



'The Phoenix' - Whitehouse News



"We Rise By Lifting Others"

February 2018

Principal's Scribble...

Dear Parent,

I want to begin by thanking all the parents who attended the **interviews with teachers** this month. The attendance rates were very high!

At this point in the year I normally have already published **school holidays for the next academic year**. Due to changes in the new Education Authority this process has been delayed. It is, however, my hope to publish them by the end of March.

I have recently completed a communication survey. Very positively parents seemed delighted by the quality of our systems and our desire to engage our community. One interesting finding to me was that **83.6% of parents would prefer e-notes rather than paper version**.

Therefore, after the Easter holidays we are going to pilot a **'paperless communication policy'**. What does this mean for parents and the school?

- ◆ All notes/newsletters not requiring a signature will be sent to parents via the app and loaded to the website;
- ◆ Letters requiring a return slip will still be sent in paper version;
- ◆ This will save money for the school that we can then invest in pupils' care and learning;
- ◆ It will help the school gain its 'Green Flag' for Eco Education.

Yours sincerely,
F. Bailie

'Festival of Words 2018'

'A Celebration of Literacy and Friendship'

On Monday 26th February we will proudly launch our fifth annual 'Festival of Words'. This week long festival will raise the profile of literacy and encourage children to become enthusiastic about their learning.

Earlier this week a timetable of the week's events were sent home and uploaded to the website. Please take time and read it as a family. This event is a great example of how we bring together super teaching with a really fun set of experiences.

Key activities will include:

- ◆ Buddy Class Reading Day
- ◆ 'Show and Tell' opportunities;
- ◆ Handwriting and poetry competitions;
- ◆ Vocabulary Parade

When we compare our literacy scores to other similar primary schools in Northern Ireland we believe **we are achieving well above the norm**. We strive towards these standards by working hard but also by trying to make literacy fun. Please try to engage in this week with your child.

'The Festival of Words' will incorporate the Scholastic Book Fair. There will be a chance to purchase books each morning from 8.30am and from 2pm to 3.30pm each afternoon. 60% of all sales from the book fair will be donated to our school. We intend to invest all the commission in our fantastic Roald Dahl Library.

This event is a great example of how we bring together super teaching with a really fun set of experiences.



"Learning to Live"

Talking Points: **Sleep & Education**

Every month we would like to share an educational issue with our families. The need for parents and teachers to be on the 'same page' is so important to help our pupils reach their full potential. My hope is that parents would find this information useful and thought provoking. We are also very keen for parents to respond with their comments to us. Your comments can be sent to Mr Bailie (wbailie552@c2kni.net).

This month we want to discuss the link between **Sleep & Education**. Children's sleep is often for parents an area of concern. When your child is a baby one of the first questions we are often asked is, 'How does he/she sleep for you?'

Sleep deprivation is a significant factor in lowering pupils' achievement. It is a particular problem in more affluent countries, with sleep experts linking it to the use of **mobile phones** and **computers in bedrooms late at night**. In a recent study in the USA 76% of 9 and 10-year-old pupils were lacking sleep.

Brain Food

'Sleep is a fundamental need for all children. If teachers report such large proportions of children suffering from lack of sleep, it's having a significant impact.'

'If you are unable to concentrate, to attend mentally, you are unable to achieve at your optimal level, because your mind and body are in need of something more basic.'

Sleeping & Tablets

'It isn't only that young people are kept awake by messaging their friends or using the internet. The light from the screen, held close to the face, is physically disruptive to the natural onset of sleep. It's going to tell your brain to stay awake,' says Dr. Fitzpatrick.

'There is a growing interest in the associations between adequate sleep and academic performance," says Professor Dijk.

Practical Suggestions

It is not our role to be a 'Nanny' school. Parents need to make decisions for their own families. We are simply sharing research and our experience. It is your decision how you use this information.

Schools are experiencing more pupils being sleep deprived and it is impacting achievement.

Please consider the following ideas:

Get homework done before tea if possible;

Limit pupils screen time (especially before bedtime);

Have a regular bedtime routine that helps your child 'wind down' naturally;

Set sensible bedtimes and make it a positive parent/child time.

**'Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening.
Sleep in the night.'** - William Blake



Reach For The Stars



Our team of Year 4 NASA engineers blasted off to Armagh Planetarium this month. During our mission we designed and built rockets, of course we had to launch them to check whose was the most aerodynamic! We visited the digital theatre to explore the planets, Earth's moon and the constellations. We had a thrilling ride on the Armaghgeddon space coaster before having a well earned lunch and a visit to the shop.



Who knew Uranus used to be called George?

Eva Drake

We zoomed around Space on the space coaster and even though we weren't moving, it felt like we were!

Jack Frizzell

I never know that Saturn's belt was made of lots of little pieces.

Mitchell Kelly

Beware of shooting stars, they could be exploding astronaut poo.

Sophie Taylor

I can't believe astronauts have to wear an adult sized nappy in space.

Naomi Stewart

Did you know there are 3 abandoned space buggies still on the moon?

Dewan Sharif

Neptune and Uranus are made from methane gas.

Lewis McCracken



Our engineers at work building rockets.



Time to add fuel.



Time for launch!



