

St. Helen's JNS

Easter Newsletter - April 2025



Team work and play in Junior Infants

The Junior Infants in Ms Kavanagh's class have been learning about teamwork and having fun using the parachute. We have used our cooperation skills to solve challenges and maneuver items around, over, and under the parachute. Our favourite part of each lesson was when we went under it to make a big mushroom shape together.



News from Room 23

We have had a fantastic term in Room 23! The children are really enjoying the Attention Autism activities during our daily circle time. Last week we made Easter chicks using shaving foam, glitter and googly eyes! The children have made lovely artwork throughout the term - just like this St. Patrick's Day Pot of Gold!



A Word from the Chairperson...

It has been a busy term in the school which is certainly reflected in the wonderful termly newsletter.

On behalf of the Board of Management I would like to acknowledge the wonderful commitment of the teachers and SNAs who are working so conscientiously to support the pupils of St. Helen's.

Lorna communicated to the Board earlier in the year that she had contacted the NCSE (National Council of Education/ Department of Education) in term one to express her concerns about not having an adequate allocation of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to meet the needs of our young pupils.

An application for additional resources was made to the NCSE which involved going through a rigorous process of gathering a substantial amount of information. An inspection from the SENO (Special Education Needs Organiser) took place last January. We were delighted to hear in February that the school has been sanctioned an additional two SNAs.

School Self Evaluation - the staff continue to work towards achieving targets identified in their School Improvement Plan (SIP) on Wellbeing. The SIP and the Music policy have both been recently ratified; Both documents are now on the school website.

The teaching staff completed training in February in the new Primary Maths Curriculum and will undergo further training at the end of May in the new Bí Cineálta Procedures, which replace the 2013 Anti-Bullying policy and procedures. This new policy will be developed in consultation with the school community.

The Board would like to congratulate Claire McHale and Wesley on the birth of their daughter Ana.

The Board would like to convey our gratitude to parents for your generous donations to the Voluntary Contribution scheme which will benefit all our pupils in St. Helen's.

Finally I would like to reiterate my appreciation to staff, the BoM, PA, parents and pupils for a very successful term and a happy and well-deserved Easter break to all!

Celine O'Connell Chairperson BOM, April 2025

Seachtain na Gaeilge 2025

Bhí Seachtain na Gaeilge an gnóthach againn arís. Is féile idirnáisiúnta Ghaeilge í Seachtain na Gaeilge, atá ar an gceiliúradh is mó dár dteanga agus dár gcultúr dúchais. An Irish drama 'Bean na Bróige' performed for the school and the children got the opportunity to listen and sing along. We had the local Ceoltoirí and Aonghus McAnally visit us to perform some traditional music and we were delighted to sing all the new songs we have learned over the term including Báidín Fheilimí and Beidh Aonach Amárach. Ms Cummins organised and delivered a fantastic Irish Dancing class to each year group. The children had the opportunity to perform in pairs and in groups. It was a brilliant way to celebrate Irish culture and great fun was had by all. Thank you so much to those teachers who organised and made Seachtain na Gaeilge a most engaging and successful week for us all in the school. Chríochnaigh an tseachtain le dioscó sa halla. Bhain gach duine an-taitneamh as! Bhí Lá Glás againn agus shiúl na páistí timpeall na cloís don pharáid.

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



Shared Reading

Our shared reading programme continues to take place each Wednesday.

The Transition Year students from Portmarnock Community School are enjoying this opportunity to read with our senior infant pupils each week.

This programme is long established and continues to bring joy and additional opportunities for improving reading fluency and a shared enjoyment of stories. Sharing a book and talking about it with a reading buddy is a special moment for both groups.



Scholastic Rewards

New books were purchased in the first term from Scholastic using our rewards earned from your generosity during our Scholastic book fair in term 1. Our school purchased lots of

levelled readers for our shared reading programme as well as new sets of class novels and library books.

We invested in a class set of Rosie's Walk, Burglar Bill and Charlotte's Web to add to our other sets of novels. We also

purchased lots of additional bestselling titles for the children to enjoy during their library time.

The children love the opportunity to delve into the magical world of story with rich text filled with lots of rhyme, rhythm, alliterations and funny illustrations.

Through reading aloud as a class group, the children improve their story recall and strengthen their creative writing skills.

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." Dr. Seuss.

