



**Dates for the Diary**

**October**

Tues 1	Y6 Viking Day
Fri 4	School photographer (Nursery, Y1 & Y7 class groups)
Wed 9	P/T Consultation times sent out to parents
Thurs 17 & Fri 18	Flu Vaccinations
Mon 21 – Thurs 24	2.00 P/T Consultations. <b>To facilitate the consultations school will finish at 1.45pm (Y1-Y4) &amp; 1.50pm (Y5-Y7)</b>
Fri 25	PTA Halloween Disco (FANCY DRESS)
<b>Fri 25</b>	<b>School finishes @ 1.45/1.50 for Half Term</b>

**November**

<b>Mon 4</b>	<b>School resumes at the usual time</b>
Thurs 14	7.30pm PTA

**Attendance & Illness**

Obviously, it goes without saying that the more often children are in school, the more progress they will make. With this in mind, I would really encourage you to avoid taking holidays during term time. As part of DE policy to improve pupil attendance I am required to provide a report to the Board of Governors at each meeting. At Parent/Teacher consultations in October and February your child's class teacher will update you on your child's attendance and if your child's attendance has fallen below 90% you will receive a letter from myself highlighting the drop in their attendance. Should your child's attendance have dropped to less than 85% you will receive a letter and we will consider involving the EWO (Education Welfare Officer). Should your child's attendance have dropped below 80% your letter will ask you to contact me in order to set up a meeting regarding your child's attendance. Please see a copy of the notes below.

While I really encourage good attendance it is also important that if your child is ill, that they remain at home. Please inform your child's teacher via Seesaw on the first day of your child's absence outlining why they are absent, **YOU NO LONGER NEED TO PHONE THE SCHOOL OFFICE AS LONG AS YOU INFORM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER.**

**After School Activities (ASAs)**

On a Tuesday & Thursday when our own staff are taking ASAs they will accompany the children out to the playground where they can be collected from the Y3/4 playground or the gate.

On a Monday, Wednesday & Friday when ASAs are taken by coaches from outside WPSNU parents should come into school to collect their children.

- Mon Football – Assembly Hall
- Hockey – Gym Hall
- Tues Juglenastix
- Wed Irish Dancing – Assembly Hall
- Jujitsu – Gym Hall
- Fri Gymnastics – Gym Hall
- Lego Club – Assembly Hall

I do appreciate that some Y5 – Y7 children may be walking home by themselves or have arranged to meet you somewhere outside school. Please remind your children that if they are ever unsure about their pick-up arrangements or if no-one is there to pick them up as they expected, they should come back into school so we can contact their parents.

**Parent/Teacher Consultations**

Please complete the form which will be sent home with your child today indicating which days suit you best to attend for the parent/teacher consultation. Please return the completed form to your child's teacher by Friday 4 October. Teachers will meet on Monday 7 October to co-ordinate days and times for siblings and will use Seesaw to send out consultation days and times on Wednesday 9 October.

### Parent/Teacher Consultations

The consultations will take place from Monday 21 – Thursday 24 October. **To facilitate the consultations, school will finish at 1.45pm (Y1 – Y4) & 1.50pm (Y5 – Y7). There will be no after school activities this week.**



### PTA Halloween Disco

The first PTA event of the year will take place on Friday 25 October ... our Halloween Disco. The PTA work very hard to organise events that the children will enjoy and in so doing raise additional money to the benefit of your child. Please support us in this event. **The Disco costs £2 per child and will go live on School Money on Monday 7 October.** For any parent who wishes to make a greater donation there is the facility to do so on School Money. **On Friday 25 October everyone is encouraged to come to school in Fancy Dress.** Please see the poster below.

### Christmas Concerts & Carol Service

The Nursery – Y3 Christmas Concerts will take place on the mornings of Wednesday 4 & Thursday 5 December and the Carol Service will take place in Whitehead Presbyterian Church on the evening of Monday 16 December.

### Asda – Cashpot for Schools

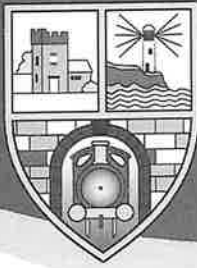
With ever increasing financial pressure on schools we are constantly considering how we can raise additional funds.

We are involved in the Asda Cashpot for Schools Scheme and as such, when you shop with Asda Rewards they will donate 0.5% of your total spend every time to your selected primary school. This is additional to your own earnings and doesn't take anything out of your Cashpot.



### Mobile Phones in School

Through the media you may be aware that the Education Minister has issued guidance regarding the use of personal mobile devices in school. This has not been an issue in school at all, however I would like to remind you that children should not in normal circumstances bring their mobile device to school. Please see the letter below from the Education Minister.



**Whitehead**  
Primary School  
& Nursery Unit

**'LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER'**

Dear Parent

It is school protocol, as based on DE Policy, to inform parents when their child's attendance is 90% or lower.

Your child's attendance is \_\_\_\_\_ which DE would describe as "Chronic Attendance". This means that your child is missing 2-3 days per month.

I appreciate that there are many reasons for a child's absence, some of which are very valid. This letter is merely designed to keep you informed and is sent out to all parents whose child's attendance has dropped to 90% or lower.

