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Welcome note from the Principal.....

Dear Parents/Guardians, Christmas is almost here. It is a time to reflect and remember and a time to be grateful for what we have and for the people who help us. The whole school community is eagerly looking forward to Christmas. Well done everyone for working so hard this term and achieving so much. Enjoy the well deserved rest over Christmas. The Staff and Board of Management are grateful for the continued support received from Parents. Your contribution is valued and much appreciated. Your input makes a positive difference to the school. We wish all pupils, parents and families a very happy, safe and healthy Christmas. Is mise le meas,
Lisa Dempsey.

Board of Management: The new Board of Management for Scoil Ghormáin Naofa is now in place. This was a very positive process and the new members are looking forward to working for the good of the school and the children it serves. I am very grateful to all involved for giving voluntarily of their time. They will serve a four year term 2015 – 2019. The new Board is as follows:

Bishops Nominees: Joe O'Shaughnessy, Chairperson and Mary Hearne.

Teacher Nominees: Louise Whittle and Lisa Dempsey, Principal.

Parent Nominees: Concepta Church and Noel Ivanoff

Community Nominees: Niamh Ní Shuilleabhán and Seán Halvey

Please remember that while the BOM has members from across all stakeholdings in the school community they do not act as delegates or representatives for their individual groups at Board meetings. There is an agreed procedure for dealing with concerns which is available on our school website. Please follow this if necessary.

Parents Association: I would like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing P.A. Officers for all their hard work and dedication over the years. Michael, Maria, and Ailish were a great support to me in my first year of Principalship in Castletown and I thank you sincerely for the work that you have put in over the last number of years; too many achievements to list here. One of note though is the achievement of halving the debt that hangs over us within a year. Upon my appointment I was informed that the school had a debt of €20,000 that the parish thankfully loaned us interest free over four years. Our first repayment is due now. However thanks to the support, dedication and generosity of the parents and wider community of Castletown that debt now stands at €10,000. Also within that timeframe education has progressed and we have managed to purchase literacy, Aistear and I.T. resources (laptops and iPads) for your children. Concepta Church also deserves a special word of thanks for overseeing the financial management of the school over the past year and for getting it back on an even keel.

It is a new era in Castletown and time for new parents to take over the reigns of the P.A. We are moving in a new direction, we now have our B.O.M. up and running, we are using new technology in our classrooms (laptops and ipads), new resources have been purchased for Aistear and we are using new teaching methodologies in English and Maths thanks to the financial support of the parents and the outgoing committee. It is an exciting time for education in Castletown as we engage with the new teaching and learning approaches of the 21st century.

The P.A. is the structure through which parents in a school can work together for the best possible education for their children. The P.A. works with the Principal, staff and the B.O.M. to build effective partnership between the home and school. Partnership between the home and school is important because with positive and active partnership the child gets the best that primary education can offer. In the new year we plan to hold an information evening facilitated by the National Parents Association to inform parents about the role of a P.A. We would be very grateful if parents could make an effort to attend this meeting and hopefully from this we can elect a committee that is ready and willing to work for the good of the school and to oversee the functions of the P.A. on behalf of all of us.

"Green School" Programme:

We are almost there!!! We all tried our best last Wednesday 9th December to take part in our "HoHoHo Santa Stroll". Some of us strolled to school, some of us did a park and stride and some of us carpooled. This was our Action Day for our Travel flag and the feedback is good from An Taisce. Here's hoping we will receive our flag in March. Well done to everybody who tried and if you can't come to school in a green way you might try to travel in a greenway over the weekends or your Christmas holidays. Look at some of our lovely Action Day pictures.



"Active School Flag" Programme:

The children in our school continue to be very active both in and outside of school. The Supertroopers Programme is great for these long, dark evenings so please try and do the few minutes activity each day. 3rd and 4th boys won the Triona Byrne Kelly blitz. Classes from 3rd to 6th went bowling during National Bowling Week and had a great time. We have rugby training every Thursday and finally our activity for October was skipping and proved to be such a huge hit we have let it run to Christmas. It's a great fun, fitness activity for all either individually or as a group. It's also great for the yard considering the field is so wet at this time of year. The application form is in for us to get our ASF so we are waiting to hear back from the committee in the New Year! Be Active over the holidays and Happy Christmas from the Active School Flag Committee.

Class News:

Ms McGonnell – Junior/Senior Infants.

November: The children enjoyed a visit from The Wexford Wildfowl Reserve. The speakers told them lots of interesting things about bugs. This inspired the children to create ladybirds from clay.

