

**Parents Association
St. Mary's National School,
Ballygunner.**

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**Newsletter
Issue 34 – Halloween, 2013.**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we approach the Halloween mid-term break I wish to update you on important school news. Our school patron William Lee, Bishop of Waterford and Lismore retired recently. I have written to Bishop Lee on behalf of our school community.

This year the parents association AGM took place on Wednesday 9th October. There was a good attendance and current issues were discussed. Sincere thanks to all committee members who stepped down after their three year term.

I wish to welcome new teaching staff to our school. Emma Tallon and Katie Slattery join us as permanent members while Neil Kirwan, Philip O'Leary, Máire Byrne and Maria Hayes are with us for the 2013/2014 school year.

On Monday 23rd of September 2013 our school Board of Management arranged a School Improvement Plan Facilitation and Training

Day for all staff. It was an essential first step as we implement the Department of Education and Skills school self-evaluation guidelines for primary schools. Working groups have been established and the following areas have been prioritised: Learning support teaching, Autistic spectrum disorder classes, Roles and communication, I.C.T. development, Enrolment, Expectations of out of class behaviour, Support structure for staff and School year planner. Parents/guardians input will be sought in some areas and I will circulate a progress report before Christmas.

We continue to work on recommendations from our 2012 W.S.E. Report. This term we started a creative writing initiative for all 26 classes. We developed a senior library space and there is an on-going review of our English reading schemes. Sincere thanks to all parents/guardians who are visiting classrooms and assisting infant teachers with the 'Aistear' programme.

The Board of Management completed an annual review of our child protection policy recently and will commence a review of our anti-bullying policy in line with the Department of Education and Skills circular 45/2013 in November.

Cllr. John Cummins Mayor of Waterford visited our school on Wednesday 16th October. He launched a primary schools exercise and health eating competition and presented forty five certs to pupils who had full attendance last year. I wish to acknowledge our pupils' attendance here at St. Mary's. We had a 95% rate recorded for 2012/2013 school year which is exceptional!

Finally, I wish to extend a special welcome to all pupils and families who started in St. Mary's N.S. this year. Enjoy the mid-term

Killian O'Reilly
Principal Teacher.

Ballygunner Parents Association:

The Parents Association AGM took place at the school on 9 October last. The following officers were elected for the coming year:

Chairperson: Sinead Nevins
Vice Chair: Catherine Rogers
Secretary: Bernie Murphy
Treasurer: Robert Parsons
Teachers Rep: Maura Upton

The New Constitution was voted on and formally adopted by the Parents Association.

A huge thank you to our outgoing committee members who have now retired from the association, in particular last year's Chairperson, Phyl McNicholas, and Lisa Murphy our teachers Rep.

New Parents Coffee Morning

A coffee morning took place on Friday 27 September for parents of new pupils to the school. This was a nice informal way for new parents to meet up and get to know one another.

Victorious Waterford Minors

Our School welcomed the victorious Waterford Minor Hurling Team who came to the school on Monday 7 October with the Irish Press Cup. We were particularly delighted to welcome two of our past pupils, Peter Hogan and Billy O'Keeffe key members of the team. The School & pupils were all decked out in Blue & White for the occasion.

BOOK NEWS

Senior Infant Classes welcomed Korky Paul, the illustrator of the popular Winnie the Witch books to the school on 23 October. Our pupils who had transformed into witches and wizards for the day had a wonderful time examining Korky's work and engaging with him in a fun and lively way.

Several of our classes have exchanged

bookmarks with children in Missouri, Ontario, Mumbai, Zagreb and Romania. The other classes have exchanged bookmarks with children in the school. This initiative will help to promote the reading of novels among our pupils.



Car Park Safety

We are urging all parents to **please drive safely** at all times when dropping off/collecting your children from the school. Please **do not stop in the yellow boxes** at the entrance to the school and make sure that you use the system correctly. Be mindful of over-hanging car boots if you park your cars at the school walls as you may be obstructing the pathway to the school gate. We are grateful to Havenwood who continue to allow us to use their car park **However, this arrangement may be reviewed if the entrances/exits to the nursing home continue to be obstructed.** We urge you to only use designated car parking spaces in Havenwood and not to park any cars at the entrance/exit area. Always use the pathways when walking to/from the school and avoid the shrubberies.

Rainbows

Rainbows is a peer-support programme to assist children who are experiencing a significant loss in their lives through a death or separation in their family. Rainbows helps by providing a safe setting in which children can share their feelings, emotions and struggles with others who have similar experiences. They are supported in this process by a trained facilitator during one lunchtime session per week. It is suggested that a nine month period would pass since the time of the bereavement or separation before joining a Rainbows group. If you are interested in your child joining a Rainbows group, please contact Fionn Smith (teacher in 3rd Class) by Thursday 7th November - immediately after the mid-term break – so that the groups for this year can be organised.



