

# St. Helen's JNS

Newsletter - December 2022



## Active School Flag!

This term the school has taken its first steps in achieving our first Active School Flag. This is an initiative supported by the Dept. of Education which aims to provide schools with a framework to guide and support them to work towards achieving a physically educated and physically active school community. A team, led by Ms. Walsh, Mr. Shevlin, Mr. Jennings and myself will be organising lots of fun activities for the children to participate in, in the new year as we work towards achieving our Active School Flag. This month we introduced an extra active break where the children have been doing 'The 12 days of Fitness!'. Looking forward to an active 2023!

Thanks again to Shane Kavanagh of the victorious Naomh Mearnóg hurlers and our G.P.O Ronan, who came to visit us last month. Shane spoke to the children about the fun and enjoyment he gets from playing team sports. Congrats to the team again!

**Louise Rooney**

### New percussion instruments investment

The school invested in new music resources, a set of over 100 new musical instruments. These include a mixture of standard percussion such as castanets and triangles as well as instruments from around the world such as monkey drums and claves. Children will learn how to make different sounds using different instruments. The elements of music such as dynamics (loud, soft), duration (long, short) and register (high, low) will be explored. Mr Horan lead some African drum workshops, integrating music with other subject topics such as number in maths and stories in language. Children will enjoy exploring tuned percussion using 6 additional sets of chime bars. The Cabhair Centre received a beautiful selection of instruments for engaging in sensory play.

**Philip Horan**

## Update from our Parents' Association

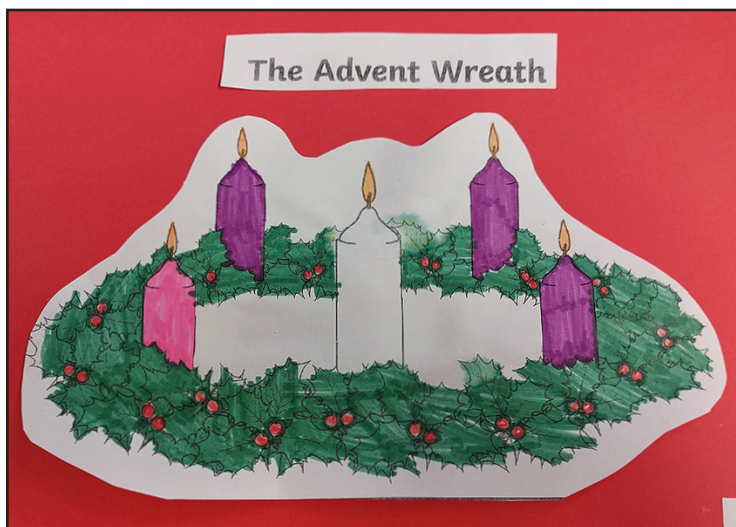
Hard to believe it's that time of the year again drawing an end to another school term which was hugely positive and successful. We managed to hold our first in person AGM in a number of years and are delighted to welcome new members to our PA. Thank you to all who attended on the night, it was lovely to all be able to meet in the school hall again.

We had great fun for dress up day at Hallowe'en and thanks to everyone for your donations to our chosen charity Oscar's Kids. The Christmas Cards designed by all the children again this year proved to be a massive success. Huge thanks to all the parents and guardians for their continued support on this. Also our first year to have a Christmas Raffle which will take place next week. Thank you most sincerely for such positive feedback and support on this. We were delighted with the generous response. The return of the children's Christmas concerts for me this has been my highlight. The children were all incredible and it was so special to be back in the hall with our beautiful brand new stage (thank you again) to cheer them on. This is what Christmas is all about, pure magic.

Santa and his elves will visit the school on Monday which no doubt will be another memorable day within our school community. On behalf of the Parents' Association, I would like to thank Andrea and all the staff for the amazing work they do for our children daily in making St Helen's JNS the unique place it is! Thank you all for your support to the PA. Wishing you all a happy, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year.

**Sarah Murphy** Chairperson Parents' Association





**Room 7 - The Advent Wreath**

## A Word from the Principal...

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our parents, teachers, SNAs, Marcella, Gerry and all within our school community for your help, support, commitment and enthusiasm over the last term.

It is a magical time of the year in St. Helen's Junior School! It was our pleasure to share that spirit of joy and gratitude with you all last week as we watched in awe of our pupils while they performed on our brand new stage. We will have years of performances ahead and our school will always treasure the gesture and generosity experienced as result of the donation of our stage.

Santa came to visit us on Monday 19th December and was delighted by the bespoke grotto designed by Gwen, Gerry and Miriam with lots of extra support given as needed. Sarah Nugent kindly provided a festive balloon arch which was then redesigned to adorn the grotto.

We would all like to thank you for your continued and generous support to us here in the Junior School over the past term. Our school is blessed with a supportive community always willing to help or give a hand if needed.

We especially want to acknowledge your wonderful children who have been outstanding since we returned to school and they never cease to give us such joy and delight every day.