I enjoyed visiting the shop and going on the spacecoaster.
By Emma

There are 5 dwarf planets, one of these is called PLUTO. By Jack M



I learnt that Uranus was first called George, but astronauts didn't like the name and changed it. We liked the name George.

By David.



We visited Armagh Planetarium as part of our 'Reach for the Stars' topic. We had a terrific day learning about our Solar System, competing in quizzes, building and launching rockets, learning about astronauts, eating lunch, visiting the shop and travelling on the bus. Here are our thoughts on the day:



We found out that Saturn is not the only planet with rings. Uranus has rings although they are not as visible from Earth. By Ava.



We found out that astronauts have to wear adult nappies as they travel to Space. In the International Space Station they collect their pee and recycle it into water. They keep their poo in the freezer, when it is full up, they throw it out of the space station and it burns up as it hits the earth's atmosphere. This can look like a shooting star.

By Katie and Adam Y.

Astronauts have to eat dried food in space. The ice-cream they eat is called Astronaut ice-cream and it is the nicest thing they have to eat.

By Rebecca S and Jacob.



Blueprint 2020

September 2017/18 sees the fifth year of our dynamic six year school development strategy. This innovative and far ranging plan will bring our school to the next level in terms of learning and services to our community.

In this section we want to share some of our key strategic goals for the year ahead and then focus in on a few of the key innovations. Over the next year we will regularly report on what has been achieved and the new projects that we develop.

Strategic Leadership

To share good practice across the school and beyond to enhance staff development and pupils' attainment. This will include the development and coaching of curriculum leaders;

The continued development of Shared Education with St. James's Primary School. In particular, this will allow the schools to promote S.T.E.M. and Forest School learning as well as achieving 'Rights Respecting Schools' status;

To engage with community stakeholders to increase aspirations, attainment, early intervention and collaboration. This will include focused family learning support interventions.

Ethos

Implement and review a whole school wellbeing strategy;

Achieve the British Council's International School Award by June 2018;

Use the pursuit of the Eco Green Flag, by June 2019, as a means to educate our school community to be more eco friendly.

Learning and Teaching

90+% of pupils, in both, Literacy and Numeracy will achieve as expected or above;

I.C.T. will more effectively enrich creativity, thinking skills and improve school management;

Review and update our P.D.M.U. provision.

February Update:

We held a very successful and effective **Internet Safety Day** on the 6th February. Classes across the school engaged in some really interesting activities. They also entered an e-safety competition for 'House Gold'. The entries were fantastic but more importantly it was obvious that the pupils had learned lots about staying safe on the internet.

We also during February made useful preparations towards our **Rights Respecting School Award** bid for later in the school year. Our Eco Club Teachers, Mrs. Weir and Miss McIntosh, attended a Eco School Leadership training course to help us prepare for our '**Green Flag Award**' entry for June 2019.

In addition to this teachers are working very hard to include more **e-safety lessons and numeracy/thinking skills activities**. Staff also audited our I.C.T. planning overviews.

Diary Dates

February

25th - Year 5 pupils attend the Peace Proms in Belfast.

26th - 'Festival of Words' - A week of activities promoting reading, writing and drama. Calendar of events has already been sent home.

26th - **Scholastic Book Fair Week.** Open from 8.30am and then 2pm to 3.30pm.

March

2nd - **Internet Safety Drama Production.** Year 4 to 7 pupils (1.45pm to 2.45pm).

5th - **Year 5 Early Man History Day**

5th - The milk notes for the Summer Term will be issued. **Deadline 20th March.**

19th to 23rd - Easter Week Assemblies exploring 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'.

19th & 20th - Year 5 Shared Education Easter Trips to local churches.

20th - Milk Order Deadline for the Summer Term.

23rd - Non-Uniform Day £1. Early closure (no school lunches served today). Hope to use the money raised to help with our new outdoor play area.

Year 1 - 4 pupils leave at 12pm with older siblings.

Year 5 - 7 pupils leave at 12.15pm.

Nursery pupils leave between 12pm and 12.15pm.

Easter Holidays 26th March to 6th April.

School begins on Monday 9th April.

Pastoral Care Team



Pupils' safety and care is our first priority. If you have any concerns we have a team of staff who are trained to support pupils and families. This team focuses on both child protection and wider pastoral support.

Team Leader: Mrs R Watson

Mrs Clifford (Early Years)

Mrs Spratt (Nursery)



Special Easter Celebrations



As a school we take very seriously our responsibility to teach our pupils about key Christian celebrations. This year, starting on Monday 19th March there will be a week of assemblies to prepare children for Easter. During this week the children will be exploring 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'

These fun and informative assemblies will help our pupils understand the significance of Easter and enjoy the celebrations.

In addition, on the 19th and 20th March Year 5 children, with their friends from St. James', will be attending **Easter Workshops in Whitehouse Presbyterian**. This year we are celebrating a 26 year friendship with St. James's. At this very special time of the year is good to come together and share our understanding of Easter.

Mr Bailie will also be sending home a family competition on Monday 19th March. This will be an opportunity for parents to work through the Easter story with their children. As a school we are focused on striving to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for all our pupils. We hope this build up to Easter will help reinforce our R.E. curriculum richly.

Get cracking and have a lovely Easter!