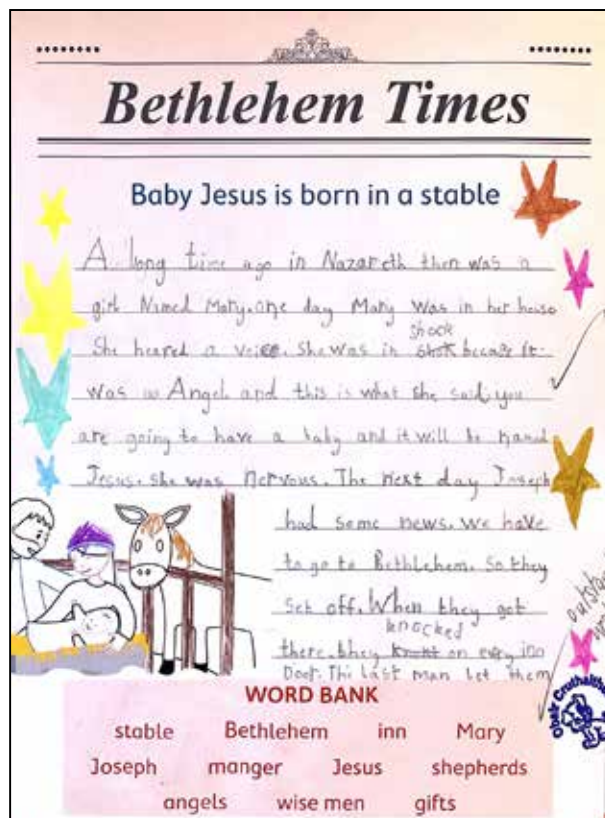
We have enjoyed making December as celebratory as possible for the children. Decorations were put up early by our wonderful PA. Santa, helped by his team of elves, made his annual visit to us on Thursday to deliver a fun and festive activity book to each child. The children (& staff) all donned their cheerful Christmas jumpers and dresses over the week!

Many thanks to our Parents' Association for their fundraising efforts this term. Ger and the team organised for the children to partake in the personalised Christmas card initiative again this year which has proven to be another wonderful success.

Thank you to all parents who support your children and the school. As always, you have made a huge contribution to the Junior school in all its endeavours! Cormac Sugrue & Co have been very helpful throughout the term with various maintenance projects and especially the recent work completed in our new Nurture Room. I would also like to thank Mc Gowan and Co for the new flooring we have had installed.

Finally we want to acknowledge your wonderful children who have been outstanding since September and who never cease to give us joy every day. On behalf of all the staff and the Board of Management, I would like to wish you and your families a very happy, safe and peaceful Christmas. Nollaig Shona Daoibh go léir agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh!

Lorna Lavin and all the staff of St. Helen's JNS



Bethlehem Times by Holly McNeice 1st Class



Hello Winter Mr Jennings 1st class

Lámh

As part of our dynamic inclusion programme, the teachers from the Cabhair Centre and Ms. Lavin visited all the classes in the school to speak about inclusion and different forms of communication. During our visits we showed the children how to do some basic Lámh signs. In St. Helen's Junior School we



understand and embrace that people can communicate in lots of different ways. We have children using augmentative alternative communication in the form of tablets, picture exchange and Lámh.

Lámh is a manual sign system used by children and adults with intellectual disability and communication needs in Ireland. - Lámh is always used with speech (say the word as well as the sign

to encourage skills needed for speech).

- Using Lámh signs when you speak can help the listener process your language. Signing encourages eye contact and attention to movement.
- Lámh signs are adapted from Irish sign language but are not all the same. We look forward to expanding the children's Lámh repertoire in the new year.

Claire Mc Hale

Condolences

St. Helen's Junior National School would like to offer our sincere condolences to all those who have had lost loved ones this term. Our thoughts are especially with The Goss and O' Driscoll Family, The O' Toole and O' Sullivan Family, the Sheehan and Grace Family, the Krawczyk and Muldowney Family, the Mc Glynn and Healy Family, and the Keane and Lawlor Family. Our Advent prayers and thoughts are with you all during this difficult and lonely time.

Dates for your calendar...

January 2024 - School reopens Monday 8th January
 February 2024 - School closed - Public Holiday Monday 5th Feb
 Midterm break- School closed Thursday 15th and Friday 16th Feb
 March 2024 - School closed - Public holiday 18th March
 Easter holidays - School closes Friday 22nd March



Nativity Art Ms Fleming Junior Infants



Christmas Minions Ms Kavanagh 1st class



Storytelling - Snow Bears at Winter Assembly



Advent Calendar Ms Rae 2nd class



Baubles Mr Shevlin 2nd class



Melted Snowmen Ms Walsh Junior Infants