



St. Mary's Junior NS

Rowlagh, Clondalkin, Dublin 22

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT & SCHOOL REPORT ON OUR 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

A summary of activities and achievements this year.

Another Eventful Year in St. Mary's JNS

Summer Holidays are here. After a vastly different year, filled with uncertainty and restrictions we have finally made it to the summer holidays. Here in St Mary's JNS the staff have gone above and beyond to ensure the health and safety of the children.

Huge credit goes to the families and in particular children of St. Mary's JNS who have continually shown to be flexible by adapting to continuous change. Throughout the entire past year and a half, the children have skipped through the gates of the school eager to get into their classroom to see their friends, teachers and SNAs.

A big thanks to Sheena Lynch, Susan Church and Pamela Stroescu who joined the staff when needed and contributed to the smooth running of the school. Due to Covid restrictions some of our staff had to remain working at home.

Despite the pandemic, school closures and changes to staff, we have still managed to have a wide range of activities and events happening through the year. While activities took extra planning and consideration we held events like Wellbeing Week, Science and Maths weeks, Active Schools Week and Sports Day.

This year also saw St Mary's JNS becoming a creative school. This came at the perfect time for us as it took learning outdoors. We hope to

create the perfect outdoor space with sensory garden for the school community to enjoy.

We hope that this newsletter will help parents, teachers and children look back on what has been a very eventful year.

Back To School Grant

Don't forget to apply for this grant on time. This grant is for back-to-school expenses and should be used for book rental, uniforms, tracksuit etc... **Please note all children must pay book rental in September to be included in the scheme.**

School Uniform

School Uniform: Navy jumper, Trousers/skirt, white shirt. Tracksuits are available from:
School Wear House, Unit D7 Ballymount Cross Ind. Est., Ballymount, Dublin 24,
Email: info@schoolwearhouse.ie
Tel: 01 4604371.

Child Protection

Our Child Safeguarding Policy is reviewed each year. The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is the Principal, Maura O'Shea, The Deputy Designated Liaison Person is the Deputy Principal Mairéad Byrne.

Any concerns are referred to a Tusla Social worker for advice. The school always follows this advice.

Ms McCarthy Retiring:



You may already be aware that Ms. McCarthy is retiring this summer. Ms. McCarthy has been teaching in St. Mary's for many years and during this time has been such an inspiration to her

colleagues and all the children who have been lucky enough to be in her class.

Her talent as a teacher is phenomenal and any child that has been in her class has excelled not only academically but socially and creatively.

She has an abundance of energy and presents for work every day with new love for teaching and learning. I can honestly say that Ms McCarthy's love for teaching has meant that the children of St Mary's JNS have been positively influenced by her energy, dedication and care.

I speak on behalf of the staff of the school and the wider school community when I say Ms McCarthy will be sorely missed. We are delighted however that she is beginning a new chapter and wish her many happy adventures. Don't forget to drop by every now and then.

Best wishes to you Nora and I'd like to say :

Go n-éirí leat agus tú ag dul ar scor !!!

Home School Community Liaison

Many thanks to Ms. Meabh O'Connor who is our Home School Liaison Teacher. Ms O'Connor began her role as HSCL teacher this year. While it has not been an ideal start Meabh has certainly exceeded expectations and managed to build strong relations with the parents of the school.

Despite the Pandemic Meabh has managed to be creative in how she has reached out to parents. From gardening outdoors at a social distance to online meetings, coffee mornings and parents clubs to name a few.

Some information and activities from HSCL Maths For Fun

'Distance Maths for Fun' took place this year. There was great feedback from all involved.

Distance CLOVER Project

The Distance CLOVER Project took place in November for Junior Infant students. Each child took home a pack with books in them.

Parents Plus Children's Programme

'Parents Plus Children's Programme' was held online - this involves 6 training sessions.

Gardening with Parents

Pat Hunt (Biodiversity Expert) worked with a group of 6 parents outdoors on pot planting and gardening.

