NEWS SHEET 2 (OCTOBER 2016)

A Thuismitheoirí,

Hasn’t the first half of term just flown by! Tá Oíche Shamhna beagnach buaillte linn! I wish to compliment pupils, staff and parents for all their hard work and true diligence to date this year. It has been most fruitful. I wish to bring the highlights along with some other points of information to your attention below:

1. Congratulations to the senior pupils and their captains Matthew Forde and Caoimhe Cunningham (Caoimhe was also selected to play underage for Galway recently!) who participated in the mini sevens Cumann na MBunscol football competitions in Corrandulla at the start of the month. They played with massive passion as always and their attitude on the field of play was exemplary. Some excellent results were recorded against larger schools. While it’s not always possible to secure playing time for all panel members at every school game, I was delighted that on this occasion I managed to do just that.
2. Many thanks to the parents who take turns to wash the school jerseys. It’s always noted and much appreciated by the school staff and the pupils.
3. Our athletes are gearing up for their annual athletics event in Annaghdown N.S. this coming Thursday. Many pupils are displaying excellent intrinsic motivational skills (an important life skill) by running their distances without having to be reminded during their breaks and outside of their official timetabled P.E. class. We’re fortunate that we can ensure that all pupils from 3rd to 6th class will be both participating and supporting (their fellow classmates) on the day. In the lead up, I’d ask parents to practise the distances with their children and to record their times. Our aim is that every pupil will know their best time by Thursday morning and when they return home in the evening they will hopefully be able to report a P.B. to you! That’s what winning is about.
4. Many thanks to Mrs Gannon and Breda McHugh for organising a very interesting visit by Babaro, the Galway based children’s youth theatre company. All junior children fitted into the mobile library that arrived at the school, where interesting stories about the Cnoc Meadha fairies were told! How fitting! One fairy still lingers amongst the toys in Mrs Gannon’s classroom! Mrs Gannon has also organised the pupils’ personalised Christmas cards and a trip for the junior pupils to a Christmas show in December! Many thanks!
5. Senior pupils visited Tuam library as part of their annual Autumn Book Festival. The pupils returned to the school all enthusiastic for writing after a children’s author gave a workshop.
6. Over €600 has been collected for book purchases from the Book Club company. 20% off all orders are given back to school as book credit! This enables us to place orders for classroom reading resources. Many thanks to Ms Fleming and Breda McHugh for organising this on behalf of all the pupils every year. We all appreciate the value of encouraging our children to read.
7. Many thanks to Ms Kelly and all the staff for researching and sharing their beautiful Halloween art ideas with each other. All very stimulating stuff for the pupils.
8. Many thanks also to Ms Keady, Ms McDonagh and Ms Joyce for researching appropriate assessments and organising targeted educational resources for the special needs department. This is all very time consuming but very much appreciated.
9. Matt Cunningham’s visits are another highlight every week. The cost of these tin whistle classes are only €10 per pupil for the 1st term. This represents excellent value for money. The B.O.M.’s termly subsidy ensures that this low cost per pupil is maintained. Private lessons would be considerably more expensive than this. Pupils in Ms Kelly’s and Ms Fleming’s room are given this special opportunity. I urge you to motivate your child to spend no more than 5 minutes practising every night as part of the homework routine regardless of whether it’s recorded in their homework journals are not. I encourage you to do this not only from a musical point of view but also from a fine motor/dexterity and concentration point of view. Studies have proven that handwriting improves as does general school attainment when a pupil can play (no matter what the proficiency level) a musical instrument. I don’t want any pupil in Castlehackett N.S. missing out on this valuable learning opportunity.
10. It’s our desire that every pupil avails of all the extra-curricular opportunities provided for them i.e. tin whistle classes, stretch and grow classes and gaelic games sessions etc. If for whatever reason you do not wish your child to participate a note is required for retaining in your child’s school file.
11. Parent teacher meetings will take place after school on the 14th and 15th of November. Times will be circulated at a later date.
12. Many thanks for all of the bags for recycling that have been returned to the school. We are still collecting. Many thanks to Breda McHugh for always leading this drive and thus raising funds for resource purchases for you children etc.
13. A note for explaining a pupil’s absence must always be sent into the school for inspection by the education welfare officer at the end of the year. Cases of children constantly arriving late at school, continuously arriving without lunches, not having homework adequately supervised and frequently presenting without full school uniform are always recorded and discussed where warranted in particular cases with the welfare officer also.
14. Congratulations to the Feeragh Pipe Band and Drum restoration committee for organising such a lovely function in the school on Friday 21st  October. It was a very memorable occasion and very well attended. Many thanks to Micheál Cunningham, past pupil and main sponsor. We also thank Caherlistrane community council for their donation. The project could not have been brought to fruition were it not for this financial support. Well done and thanks to all of our talented past pupils who played music on the night. The catering support was also very much appreciated.
15. The school will close this Friday (no half day) for the Halloween mid- term break. Pupils can dress up in their Halloween outfits on the day and a €1 donation per pupil is being collected for “Feileachán” a charity that supports families of stillbirth infants.
16. The annual card drive will take place on Sunday evening the 4th of December (time t.b.c.). We all appreciate the work the P.A. do every year to organise this event for the benefit of our pupils. The P.A. are also responsible for the outdoor buddy benches that will be unveiled shortly. Any lone pupil that sits here won’t be on their own for long as pupils will be encouraged to sit alongside them and be their buddy. This will all be communicated in more detail at our next whole school assembly. What a lovely idea.
17. Castlehackett 8k Run, Jog, Walk 2017 takes place on Sunday the 11th of June at 12 noon! Spread the word. Mark it into your diary. Start training early whether you intend to walk it, jog it or run it. You can set a P.B. on the day too and reap all the health benefits by so doing!
18. Contact Alma O’Connell (a local Castlehackett 8k participant. We always appreciate Alma and her husband Austin’s annual support of this event. Austin also provides meats for the hundreds of sandwiches that are made for our 8k every year) 087 2830339 or almaoconnell4@gmail.com re. her community walking challenge. More details are posted in the school. It’s all free and a great way to prepare for our 8k in June and get active this Winter. Some parents are already availing of the opportunity.
19. Length of time to spend on homework: (It’s always good to time and record this. Tidy, focused and speedy work should always be rewarded)