Andrea Smith



Exploring China: A Collaborative Learning Adventure - Second classes

This term, students in second class have been busy exploring the rich history and culture of China through exciting group projects! From creating colourful posters about the Great Wall to researching Chinese inventions and traditions, each group brought their creativity and teamwork to the table. Pupils shared responsibilities and practiced their problem-solving skills. It was wonderful to see their enthusiasm as they learned about Chinese history, geography and customs while strengthening their collaboration skills.



Assembly to mark New Year's Promises Jan 2025

On Friday 17th January, Mr. Jennings and Mr Shevlin hosted an assembly to mark the beginning of the new year with a special focus on resolutions and what we were all looking forward to for 2025.

We began with some prayers before singing a lovely rendition of 'Here Comes The Sun'.

Children from First and Second class shared some of their resolutions for 2025. It was great to hear people mention things like reading more, increasing time spent playing outside, etc.

The children were then treated to storytime with Mr. Jennings as he read 'The Bear and the Piano'. The boys and girls hung on his every word and really enjoyed it.

A number of pupils suggested and shared some of the things they were looking forward to in 2025. Some examples included Sports Day, First Holy Communion and even the mobile library returning!

The assembly concluded with the song 'Resilience in Me'. It was a brilliant way to end a very enjoyable assembly! **Mr. Shevlin**

Skipping Across Europe Challenge!



We are very proud in the Junior School to have achieved our Active School Flag in 2022-2023. This term our 1st and 2nd Class students started an exciting four-week skipping challenge, aiming to "travel" across all 27 countries in Europe – one skip at a time! This is a Department of Education well-being initiative, supported by Healthy Ireland where every skip counts as one kilometer, encouraging children to stay active while working together toward their goal.



Beyond fitness, this challenge offers fantastic cross-curricular learning opportunities. Students are exploring European geography, cultures, and landmarks while improving their counting and teamwork skills. The enthusiasm has been amazing, with everyone eager to see how far they can go!

Emer Rooney



World Book Day Celebrations in St. Helen's



Junior Infants Ms Ryan

We celebrated World Book Day on Thursday the 6th March.

All classes participated in a wonderful 'Where's Wally' Walk around the school. The children found each Wally and answered questions about some of our favourite fairy tales and picture books. They enjoyed working together to discover their answers to the questions. We had great fun participating in class competitions where the students designed book covers, decorated book marks and created fantastic character profiles.

Mr. Read visited our school and read with each year group. We loved listening to his fabulous stories and exciting voices as he read. The children were captivated. A huge thanks to Mr Read, William Morgan. The Masked Reader was a popular activity with both children and staff. We were so excited to guess which staff member was reading each popular children's book. They were so amused when the staff member was revealed and very pleased when the children guessed correctly.

We also continued to put a focus back on D.E.A.R. time (Drop Everything And Read). This is where the children read as a class or independently for 10 minutes every day.

The pupils and staff dressed up as book characters or wore their cosy clothes to read their favourite book. Well done to all - everyone looked fantastic!

Susan Kavanagh



Creative Book Covers Rang a dó - Seomra a sé

Our school was buzzing with excitement as we celebrated World Book Week! Children in 2nd class, Room 6 got creative by designing their own book covers for their favourite stories. Each cover came complete with a beautifully written description on the back – just like a real book! Pupils also wrote about their favourite characters, sharing what made them so special.





We planted cress - Senior Infants (R18) Ms Natin



Pancake Day



Feast of St. Brigid's Day 2025

This term we introduced story maps to all of our children in Junior Infants. Story maps improve comprehension and help children's understanding of stories. We have been learning about characters, setting and the beginning, middle and end of stories. The children loved hearing about St. Brigid and afterwards they created their own story map.



Story maps - Junior Infants Room 17. Ms Walsh

News from the Parents' Association...

We are delighted to have been able to help out again at so many happy occasions in the Junior School! We had great fun during our Pancake Tuesday celebration in school. The children were delighted to choose from the healthy toppings on offer and relished their pancakes among their friends!

We have been busy decorating the Millennium Garden in anticipation of the Easter Bunny's visit to the Junior School on Friday.

Both myself and Sarah Murphy (PA in Senior School) continue to work with the school community to try and ensure that arrival to school and departing at home-time is as safe as possible for the children and families.

Thank you to Clare, our traffic warden and to the caretakers Gerry and Paul for their diligent help to keep the road and school avenue safe for the children. We will continue to prioritise this important issue in the last term and thank everyone for their compliance and cooperation.

Wishing you all a happy and safe Easter.