St. Mary's Book Club:

A virtual book club began with some of our parents in December. The book club finished with a trip to North Clondalkin Library.

Distance Tasks for Fun

'Distance Tasks for Fun' involved each child bringing home with a variety of tasks to complete with parents. The focus was on parental engagement.

Circle of Security Parenting Programme

This initiative took place in January with 4/5 parents over ten sessions.

Virtual Coffee Mornings and Check In:

All parents were invited to attend a virtual coffee morning and check in with Maura and Meabh.

It's been a busy year – Look at all we have done !!

New Website



<https://www.stmarysjunior.ie>

This year we saw St Mary's JNS launch our brand new website. The site is very user friendly and filled with useful information and up to date news. Thanks to Ms Hogan our IT coordinator for updating the site on a regular basis. Check it out to see what's happening.

Creative Schools Initiative

Our school is lucky enough to have won the opportunity to participate in the Creative Schools programme 2020-22 through the Arts Council of Ireland.

The Creative Schools initiative aims to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives. Our schools will be supported to understand, develop, and celebrate young people's engagement with the arts and creativity. We will draw on the range of resources within our school and the wider community, developing new ways of working that reinforce the impact of the arts and creativity on student learning, development, and well-being. Students will have a central role in the development of this process.

Over the next two years, we will be working with Creative Associate, Dr. Clodagh Emoe (Artist and Lecturer at IADT). We are very lucky to have been matched with Clodagh and over the next years we hope to celebrate and promote all things creative here at St. Marys JNS...watch this space!

Dr. Clodagh Emoe



Below is a little introduction to our Creative Associate, Dr. Clodagh Emoe (Artist and Lecturer at IADT) who will work with our school over the next two years in celebrating and promoting all things creative at St. Marys JNS as part of Creative Schools initiative.

About me...

I believe that art is a form of enquiry, an explorative process that we can share together. My desire to explore our deep connection with each other and the natural world has motivated me to devise collaborative projects with artists, philosophers, botanists, writers, filmmakers, community groups, and young people. Through collaboration and creativity, we can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary. I know that when we work together we can make something more ambitious and exciting than we could ever have anticipated.

I am really excited to be working with St. Mary's Junior School as a Creative Associate. My role is to work with the staff and children so that together we can devise a Creative Plan that is unique to this school.

Clodagh :)

Check out our website under creative schools to see what the children are creating !!

Halloween



This year saw our Halloween Parade take place at social distance and in our class bubbles. Despite restrictions the children had a great time dressing up and having a fun time during our social distanced Halloween parade.

Science and Maths Award



We love all things Maths & STEM at St. Mary's and as a result, we love taking part in Science Foundation Ireland's Discover Primary Science & Maths Award (DPSM). All the pupils and staff here at St. Marys Junior are proud to announce we have been awarded the 2020 Discover Science & Maths Award! Winning the badge of excellence requires lots of hard work from our pupils and teachers.

The DPSM programme aims to develop creativity in children, help develop an interest in science, show how important science is to

our daily lives and more importantly how much fun science can be!

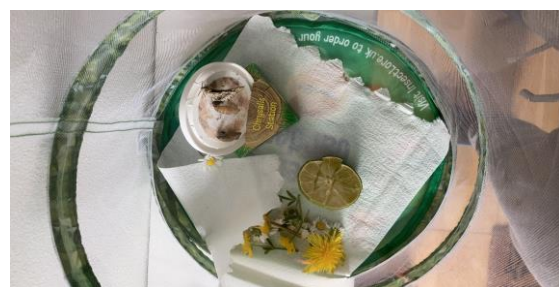


Nature Walks in the Park



This year has seen us teaching outdoors wherever possible. Teachers have taken advantage of Collinstown Park to observe nature and take in some fresh air. The added benefits of being outdoors have helped maintain our Health and Wellbeing. And of course our Fitness....

Lifecycle of a Butterfly



Mr Whelan's class learned about the lifecycle of the butterfly by bringing in some baby

caterpillars and watching them grow and change into butterflies.