80 new junior infants joined us in September. They are all well settled now and enjoying their time in big school. We were also delighted to welcome 6 new pupils to the Cabhair Centre and to extend this special fáilte to all the new pupils in other classes throughout the school.

Our Parents' Association have worked tirelessly throughout the term helping with our Hallowe'en dress up for Oscar's Kids, our annual Christmas card project of which the school receives 50% of the proceeds and our first Christmas raffle. The enormous generosity shown by the many sponsors, parents, guardians, grandparents and friends for our Christmas raffle. We are very appreciative of your support and to all those parents who gave generously of their time to organise and run these initiatives under the guidance of Sarah Murphy, Chairperson of our PA.

Finally, on behalf of myself and all the staff of St. Helen's Junior School we would like to wish you all and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas. We look forward to seeing you all on the 5th of January as we reopen for our 2nd term with the promise of another exciting New Year!

Nollaig Shona agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh!

**Andrea Smith and the staff of the Junior School**

# English

The whole school has started a new English programme called 'Over the Moon'. The children enjoy the new stories and activities from the programme. Their favourite part of the week is the station teaching, where their teacher and an additional teacher split the class into four or five groups and the children do a carousel of fun and interesting activities. We are 'Over the Moon' about the new programme!!!

Our Shared Reading Programme has also restarted this year. The transition years from Portmarnock Community School visit one of our Senior Infants every Wednesday. Each transition year student sits individually with a Senior Infant child and reads with them in our school hall. They discuss the books they have read and write or draw about the characters. The Transition years and Senior Infants really enjoy this time.



**Room 12 - Christmas Jumpers**



**Room 13 - Baubles**



**Room 15 - Santa**





## Our Seventh Green Schools Flag 'Global Citizenship - Energy'

St. Helen's Junior School is currently working on our Seventh 'Green School flag for Global Citizenship -Energy.' This Global Citizenship Energy theme gives schools the chance to revise the Energy theme while looking at issues surrounding energy on a global scale. The most obvious global link to the energy theme is of course Climate Change, the most serious environmental problem of our time and is intrinsically linked to our energy use. We hope that by increasing students' knowledge of and interest in saving energy will encourage the children to become more energy aware and conserve energy at home and at school.

We have formed a Green Schools Committee. This committee is made up of one child from each class and they have meetings and really important information to their classes.

We have also been revisiting past green school themes. Many classes have also planted flowers to take home and replant. In each class, we kept track of the seasons and changes on our grounds during these times. We also continue to recycle paper, batteries, and mobile phones.

The children in Mr Jennings' Class have been working on a special project called 'Picker Pals'. This is a project where the children use a litter picker to collect litter and plastic waste.

Read more about the 'Picker Pals' and the Green Schools Energy theme here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?>

<https://greenschoolsireland.org/themes/global-citizenship-energy/>



Room 18 - Winter Wonderland

## Calendar 2022-2023

### Christmas Holidays

- Wednesday 21st December @12pm

**School reopens** Thursday 5th January 2023

### Term 2

**Public Holiday** - Monday 6th February 2023

**Mid-term Break** (Inclusive) Monday 13th February - Friday 17th February 2023

**St. Patrick's Day** - Friday 17th March 2023

### Easter Break

**School closes** Friday 31st March 2023

**School reopens** Monday 17th April 2023

### Term 3

**Midterm Break** (Inclusive)

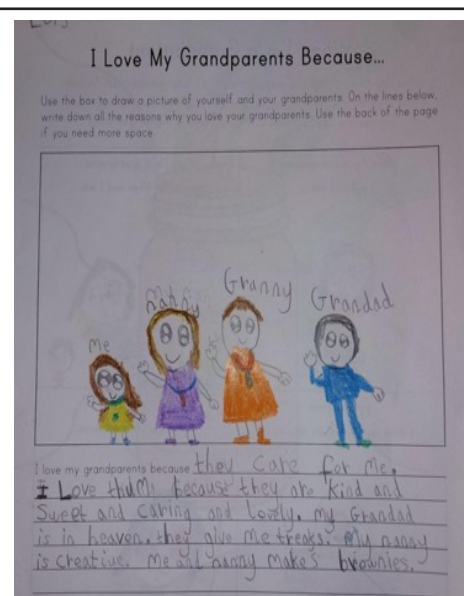
Monday 1st May - Friday 5th May 2023

**June Bank Holiday** - Monday 5th June 2023

### Summer Holidays

**School closes** Friday 30th June 2023

**\*First Holy Communion** 13th May 2023



## Grandparent's Day

This term we celebrated International Grandparent's Day on the 6th October 2022. We worked on poetry, art, reports, stories, songs and drawings of our Grandparents. It was lots of fun to hear about the special things our friends love to do with their Grandparents. In second class we interviewed a Grandparent to find out what school, games and Halloween were like when they were children. On Grandparents Day we said a special prayer and lit a candle for all the Grandparents who have gone to heaven.



