



## 'The Phoenix'- Whitehouse News



**"We Rise By Lifting Others"**

April 2018

### *Principal's Scribble...*

Dear Parent,

We are preparing for our **end of year assessments** during May. Please try for 100% attendance. It makes all the difference!

On **Thursday 26th April** I will post the letters to all parents who were successful in gaining a place in **nursery or Primary 1** for September. I wish these families every happiness and success in the years ahead.

Our P.T.A. are working very hard in getting ready for our **Summer Fair**. It will be held on **Friday 1st June from 5pm to 7pm**. Please plan to come along and support all their efforts.

I am extremely proud of our school's work in developing I.C.T. On the 10th April we were visited by judges search for the **top I.C.T. school in Northern Ireland**. In June we will hear if we have won the award. However, whatever the final decision we can be proud to be in the top few contenders in the county.

**School budgets are under chronic stress.** In practical terms, every year many families who are entitled to **free school meals** do not apply. This means **we lose out on thousands of pounds**. See page 2 for details on who is entitled. These are tough times and we need to work together as a community.

The **new outdoor learning area** will begin this week. This £50,000 project is the first stage in a longer term plan. Parking will be more difficult with builders on site, sorry!

Yours sincerely,

F. Bailie

### **Northern Ireland ICT Award Finalists!**

We are very proud to have been shortlisted for the Northern Ireland I.C.T. Award. The awards were introduced back in 2015 to celebrate the innovative technology in schools across Northern Ireland and the impact this is having on students.

The ICT Team at Whitehouse worked extremely hard to submit a presentation and five judges came to complete a very robust evaluation of the school on the 10th April.

We also had to submit a video to support our case. The pupils had great fun producing it and we look forward to sharing it with our community once the competition has ended.

A big congratulations to all involved and whatever the outcome all school who took part are winners!

### **Nut Free Zone**



In school we have several children who will have a severe and life threatening reaction if exposed to nuts. We therefore are a nut free school and ask all parents to carefully check that breaks and lunches do not contain any nuts. Thank you for your support.

**"Learning to Live"**

## **Are you losing out on a free school uniform and school dinners?**

Last year we lost around £20,000 of funding because families did not claim the benefits they were entitled to. This year it could be even more!

A pupil is entitled to free school meals and a uniform grant if:

- the parent/guardian is in receipt of Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance, or if a pupil claims Income Support in their own name; or,
- the parent/guardian is in receipt of Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit and has an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less; or,
- he/she has a statement of special educational needs and is designated to require a special diet; or
- the parent is in receipt of the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit; or
- he/she is the child of an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS).

Some people do not apply. Even if you do not want meals you are losing out on £35.75 per child for uniforms.

In addition, the school also loses out on funding. We did a study of one year group and found that eight parents were not claiming free meals. Based on this survey, assuming this is typical of each year group, we are losing around £20,000 per year, which could be used very well in our school.

Please contact our school office or ring the Education Authority Meals and Uniforms office on 0282566 2571 for an application form if you are eligible.

Education cuts are looking to be very serious over the next three years. We need to get every penny of budget available to us. To miss out on over £20,000 of funding will have serious consequences for our school. Please apply!

## **Forest Schools/ Outdoor Learning**

Nursery and Primary 1 classes have just recently completed a 5 week programme each on Forest Schools with their friends from St. James.'

### **Nursery**

*Nursery's Forest School Learning took place at the Whitehouse site. We had great fun in the forest learning about forest safety, finding camouflage animals, creating natural tree art, building homes for the woodland animals and making bird feeders for the hungry birds!*



### **Primary 1**

*Primary 1's Forest School Adventures took place at St. James' site. We had lots of fun in the forest taking part in a Scavenger Hunt, doing a sound search, making fantastic tree art, building dens and having yummy toasted marshmallows around the campfire!*

### **Primary 2**



***Primary 2 will begin their Outdoor Learning with their friends from St. James' next week!***

**Whitehouse Primary School was Awarded HUB School Status**



In the Nursery we have been learning all about Growth in Spring time. We have had lots of fun playing in the Hairdressers and Nail bar, finding out about Spring animals, and planting seeds and vegetables. We are excited to see our fluffy caterpillars growing more and more each day! Soon they will be beautiful butterflies!



# Nursery Growth in Spring



# 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.

## April Update:

The main success has been a successful entry for the **Northern Ireland I.C.T. Award**. Please read the details on page 1. We are only into our second year of our I.C.T. school development focus and so whatever the result we can be rightly very proud!

Our school was also granted over £44,000 extra funding for the next two years to act as a **Shared Education Hub School**. This means our work in Shared Education has been judged of a very high standard and now we are a nominated training provider for other schools across Northern Ireland.

Finally, the **new outdoor learning area is starting**. We hope it will be completed by the end of May this school year. Over the next five years we intend to build additional phases to provide our pupils with a great play and learning zone. Our thanks to the council, P.T.A. and the generous help from parents. Every pound has helped!

# **Whitehouse Primary School Holiday 2018/2019**

**School begins on Thursday 30th and Friday 31st August with short days.** Year 2 to 4 pupils will leave at 12 noon and Year 5 to 7 will leave at 12.15pm for both these days. There will be no lunches served these two days. Nursery and Year 1 pupils, however, will be phased in gradually. Details will be provided during information sessions in June 2018.