The children named the caterpillars and checked in on them every day. They fed the butterflies some fruit and flowers before releasing them into the wild having learned lots.

North Clondalkin Library.



We are delighted to see the opening of NCL and look forward to linking in more often once restrictions allow. Thank you to all the staff who have welcomed us in to date .

Soccer



The children in 2nd class enjoyed practising their soccer skills with Eoghan from “Shooting Stars Soccer school.”

Santa Visits St. Mary’s JNS

We welcomed Santa to St. Marys on Friday, 11th December. All the girls and boys sang songs in the yard outside with Santa. Santa had a special message for all the boys and girls to

wish them a very Merry Christmas and gave them an early present of a selection box!



Some other activities that took place in December:

Amber Flag Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone who made a donation to the Amber Flag Fundraiser for Pieta House. This event took place on the 11th of December when staff and students wore their Christmas jumpers to school. We raised €681.78 for Pieta House, a very worthy cause. A presentation will be made to Pieta House in due course. Well done to all.

Collinstown Park Virtual Winter Wonderland

The Senior Infants and Mr. Whelan's class will take part in a virtual Winter Wonderland in early December.

Fighting Words

The 'Fighting Words' programme took place online this year. The children in 2nd class really enjoyed it and produced wonderful stories.

Literacy and Numeracy:

Children got books from North Clondalkin Library and the school library each week. Children read a wide range of books, they also wrote in different styles and for different audiences. Teachers followed the Jolly Phonics, First Steps Reading and First Steps Writing Programmes.

We have a lovely Oral Language Programme in Irish called Bua na Cainte and we introduced a new English Oral Language Programme last September. We also did a lot of work on Aistear to encourage learning through play. Staff will continue training on the *New Language Curriculum in September*.

Music

Music: Music Generation, a co-funded project between South Dublin Co. Co. and schools took place in junior infants this year. The children really enjoyed their lessons with Laura throughout the year!

Active Week / Sports Day

Due to Covid restrictions we could not have our traditional Sports Day. Instead we had active week and fun week. Here are some pictures from these weeks.



Recreate

We were delighted to host Jo May, [ReCreate Ireland's](#) Creative Facilitator on Thursday, June 3rd to engage the children in contributing to ReCreate's *curious B: A 21ST CENTURY OUTDOOR CURIOSITY CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE* an interactive creative installation, a showcase of curiosities, imaginations, and voice of the children in Ireland as part of Cruinniú na nÓg 2021 South Dublin. The project aims to explore, design, and build an outdoor curiosity classroom of the future.



The children really engaged in the project – check out our website for all their create talents.

Kite Making Workshop

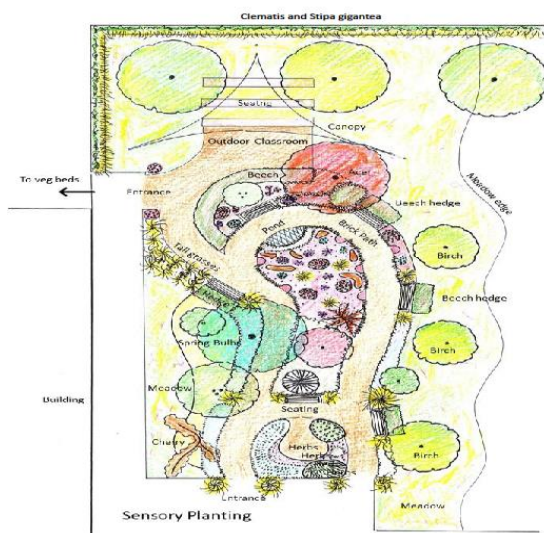
Some of our children participated in a kite making workshop. Kites were delivered through [goflyyourkite](#) as part of Cruinniú na nÓg South Dublin celebration of children's creativity. Each child who came to the workshop received a blank kite and were inspired to create a design on their individual kite. The children then had to assemble the kite correctly to ensure its successful launch and subsequent ability to fly.