Ger Keogh - Chairperson Parents' Association



Safer Internet Day

On February 11th the first and second class children took part in Safer Internet Day. The children learned all about the motto of the HTML heroes "Stop Think and Check". Each class went to the library to read the story 'The Internet is Like a Puddle'. After they each designed a poster for the Safer Internet Day art competition. Two winners from each class received a homework pass to use in class. Congratulations to all our winners. Webwise is a great resource for parents and there's lots of information available here <https://www.webwise.ie/parents/>





Catholic Schools Week: Grandparents Day 2025

St Helen's Junior School hosted a very special occasion on the 23rd of January 2025. Each year, as part of Catholic Schools Week, we invite the grandparents of our First Class pupils to our school to see our classrooms and hear some songs and very special written work prepared by the children.

This year, for the first time ever, we were able to invite the grandparents of the Junior Infant pupils as well as the grandparents of our pupils in rooms 23, 24 and 25. Grandparents shared their memories of school and the songs and stories they learned. The children really enjoyed learning about the difference between school life when their grandparents were children. We were fascinated to hear that almost all the grandparents interviewed by First Class have remembered the name of their favourite teacher from their childhood. It reminded us all how important and precious these early years are to our own young pupils.



After the craic agus ceol in the classroom our VIP guests made their way to the hall for tea, coffee, freshly baked scones and chats. Here, they could explore the gallery of grandparent portraits and identify their own!

Before we said goodbye, we had one more treat for our visitors. Mr. Horan had gathered photos taken by the teachers and helpers and compiled them into a beautiful video.

This allowed grandparents to see the fun, friendship and learning opportunities that each day brings.

Traditionally we mark the end of Catholic Schools Week with a whole school assembly. This year, the children in Senior Infants and Second Class had the chance to showcase the beautiful work they had done in class about their grandparents.

We are so grateful to all the grandparents who came to see us on Grandparents Day and helped to make this a memorable occasion for the children.

Graceanne O'Callaghan





Maths Stations (R 14)

The Senior Infant pupils are enjoying the weekly math stations organised by Ms. Magee. Each week the children rotate through a variety of fun and interactive activities that make learning maths exciting! With lots of hands-on games and activities each station is designed to keep the kids engaged while reinforcing key concepts. The stations provide a perfect mix of learning and play. It's wonderful to watch the children's enthusiasm for maths in addition to them developing their skills and language during these stations.

Shauna McGahon Senior Infants

Engineers Week

We celebrated Engineers Week in St Helen's through March 3rd to March 7th. It was a great opportunity for our students to learn all about what engineers do and how they solve problems, build amazing things and make the world a better place. We kicked off the week by exploring the big question : what is an engineer? We read stories about famous engineers learning how their creativity and curiosity changed the world. But the most fun came with our hands-on activities. The students took part in exciting challenges from building tall towers to designing paper airplanes. It was amazing to see their teamwork, problem solving skills and their imagination in action.

Deirdre Magee



Second Class Room 6





Neurodiversity Week



In April we celebrate neurodiversity at St Helen's. This coincides with World Autism Month and Autism Awareness Day which takes place every year on April 2nd and is a designated United Nations Day of Observance. We are an inclusive school and support differences in all its forms. Through practical activities, children learnt about our senses, how we communicate in different ways such as our voice, body language and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) used by some children in our school. Children learnt about how our brains all work differ-

ently and the ways we support each other. Children in first and second class learnt some facts about Autism, ADHD, DCD and dyslexia. We celebrated the end of the week with a school assembly and the week's theme song (Sesame Street: Will.i.am Sings "What I Am"). We were very happy to welcome Fergal and Paddy from the Neurofibromatosis Association of Ireland (NF Ireland) and presented him with a cheque of €1000 which was donated by the children from our Dress Up Day at Halloween. Thanks also to our Parents' Association who contributed to the charity as a result of the Christmas Card fundraiser.

Philip Horan



Seomra 25

The boys and girls have been very busy this term!

The sun came out last week and the children took full advantage by reading outside in the Senior Yard. The children went on a walk to the PSLC and enjoyed some treats having completed lots of hard work in school. During the term,

we had delicious pancakes in the hall, provided by the Parents' Association for Pancake Tuesday. We also celebrated St. Patrick with a lovely parade outside and by doing lots of amazing artwork. The children are looking forward to a good rest over Easter after a fantastic term of work!