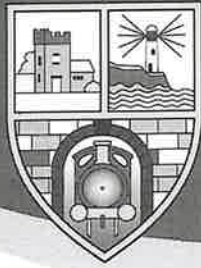
Should your child's attendance drop to 85% I will be in contact by letter again and I will begin to consider making a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

Should you need to discuss this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal



**Whitehead**  
Primary School  
& Nursery Unit

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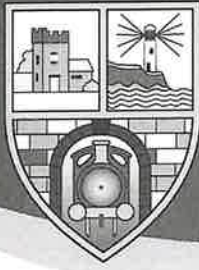
Should your child's attendance fall to 80% or less (Severe Chronic Attendance – missing 4+ days per month) I will be in contact to discuss your child's attendance and to discuss making a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

Should you need to discuss this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal



**Whitehead**  
Primary School  
& Nursery Unit

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Your child's attendance is \_\_\_\_\_ which DE would describe as "Severe Chronic Attendance". This means that your child is missing 4+ days per month.

I appreciate that there are many reasons for a child's absence, some of which are very valid. This letter is merely designed to keep you informed and is sent out to all parents whose child's attendance has dropped to 80% or lower.

Please contact the office at your earliest convenience to arrange a meeting with myself regarding your child's attendance. During this meeting we will discuss the involvement of the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

Yours faithfully

**J LOUGHINS**  
Principal



WPS PTA FUNDRAISER

# HALLOWEEN DISCO

Friday 25th October  
during school hours

**BOO!**

**NOT TOO  
SCARY!**

**FANCY  
DRESS**

**TREATS**

**GLOW  
STICKS**



£2 per pupil  
payable through School Money

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of  
**Education**

[www.education-ni.gov.uk](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk)

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Parents, Carers and Guardians

3 September 2024

Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

**SUBJECT: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS ON PUPIL USE OF PERSONAL MOBILE PHONES AND OTHER SIMILAR DEVICES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY AND POTENTIAL PILOT PROGRAMME OF INHIBITING DEVICES**

Today, my department published new guidance for schools which recommends that pupils do not use their personal mobile phones or other similar devices, during the school day and that these devices should not in normal circumstances be brought into primary schools. I wanted to write to you directly to explain why my department is taking this approach.

There are growing concerns about the impact of smartphones on children and young people's development. This includes being exposed to violence and sexual content, the risk of online bullying, the potential to effect sleep and the impact on their social skills. I know many of you are worried about the time young people spend on their phones and some of the content they may be viewing. It is a particular concern that they may be missing out on real life experiences with their family and friends.

I have considered a number of recent reports. These include the following:

- The National Behaviour Survey (2021-2022) found that 29% of secondary school pupils reported mobile phones being used without permission in most of their lessons.
- Data from Office of National Statistics (2020) suggests that one in five children (19%) aged 10-15 experienced at least one type of bullying behaviour online, and out of them, around three quarters (72%) said they experienced at least some of it at school or during school time.



- Research by Ofcom has found that older children in the UK are more likely to be bullied on a screen than in person.
- A global study of nearly 30,000 young adults found a link between the age a child received their first smartphone and their mental health in young adulthood.
- 45% of students across OECD countries feel anxious if their phones are not near them.
- A report from the Children's commissioner published in 2023 indicates that nearly a third of young people will have viewed pornography by age 11.
- The [Growing Up Online](#) study by the Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement at Stranmillis University College presented evidence that many children and young people are spending much greater amounts of time online (as much as seven hours per day during weekends and holidays and four hours or more on a school day).. The impact of this high usage, as reported by the young people and confirmed by their teachers, was a growing trend for pupils to come in to school "wrecked" or "in a complete state" or with their "heads down... sleeping" in class.

In school itself, there is growing evidence that phones can distract children from learning and that limiting access to mobile phones during the school day can have a positive impact on academic engagement and achievement. Schools that have introduced such policies have found a range of positive outcomes, including reduced bullying, an overall reduction in social media usage, increased healthy play, reduced distraction and improved academic attainment.

Many countries across the world are increasingly taking steps to limit phone use at school, including both England and the Republic of Ireland, as well as many European countries. These changes can make the world of difference in our classrooms. I want our children to be able to concentrate in school and to enjoy break and lunch playing, having fun and socialising with their friends.

I am also aware that our children and young people live in a digital world and need to learn to use technology safely and responsibly. Our schools have a key role in supporting our children to become digital citizens and digital workers of the future and in enabling them to have the knowledge and skills to access technology and to use it safely, keeping themselves, their personal information and their money safe. This is extremely important, and I want to reassure you that it is an essential part of the school curriculum.

We know that technology - when used well - can have a valuable role in supporting learning. It has a range of potential benefits - particularly for older children - including



digital textbooks and class notes, submission of homework, allowing feedback on pupils' work and allowing access to pre-recorded online lessons. Many schools have invested in technology such as tablets, iPads or laptops to support learning and teaching. Such devices will often have restrictions on internet or other applications.

Today's guidance recognises the essential role of technology in society but aims to support our children to get the most from their school day. It is our job as adults to keep our children safe; guide them in using technology appropriately and to support them to become happy and well-rounded individuals.

As a parent, I understand that many of you, particularly those with post-primary children, will wish them to have access to mobiles for safety reasons travelling to and from school. I want to reassure you that the guidance sets out a range of approaches to limiting phone use during the school day and highlights that travel is an important consideration. In addition, schools are also asked to ensure tailored approaches dependent on the particular needs of individual pupils, for example those with medical conditions or Special Educational Needs.

In order for you to support your child(ren) and help them to understand the risks of excessive use of mobile phones and the benefits of having a break from devices during the school day, you may wish to familiarise yourself with some of the evidence and concerns noted above. You may also wish to utilise resources provided in the Safer schools App [Home - Safer Schools NI](#), funded by my Department, and/or the Safeguarding Board's Online Safety Hub [SBNI Online Safety Hub](#) that I wrote to schools in April about and asked to be shared with parents and children.

These are important issues for us to consider as a society. By working together as government, schools and parents we can ensure our children have the very best opportunities to fulfil their potential.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Givan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Paul Givan MLA**  
**Minister of Education**