## A Word from the Board Of Management

It's Christmas time again and the Board of Management and I would like to thank all staff for all that they do to make the school a caring and nurturing environment for our children's education.

There were a number of Staff Appointments in August and we'd like to welcome both teacher appointments, Laura Walsh and Ciarán Jennings. Two new SNAs, Ronda Murnane and Beata Polanska have also joined the team. Philip Horan has recently been appointed Assistant Principal to the InSchool Management Team, congratulations to all.

The Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment are displayed inside the school in the reception area. Andrea Smith is the Designated Liaison Person and Susan Kavanagh the Deputy Designated Liaison Person. Teachers are made aware on a regular basis of their responsibilities as Mandated Persons.

Continuous professional development is important to all staff and I'd like to thank all SNAs and teachers who completed Crisis Prevention Intervention training offered in the school during the year and a thank you to Philip Horan who delivered the training.

The school is looking great with continued improvement and maintenance works with the replacement of the paving slabs at the front of school; new fencing installed and an all weather surface to a small area in the Senior Yard; roof repairs; refurbishment of the school hall; floor polishing throughout the school over the Hallowe'en break.

The Parents' Association continues to play an important role in the school and have recently welcomed new members. The Board of Management would like to acknowledge their support to the school since opening last August, in particular their contribution to the organisation of the Christmas raffle.

I was blessed to be able to attend the Junior and Senior childrens' school concerts last week. It was great to see the school glowing with decorations, hear the childrens' performances and share in their excitement, a gentle reminder of the wonder of Christmas, thanks to all.

Wishing all our families and staff a healthy and happy Christmas and New Year.

**Celine O'Connell** Chairperson BOM



**Room 17 - Winter Wonderland**

## Weaving Wellbeing

This term second class worked through the Weaving Wellbeing programme created by Fiona Forman. This programme is designed to empower children to identify their top personality strengths and those of their friends and family. This has created wonderful opportunities for class discussions about how best we can use our strengths to relate, play and learn together.

The course is laid out across 10 lessons, each with a PowerPoint using child friendly language, online resources, suggested activities and a guided meditation. The children in my class loved 'Strength Spotting' the most. A post box was placed in the classroom where the children could write and submit a note of acknowledgement when they saw their friend showing a particular strength e.g. I saw ... using his strength of leadership in the yard. These were then read out for everyone to hear. The final activity was to identify your top five strengths and to create a poster illustrating them.

For me, the most powerful idea in Weaving Wellbeing is 'Brave Self Talk' e.g. "I can do it", "I have done hard things before", "it's ok to try new things". This activity challenged the children to suggest helpful phrases they might say to a friend who is not feeling brave and then use that same kind voice and those same helpful words for themselves. This is something I feel we can revisit again and again with our pupils in order to foster a kind and supportive inner voice. The Mo and Ko Programme, also by Fiona Forman, is being taught in the Infants and First classes as a part of our whole school approach to enhancing children's wellbeing.

**Graceanne O'Callaghan**







## The Fingal Library

The Fingal Library van visits our Second class children every week. The children have the opportunity to choose a book to take home for the week. The library van has a great selection of books for the children to choose from.

## School Self Evaluation

As part of our School Self evaluation we have been working on the children increasing their knowledge and use of Gaeilge Neamhfhoirmiúil. Our Phrases for Nollaig are



Our school Christmas concerts also featured some fantastic performances as Gaeilge. Our favourite one was the Second class rendition of 'Áthas don Domhan'



Áthas don Domhan  
 Áthas don domhan, don saol go léir.  
 Cuir fáilte roimh an rí  
 Cuir fáilte roimh an leanbh, i do chroí,  
 Cuir fáilte roimh an rí,  
 Cuir fáilte roimh an rí,  
 Cuir fáilte,  
 Cuir fáilte roimh an rí,

Susan Kavanagh



Room 6 - Christmas



Room 23





Room 16 - Snowmen



Room 24



Room 11



Room 19



Room 14



Musical Instruments



Room 25 - Christmas Tree



Room 20 - Cribs





**Room 21 - Snowmen**

**School website**

We hope you are all continuing to enjoy our school website. As well as being an effective communication tool for parents and the whole school community, it's also a lovely way of viewing photographs and videos of the children's work and what activities they are doing in class. ([sthelensjunior.com](http://sthelensjunior.com))

## Christmas 2022

After two years of video Christmas shows, we were delighted to be able to welcome parents and grandparents into our school hall for the Christmas performances this year. The classes were busier than ever rehearsing for their Christmas sing-a-long. The corridors were filled with the beautiful sweet sound of children singing. The school set was created and beautifully decorated by Gerry, Gwen, and their team. Thanks to all our dedicated teachers and SNAs who have helped the children to make this a very special Christmas performance.

Marcella sent her annual letter to Santa in the North Pole and asked if he could visit the boys and girls who have been so good all term. We were all very excited to meet Santa in School on Monday 19th December.

**Eimear Kane**