Ms O'Mahony



Music with Mr. Horan in Senior Infants - Room 19

This term we were very lucky to have the talented Mr. Horan organise four music sessions for our class. He taught the children about various instruments: the djembe drums, the chime bars, the ukulele and a wide range of percussion instruments. The children got to play the instruments, they composed simple musical scores and performed them in pairs or small groups. The lessons were fun and engaging and the children really enjoyed them.

Buíochas ó Ms Lavin...

A thuismitheoirí go léir, 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 to make the last term so exciting and enjoyable for our school community. We hope that you enjoy reading our Easter news and wish to thank Simon Archer for his expertise in designing our newsletter each term.

To the parents, grandparents, creche facilities and other minders, míle buíochas for all you do to support the school.

The children in 2nd class made their First Confession earlier in the month. I would like to convey our appreciation to the parish of St. Anne's, especially to Ersilia and Canon John for their ongoing support to the class teachers in preparing the children for the sacraments. I also want to take this opportunity to thank our parent volunteer, Norma, for her dedicated work in delivering the Children of The

Eucharist Programme. The children and teachers look forward to Norma's regular visit to us as she makes each lesson with the children so special, inclusive and peaceful.

Many thanks to our Parents' Association and Board of Management for their huge contribution to our school.

We have included in our daily thoughts and prayers our friends and families who have recently lost loved ones in the school community.

Finally, on behalf of myself and the staff, I would like to commend our wonderful pupils who try their best every day and who have shown great kindness to each other during the season of Lent. They should feel very proud of themselves for all they have achieved throughout the term.

Wishing all our staff and families a very happy Easter. Beannachtaí na Cásca oraibh go léir!

Lorna Lavin and the staff of St. Helen's Junior School

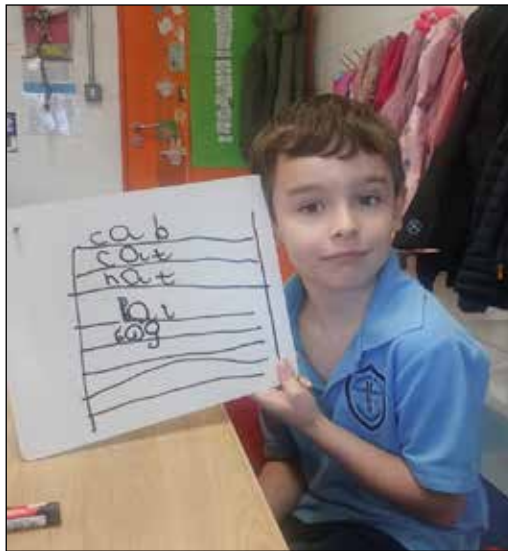


The boys and girls in Ms Fleming's Junior Infants painted beautiful bunnies for our Easter art. Well done everyone.



How to make a paper tree

In Mr Shevlin's first class we have been learning about procedural writing this term. After following the steps, 'how to make a paper tree', we enjoyed out art class. **Mr Shevlin.**



UFLI - Phonics and Spellings in 1st Class

All the children in first class have been enjoying learning phonics and spelling patterns using the UFLI programme. Every week we learn a new sound/spelling pattern. In every lesson the children pack in lots of skills including counting words in sentences, counting syllables in words, changing sounds in words to make new words, visual drills – saying sounds they see, auditory drills – dictation and writing of sounds, words and sentences, reading new words – segmenting and blending sounds to read longer words including suffixes and prefixes, word chaining and word ladders, and much more!!!

The children are really enjoying using this programme. They enjoy the routine and repetition of the lessons and most importantly getting lots of opportunities to write and show off all that they know! It is a pleasure seeing them all make such good progress. Keep up the super work first class!

Ciara Cummins



Second Class SET

In second class, pupils have enjoyed our weekly literacy stations session with the team teaching of the class teacher and SET (Special Education Teacher).

During stations, each of the four tables in the classroom complete a different activity every 15 minutes. This term we have focused on reading comprehension using traditional tales as well as texts of interest to pupils such as a biography of Messi this week.

The classes also relish the challenge of a cloze text (fill in the gaps in a text) about a topic from their Over the Moon readers.