December: In preparation for the commemoration of the 1916 Rising next year, two members of the Defence Force came to present us with a National Flag and Proclamation. Jack and Cathair Kenny accepted these on behalf of the school at the special ceremony. There is great excitement in our classroom with the build up to Christmas. The children are counting down the days on our Advent Calendar. They made decorations for the Christmas trees in the school and the Church. They have been busy playing in 'The Elves Workshop', writing lists, wrapping presents, writing gift tags, designing toys and even building Santa's sleigh. I hope you all have a very happy and peaceful Christmas and Santa is good to all!



Ms. Byrne's 1st/2nd Class What a busy second half of term one we have had!! We have learned lots of new and exciting things and have had lots of fun along the way! We were very excited to meet some of the men from the Defence Forces who presented our school with a copy of The Proclamation and an Irish Flag. We have learned lots of history around the 1916 Easter Rising. We were involved in Science Week and experimented with some celery and food colouring. Yes, the water does reach all parts of the plant! 2nd class have started to write their news 'as Gaeilge'. We all wrote Winter acrostic poems in English. 2nd class continue their preparation for their First Holy Communion. In Art, we have been working on the theme of Winter. We used chalk to create these wonderful masterpieces. November was a special month in our classroom as we remembered all our loved ones in Heaven. We lit our candles in clay pots and said a prayer. We must say a huge thank you to Sandy and her sister Mag for allowing us to decorate buns for Christmas.....it was so much fun! We are now busy preparing for our Christmas nativity play. We really do have some budding musicians and actors/actresses in our midst! Well done 1st and 2nd class on all your hard work during term one. We now look forward to a busy 2nd term. Nollaig shona daoibh go léir!



Ms. Dempsey's 3rd Class have been working like busy bees since returning to school after October Midterm! From Science Fairs to Football Blitzes to Bowling trips to 1916 commemorations to rugby coaching to visits from Wexford Wildfowl Reserve to Carol Services we haven't had a second! We also welcomed Ms. Kim Gregan, a student teacher, to our class for five weeks which the children really enjoyed.

In English we tried out 'Reading with Friends' which was a new approach to our English lessons. We all paired up with a partner in our class, read a book together and played games with interesting/difficult words that we found in our stories. A much more interesting way to go about our English lessons. It also helped us with our dictionary skills. We are also experimenting with pair work and problem solving approaches in Maths. Our emphasis is now more on how we get an answer rather than the answer itself.

Curriculum News:

New Language Curriculum

A new Language Curriculum from Infants - 2nd class will be rolled out in January 2016. To facilitate training for the new curriculum all primary schools will receive at least two half day training sessions between January and June 2016. One of these days will most likely take place in January. Adequate notice will be provided once schools receive the appropriate resources to carry out the training. This is an incremental programme which will eventually extend to 6th class.

School Self Evaluation:

To date we have focused on English and Maths as part of our School Self Evaluation Process. As a result of our findings we have introduced new initiatives such as pair work, station teaching, peer tutoring and problem solving approaches which the children are enjoying and benefitting from. We have decided to focus on P.E. as our next area. You will hear learn more about this in the new year.

Science Week:

Q:What do you call two dinosaurs that have been in an accident?

A: Tyrannosaurus Wrecks

Science week was celebrated in Scoil Ghormáin Naofa from 8th - 15th November! To mark the occasion every class carried out a variety of experiments and we held a Science exhibition in the library to which parents were invited. Check out the website and twitter feed for photos! Thanks to Ms. Whittle for coordinating the event.

National Bowling Week:

9th – 13th November



3rd – 6th Class participated in National Bowling week this year, travelling to Wicklow for our free bowling session. All children really enjoyed the day out. Evan, Stephen, Holly and Courtney went on to represent us in the regional finals. Well done everybody!

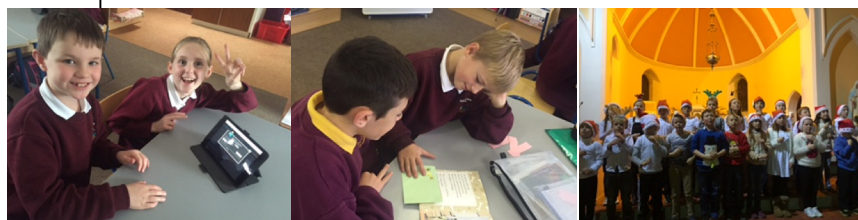
Paired Reading:

Paired reading takes place each week from Infants to 2nd class. Thanks to the dedicated parents who give their time each week to support & enhance the reading ability of our children! If you are free to give of your time please contact Siobhán in the office.