The school will be closed for a training day on **Friday 28th September.**

School ends on **Friday 26th October** from 1pm to 1.15pm for the **Autumn Holiday.**

School begins on **Monday 5th November.**

School ends on **Friday 21st December** from 12noon to 12.15pm for the **Christmas Holidays.**

School begins on **Friday 4th January.**

School ends on **Friday 15th February** from 1pm to 1.15pm for the **Winter Holiday.**

School begins on **Thursday 21st February.**

The school will close on **Monday 18th March at 12pm and 12.15pm** for staff training. The school will begin on **Wednesday 20th March.**

School ends on **Friday 12th April** at 12pm to 12.15pm for the **Easter Holidays.**

School begins on **Monday 29th April.**

School ends on **Friday 3rd May.**

School begins on **Wednesday 8th May.**

School ends on **Friday 24th May.**

School begins on **Tuesday 28th May.**

The school year finishes on Friday 28th June 2019 for the **Summer Holidays from 12noon to 12.15pm.**

We have published these holiday dates well in advance to help parents avoid booking family holidays during term time. Please avoid taking children out of school for family holidays. Pupils' attainment is impacted when they are not in school!

# Talking Points: Play & 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 **play & a successful education**. From Nursery to Year 7 we believe all pupils should engage in 'playful learning'. This can include a wide range of activities from building in a sand tray to designing robots during S.T.E.M. workshops. It can be indoors, outdoors or even in cyberspace. As educators we see the value of play to stimulate and reinforce high quality learning and teaching.

## Is it just play?

As George Bernard Shaw said:

**'We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing.'**

'A quick look at the ways in which play contributes to developing creativity and problem-solving skills, building knowledge and self-confidence and encouraging innovation and risk-taking, should convince even the most hard-headed cynics that it continues to be integral to intellectual, physical, emotional and social growth throughout childhood.' (S. Brown)

Dr. Stuart Brown is a world-renowned psychiatrist who makes a strong case for the importance of play to brain development, social integration and life success - from birth through to old age.

During the early years, as children's brains grow dramatically and they move rapidly from one developmental stage to the next, play remains central to their growth and development and is the primary means by which they build cognitive skills and begin to make sense of the world.

A recent study undertaken by the Universities of Strathclyde, Stirling and West of Scotland explored this issue when the Scottish Executive was planning to introduce a play-based pedagogy described as 'Active Learning'. This involved incorporating periods of more traditional teacher-led whole-class learning in areas such as phonics and number work with periods of play-based activities in smaller groups. All of the teachers involved in this study believed that this type of active or play-based learning promoted a positive, enthusiastic attitude to learning and encouraged independence and confidence in the children.

A Wellcome Trust report from 2005 recommended that, in order to spark children's enthusiasm and interest in science, there should be wider use of creative and innovative approaches such as role-play, stories and cross-curricular teaching, which would help children link up what they are learning and better understand the relevance of science in their everyday lives.

By following the lead of the child, listening, observing, and questioning when appropriate, we are able to extend the play experience in a positive and non-controlling way and enhance learning.

By providing ample opportunities for play, creating environments that support play both inside and outside the classroom, and playing with our children, we are sending the message that play is an important aspect to our lives. The seeds of creativity and innovation that arise out of early play experiences will continue to grow and thrive if we continue to encourage play, not just when our children are young, but as they move through childhood.

Leigh-Anne Stradeski (CEO of Eureka! National Children's Museum)

*"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than  
in a year of conversation." - Plato*



# Diary Dates

## APRIL

**27th** - Nursery and Year 1 letters for 2018 are due to arrive today!

-Y.7 Victorian Day at Sentry Hill.

## MAY

**7th** - May Day Holiday!

**22nd** - Primary 1 Parents' Induction Morning

- **Shared Education Culture Night.**

More details to follow.

**23rd** - Nursery Parents' Induction Meeting

- **SCHOOL CLOSED @ 1pm/1.15pm for training workshop.**

**28th** - May Holiday!

**30th** - Sports' Morning for Nursery to Year 4.

## JUNE

**1st** - School Fair @ 5pm - 7pm

**5th** - Sports' Morning Key Stage 2

**14th** - Reports issued!

**18th** - Half-price Summer Book Fair

**19th** - Report return deadline!

**25th** -Yr. 7 Leavers service 9.30am -11.30 am

**26th** - Yr. 3 to 6 Prize Day.

**27th** - Nursery Celebration Event

- Year 6 A.Q.E. interviews

**29th** - £1 'Dress Down Day'

- Attendance Assemblies

-Yrs. 1- 4 Leave at 12 noon;

- K.S.2 leave at 12.15 pm.

Happy Summer Holidays!

Please refer to the holiday list for 2018/19 in this month's Phoenix.

Try and plan ahead and avoid holidays during school time.

If your child misses school they miss out!

# 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)

## Attendance & Punctuality



It is our aim to keep school attendance levels at 97% or above. With assessments continuing right up to the end of term we ask that you ensure your child attends school every day.

An attendance of 95% is seen as only 'satisfactory' on reports. It is important that we aim for high attendance and punctuality as they have strong links with high achievement.

**If your child has attendance below 90% from aged 4 to 16 they will have missed more than a year of their education!**

Punctuality is crucial. Many children who arrive late are missing valuable learning and teaching time. Make sure your child is in class for 9am so that they do not miss out.