Junior/ Senior infants: 20 minutes (activities include drawing, preliminary reading, matching shapes and pictures or listening to stories read by parents etc.)

First/ Second class: 20-30 minutes.

Third/ Fourth class: 30-40 minutes.

Fifth/ Sixth class: 40-60 minutes.

The exact details re homework is always communicated by the class teacher. Should homework activities extend beyond the time periods above, please stop and write a note to your child’s teacher to the effect that the allocated time was exceeded.

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21. Many thanks to all the staff members who are busy researching plays for our Christmas concert that will take place in December. Preparations for our concert year are always early so as to have a finished product to be proud of for you our parents and all of our grandparents!

22. Please remember especially at this time of year nuts are so plentiful that Castlehackett N.s. is a nut free zone. Many thanks to Breda McHugh who will erect notice to this effect in the coming days.

23. Any pupil who wishes to prepare a Christmas shoebox for children in Eastern Europe less fortunate than ourselves can do so and drop them back to the school at any time.

24. The national Schoolwear centre has apologised for the mistake they made with our school crest in September. The matter is being rectified by the school and will be fully sorted shortly. Parents need to take no further action.

25. Mr. Brendan Smith (N.U.I.G) will give a talk to parents re. Internet safety on November 28th at 7.30 PM in the school. Please note this in your diary. This really is an opportunity not to be missed. Feel free to invite a friend. Brendan will also hold an age appropriate workshop for pupils from 3rd-6th class. (inclusive) on the topic during the school day.

26. A big congratulations to Padraig Kilcommins and his girls underage football teams on their recent successes. Well done also to the boys underage teams on some fantastic results during the season.

Bíodh Samhain álainn scranrúil agaibh!,

Beir bua beannacht,

Fergal ÓNeachtain