Technology

Thanks to the golf classic we held last year we are now the proud owners of 10 iPads, complete with protective covers. This is a major step forward for Scoil Ghormáin Naofa and we are all looking forward to using them with our classes from January. Keep an eye out for an information evening for parents in the new year!

Last week we participated in 'The Hour of Code' on our new iPads and laptops. We shared a device between two and worked together to develop our coding and programming skills. This was a completely new way of learning for us and we really enjoyed it! We can't wait for January where we will get to use the iPads on a more regular basis!



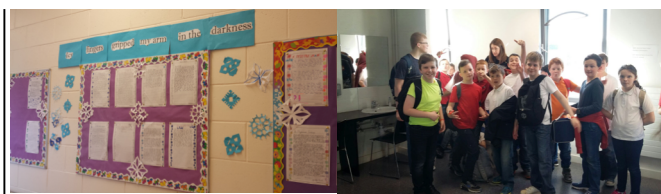
Ms. Whittle- 4th and 5th Class

Wow! What a busy few weeks we've had here in 4th and 5th class! We started back to school with a bang after the midterm and have certainly not stopped moving since. We got straight back in to our Sing Out Loud practice which all paid off on the day. We had the privilege of performing on stage in the Wexford Opera House to a FULL HOUSE! We thought it was a fantastic day out for all the family and were especially blown away by some of the other acts we saw!

In the classroom, we have been discussing healthy eating and the importance of taking care of your body. We have been learning all about eating a balanced diet and what a portion actually is. Most importantly, we experimented with the sugar content of some of our favourite drinks. We were very surprised with some of the results. We have a **"Rethink Your Drink"** display outside our classroom if you'd like to see why we were surprised. We're sure you'll be surprised too!

Our novel in English this term is Fields of Home. We have really enjoyed the adventures of Eily, Peggy and Michael. The novel follows the three different stories of these three siblings. We are shocked at how tenants were treated in Ireland during this time. We're almost finished the book and we hate when teacher tells us to stop reading! We can't wait to find out what happens.

Alongside all of this work, we have been busy preparing for Christmas. We have been learning some songs for our concert, creating beautiful Christmas artwork and learning all about the advent wreath and the five candles. We can't wait for the holidays but can't wait to see what we get up to in January! **Merry Christmas from all of us here in Ms. Whittle's 4th/5th class.**



Ms. D'Arcy- 5th and 6th Class

5th and 6th class have been busy and hardworking since the mid-term break. Our main themes this term were winter and clothing. We welcomed Ms. Ashley Woodbyrne a student teacher to our class in November and the children really enjoyed her lessons. We look forward to her return in April. The following is a taste of some of what we have been doing in class.

In English and Geography the children wrote formal letters for a Goal letter competition, on the theme of the current refugee crisis in Europe. They explored 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,' by Robert Frost and 'Winter,' by William Shakespeare. The children composed 4 line rhyming verse poetry about the first Christmas. They also wrote narrative stories based on the title, 'The Unusual Gift.' In keeping with our clothing theme the children explored and learned a poem called Laundry.

Sports All Stars

Rackard League Football - Boys

Well done to our boys; **Ross Arnold, Evan Wolohan, Jack Higgins, Jamie Kavanagh, Jack O'Gorman, Conn Kinsella, Gavin Kelly, Niall Condren, Donnacha O'Connor, James Kavanagh, Michael Kavanagh, P.J. Crotty and Doran Daly O'Toole** who represented their school in the Rackard League Football Shield Competition and brought home the trophy to Castletown. They beat Ballygarrett and the Gaelscoil in the Shield Blitz. Well done boys! Thank you to Mick and Séamus Kavanagh for all their great trainings!



Rackard League Football - Girls

Well done to our girls, **Orna O'Shaughnessy, Priya Daly O'Toole, Grace Ivanoff, Aibhín Kenny, Sophie Ivanoff, Sophia Church and Usha Daly O'Toole**, who proudly represented Scoil Ghormáin Naofa in the Rackard League Shield Competition in Naomh Eanna. They put up some great performances on the day, particularly against Coolcotts and Gorey Central but unfortunately after being defeated by the Gaelscoil we lost out on the cup due to score difference. Well done girls, ye should be very proud of yourselves.

3rd and 4th Class Blitz

On Friday 11th November we held our annual 3rd and 4th class blitz in Tomnahealy. Teams from Ballygarrett, Boolavogue, Craanford and Arklow participated in this event. We ran two competitions side by side; The Cairtriona Byrne Cup and the Parents Association Cup. Castletown entered two teams in the blitz, a 3rd class team entered the Parents Association Cup and a 4th Class team entered the Cairtriona Byrne Cup. Our 4th class team won the Cairtriona Byrne Cup beating Ballygarrett and Craanford well. Arklow won the Parents Association Cup. Both teams showed great skill and determination and represented their school proudly. Well done to all involved and thanks to everyone who helped out on the day.