Check out the colourful designs and successful launches on our website.



Sensory Garden

Next year we hope to begin work on a Sensory Garden for the school. The plans are in place to develop an outdoor classroom and sensory garden. We would love to involve the wider school community in this project and we would welcome any parents, grandparent, aunts or uncles who have time to help with this project.



Computers & ICT

The school brings IT into the classroom with the use of 'Bee Bots', new computers and I-

pads. We have a range of software for educational use.

There is an interactive whiteboard in every classroom.

Children from Junior infants to 2nd class are using lap-tops, I-pads and PC's as part of learning activities in class. Children also have access to I-pads for station activities.

We plan to roll out more new ICT initiatives in September using I-pads & Apps.

During the Covid-19 closure teachers and parents communicated using the Aladdin Connect App. We also updated our school webpage and school e-mails were given to parents.

Wellbeing / Amber Flag

The theme this year was wellbeing. COVID has certainly brought tough times for the staff and wider school community. We felt that a focus on Wellbeing was important to ensure all members of St. Mary's JNS got through the pandemic with the least amount of pressure as possible. Being a junior school, we tried to keep a focus on what was important so that the children could have a positive school experience. Throughout the year we did a few things to make the children feel valued and teach them skills for self-care.

Wellbeing Week



Wellbeing Week saw the children practice mindfulness. They took part in meditation and mindfulness colouring.



For the Staff of the school we had a coffee and cookie afternoon. This took place outdoors after school.



Our Wellbeing committee distributed easter eggs to all children in the school.

As a result of all the hard work by the children and staff of St. Mary's we were successful in receiving our Amber Flag. Well done to all involved.

Attendance and Punctuality

A special programme is in place to support children and families around attendance.

The average attendance so far this year is 89.5%. This is lower than we would normally have but it is good considering we are in a

pandemic which required pupils to isolate. I would like to thank all the families of St. Mary's JNS for showing such care and consideration to each other and ensuring not to send children into school if unwell.

Hopefully next academic year brings new hope and we can improve on this next year with parents' help.

A sincere thanks to all parents and children who support our efforts to improve attendance.

Don't forget that our children, because of their age, depend on parents to get them to school.

Student of the Week / Year

As part of the theme of Wellbeing we decided to remind the children each week on how well they are doing. Ms Hogan held Student of the week each Friday. The children really enjoyed this time.

This year we also presented certificates to all children in first class and second-class for their performance in a wide range of areas – these included reading, art, music, school spirit etc... We are happy to report that all of the children did their best and so everyone in 1st & 2nd class was awarded a 'Student of the Year Certificate' in at least one particular area.

Well done to everyone!

School Completion Programme

School Completion Programme (SCP).

This is an initiative which is designed to support families and pupils attending local schools. SCP provides funding for a range of activities including after-school clubs, play therapy breakfast clubs etc.

The focus of SCP is to ensure that all children have a positive school experience. This year's after school clubs could not go ahead but we did receive funding for Music Therapy. Several children availed of this. This year SCP provided the school with a project worker 2 and a half days per week. Amanda has really slotted into our staff and the children have really responded well to her.

We hope next year sees the return of more after school clubs.

Standardised Tests & Learner Experiences

Standardised Tests.

Standardised Tests have been completed and results have been reviewed by teachers. The results are also brought to the Board of Management. Summer reports give children's *Sten* scores in reading and maths.

Parents can speak with the class teacher about their child's results. We are happy to report that the children performed really well considering all the disruptions to school days throughout the pandemic. Huge credit goes to parents also for linking in with teachers throughout school closures.

Learner Experiences: Team teaching, station teaching and paired reading have helped to greatly improve the quality of independent writing and reading. All children really enjoy reading and writing experience success.

The teachers would like to thank parents for supporting children by listening to their reading, and encouraging reading at home.

Learning support and Special Needs

The school follows 'The Continuum of Support' Model. This has three stages. Stage 1 is where the teacher or parent sees that a child is having some difficulties. They meet to discuss these and to put a plan in place.