Dates for your Diary:

25 Oct	School closes from 12.00pm – 12.30pm for Mid Term Break.
4 Nov	School reopens at 9.00am
Nov	Parent/Teacher Meetings
Fri 20 Dec	School closes for Christmas Holidays at 12.00pm – 12.30pm
Mon 6 Jan	School Reopens for Start of New Term
Sat 10 May	First Holy Communion
Fri 23 May	Confirmation

SPORTS NEWS



UNDER 13, Boys Gaelic Football:

The boys have beaten Mount Sion, St. Stephens and St. Declans in the league. They are due to play a final against Holy Cross, Tramore. All 27 boys on the panel are training hard daily.

U10 Football 2013:

Our u10 football team have played a lot of football this term. Our first day out was in Walsh Park where we took part in a blitz with various other city teams. It was a good practice before the u10 competition started the

following week. On Day 2 we began the u10 football tournament in Gracedieu. There were some great performances on the day and with wins over Holy Cross and Portlaw we qualified for the "A" finals this week.

The team again put in some very good performances on the day and were unlucky to not come away with the cup. Well done to all the players involved this year for their participation and their fantastic effort.

Waterford schools Cross Country

On Wednesday 18th September, the Waterford Primary Schools cross-country event took place on the RSC playing pitches. St Mary's had boys and girls from 1st to 6th class competing.

Our school received the cup for the Best Overall School achieving high points in both the boys and girls categories. Sophie Walsh from Miss Glynn's 4th class managed to lose a shoe at the start of the race and still won a medal! It was a very enjoyable and memorable day out with lots of pride for our school, in a competition of such high standard. A huge thanks to parents Darina Poyner, Cáit Caulfield, Ray Leahy and Una Clifford for your great assistance on the day.

The next athletics competition for Primary schools will take place in April 2014 for sprints, long race and relays. We will be holding trials after Easter for places on the teams.

Playing in the Aviva Stadium

Well done to David Smith in 4th Class who had a terrific win at the Aviva Stadium last Tuesday. David and his team (Ferrybank under-11s) spent the day taking part in a soccer blitz at the Aviva Stadium against teams from all over the country. They won the McDonalds FAI Future Football 2013 Cup and then played a match on the Aviva pitch during half time for the Ireland- Kazakhstan match. Well done David!

Answer to June Brainteaser

A painter has to paint 100 houses in a housing estate from 1 – 100. How many times will he have to paint the number 9?

Ans: 20



GARDEN NEWS

As you may know, our greenhouse suffered major damage during the storms earlier this year. The panels of polycarbonate were blown across the GAA field. Some were badly damaged and needed to be replaced. This process proved more difficult than anticipated. Thankfully, John McGuire of McGuire's Garden Centre, sourced replacement panels and arranged to have them installed at his expense. We are extremely grateful to him for all of his help. He also arranged that wire supports were put in place to help prevent panels being blown out in the future.

The greenhouse is fully functional now. There are some tomatoes growing there and parsnips which are ready to harvest. We have a wonderful supply of strawberry plants, with new plants growing on the runners. It is hoped to take cuttings of shrubs and root them in the greenhouse over the winter. Cuttings of plants that are beneficial to bees and butterflies would be most welcome if you have any to donate to the school.

This year we have harvested Red Cabbage, Courgettes, Onions, Peas, Beans, Lettuce, Potatoes, Strawberries, Apples and Beetroot. If you are passing the garden you may notice the tall Fennel plants grown by Ms Hayes' class last year. You will also see the beautiful display of French Marigolds that have helped to keep the green fly at bay in the raised beds which were planted by the Second Classes. Many classes have studied the garden since September, noting the plants growing there and the many kinds of insects and birds that frequent it. With winter fast approaching, do remember to feed the birds. In the coming weeks a general clean-up will take place in the garden. We will also be involved with the Green Schools Committee in the work for the Biodiversity Flag.

Maura Upton

Green Schools Initiative



"Biodiversity" is our new buzz word - it's the theme that we will be focusing on for the next two years. Biodiversity is the all about plants and animals, habitats and ecosystems all around us. We are hoping to create many new habitats in our school grounds by increasing our log piles, bark mulch, bird feeders, nesting boxes and even making a bug hotel! We also hope to plant a variety of shrubs, flowering plants, hedging and wildflower areas to attract more butterflies and bees. If anyone has any ideas, wants to build a few nesting boxes or wants to help out with digging and planting we would be delighted to hear from you!

Well done to all the pupils, parents and staff who continuously promote the Green Schools themes of litter and waste management, water and energy conservation and sustainable travel. Don't forget to recycle your used batteries, stamps and ink cartridges in the collection boxes in the main entrance hall.

Fionn Smith



Kids corner

Q. What key opens a haunted house?
A. A spooKEY!

Q. What is Dracula's favourite fruit?
A. A nectarine!

Q. Who won the zombie war?
A. Noone – it was dead even!

Happy Halloween Everybody!