Rugby Coaching:

1st to 6th classes attended Rugby coaching sessions provided by Leinster Rugby Council for the last six weeks. We had a great coach who encouraged all the children to participate in the games and provided them with a taste of rugby.

Football:

1st to 6th classes will engage in Football Coaching provided by Wexford GAA after the Christmas Holidays.

Swimming News :

Swimming for **Ms. Dempsey's and Ms. Whittle's classes** will commence in January for six weeks in Arklow Swimming Pool. This will be followed by Ms. McGonnell's Infants.

Gaeilge: They wrote an acrostic Nollaig poem and are currently putting the finishing touches to their Christmas Nollaig story. We also dramatised our scéalta Gaeilge. In Maths we were delighted by our work on lines and angles, 2D shapes, fractions and number theory. We focused more on pair work doing these topics and found it more fun and helpful.

History: We focused on clothing and the history of hats. The children began learning the timeline of events of 1916. They learned the background to the song 'Grace.' We have lots more to explore on the Rising next term. Also in Geography we learned about the rivers and lakes of Ireland.

Art: The boys and girls painted an image that stood out for them from the poem 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost. They also created wonderful Christmas cards as Gaeilge for a competition in Gorey Library and we were delighted when Daniel Proctor received Highly Commended and a gift voucher for the Arts and Hobby shop. They created imaginative, insightful 1916 art images for the 1916 flag presentation ceremony. The children made Christmas tree decorations for the tree in the church and a 3D snowman. For our clothing theme the children had to design their own hats at home and wow were we all impressed by the innovative, creative pieces they made. Milliners all!

Science Week: Based on our winter theme the children investigated the best types of material to keep us warm and which materials conducted heat best. Using various materials such as tinfoil, cotton wool and bubble wrap we explored which kept warm water warm by recording the temperature every minute. Conclusion/Result: cotton wool.

Drama/Music: It was a busy few weeks for music as we were rehearsing our songs for the Sing Out Loud in the National Opera House in Wexford. The children had a thoroughly enjoyable experience and were privileged to perform in such a venue! The children in class planned, 'This is your life,' improvised sketch about a fictional character and his/her family, retelling the character's life story. The boys and girls recreated the poem 'Laundry' through improvisation. The children worked in groups to achieve this.



Class of the Month

A new initiative has been taken on with great gusto at Scoil Ghormáin Naofa. The competition called 'Class of the Month' was introduced to all of the children in an assembly just before Midterm Break in October. It runs throughout the entire school day from 9 am to 2.40 pm each day including class time, break times, lunchtimes, informal times on the corridors etc. The initiative is focused on respect, health and safety, good manners and overall good behaviour. A dedicated noticeboard has been established where the children can remind themselves of the 5 things they need to do to score some points for their class. The leader board is updated on the Monday of each week so the children can keep an eye on their progress. The winning class will be rewarded with a Pizza Party. On 27th November 5th and 6th Class became the first ever recipients of this prestigious prize! Look at the happy faces of the well deserved winners at their party below!



January:

6th; School Reopens. Children will attend Mass in the Church.

8th; 3rd & 4th/5th Class Swimming in Arklow commences
22nd; 2nd Class First Holy Communion Mass.

February

9th; 3rd Class Rehearsal in Kilkenny for Peace Proms at 12.30 p.m.

13th; 3rd & 4th/5th Class Swimming in Arklow finishes

18th; School Closes for Mid-Term Break
22nd; School Reopens

26th; Junior/Senior Swimming in Arklow commences

27th; 2nd Class First Holy Communion Mass.

March:

5th; 3rd Class Peace Proms The Hub Kilkenny 8pm.

16th; School Closes for St. Patrick's Weekend and Easter Holidays at 12 noon.

16th; Flag Raising Ceremony in commemoration of 1916 Rising.



April

4th; School Reopens

23rd; 2nd Class First Holy Communion Mass.

30th; School Closes for May Bank Holiday.

May

5th; School Reopens after May Bank Holiday.

15th; First Holy Communion Ceremony for 2nd Class.

29th; Corpus Christi Mass Arklow

June:

3rd; School Closes for June Bank Holiday.

8th; School Reopens after June Bank Holiday.

24th; School Closes for Summer at 12 noon.