Some children who receive additional support have benefited from AT (assistant technology). These pupils have



access to a laptop that allows pupils to complete tasks in their textbooks online using dictation software. A typing club is also available to these pupils as well as a digital reading pen which reads difficult

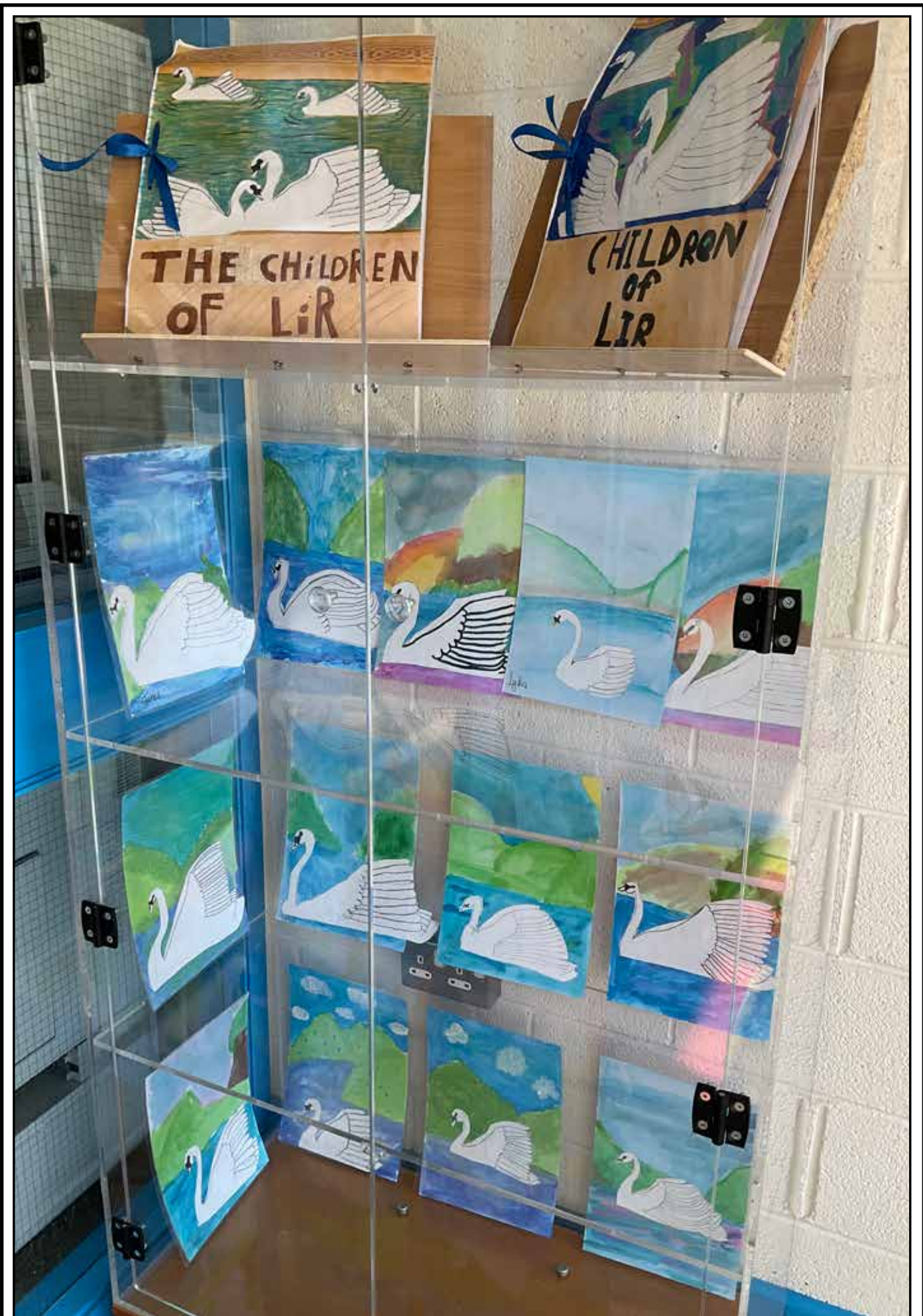
words in a text. Other pupils in the class also get to try out these technologies which will form part of their learning in the senior school and beyond.

Philip Horan

The Moon and Sixpence Puppet Theatre

We were delighted when the Moon and Sixpence Puppet Theatre visited our school last January and we were all treated to a lively performance of Jacqueline and the Beanstalk, a re-telling of the classic story that upends the gender-stereotyping of traditional fairy tales!

This marionette production aimed to tackle the issue of bullying, showing how it can be overcome with the help of friends, and how bullies can change their ways when they realise the pain they cause. As with every Moon & Sixpence production, this live show was performed live with music and sound effects and was filled with humour and audience interaction.



Children of Lir. Rang a dó Rm 13. Ms Manning