At Stage 2 the concern is referred to a Learning Support Teacher who offers advice or support.

Stage 3 is where the child is referred to outside professionals for assessment e.g. for speech and language etc.

We have been very successful in identifying needs at an early stage and putting support structures in place. Parents have a very important role to play and should discuss any concerns with the class teacher, home school teacher or principal.

Reading & Maths Recovery

Reading Recovery is an intensive programme which runs for about 18 weeks. It provides children with a great opportunity for 1:1 support with reading. If you have concerns about your child's reading please speak with his/her teacher.

The Maths Recovery programme provides intensive support to individuals, small groups and whole classes in Maths. If you are concerned about your child's Maths speak to the class teacher.

Teachers do 'team teaching' which means smaller groups for Maths and English. Parents also got involved in helping with Maths and Literacy stations.

Speech & Language Service

If you have concerns about your child's speech you should consider the following:

Can your friends or extended family members easily understand what your child is saying? If not you should seek advice.

Don't forget the importance of Reading for developing a child's language. In books children can learn about wizards, trolls, big bad wolves etc. i.e. things that they hopefully won't meet around Rowlagh!!!

Delivering Equality in Schools: (DEIS):

Our school is part of the DEIS Programme. This supports smaller classes, school lunches, after school clubs, tours and trips, summer camps, in-school and after school activities. We try to ensure that all the children benefit as much as possible. This programme also ensures we have extra learning support staff and special posts such as Home School and Support Teacher.

Medical / Care issues

If your child has Medical/Care issues please e.g. diabetes, arthritis, anaphylactic shock please inform your child's teacher and the school before the child returns to school in September

Nurture Room

We hope to introduce a Nurture room into the school next year. This hope to be an exciting new addition to our school. Maura, Meabh, CJ and Claire Kennedy received training in June. The Nurture room will enable the school to help:

- children in the transition back to school
- support pupils who need to 'settle to learn'.
- support 'at risk' children.
- Teachers and SNAs who want to adopt a more nurturing approach while working with children who have social, emotional and/or behavioural

difficulties, attachment difficulties, low self-confidence, low self-esteem, low resilience, self-regulation and/or self-expression difficulties.

Nurture Group Theory and Practice Course – supporting all students to learn

- The practicalities of setting up and running a nurture group – early years, primary and secondary
- Up-to-date research in attachment theory and neuroscience and the practical applications in the classroom
- Child development and learning : the effects of loss, trauma and neglect on learning and behaviour
- Using the Boxall Profile to assess pupils' developmental difficulties, blocks to learning and to devise practical strategies to support them
- Developing the curriculum to promote students' social, emotional and learning skills
- Developing a whole-school nurturing approach and promoting wellbeing
- Monitoring and evaluation through a structured, evidence-based, planned approach.

You might like to know:

- Staff meetings take place outside of school times under the Croke Park Agreement.



- We have increased the amount of time spent on Literacy and Numeracy activities.
- Team Teaching allows teachers work with small groups giving more individual attention.
- We meet parents of new infants in May & September.

New Infants enrolled

We have 3 new Junior Infant classes starting. The Junior Infant teachers in September are

School re-opens for children on Thursday August 26th.

We will be in touch via Aladdin / website regarding start and finish times for class levels.

The school will follow department guidelines on this matter.

First Communion 2021

Fr Hugh is hopeful that the communion will go ahead during the summer. We will contact parents as soon as we know anymore.

Enjoy the Summer!

As you know the children will be getting their summer holidays on Wednesday, June 30th.

The school will close at 12 o'clock on Wednesday and will re-open on Thursday August 26th.

Message from Ms Maura O'Shea

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Summer Holidays are here. After a manic year, filled with uncertainty, restrictions and remote teaching, we finally made it to the summer holidays!!!!

It has been a particularly difficult year for everyone and your patience, understanding

and cooperation have been greatly appreciated. So a big thank you to all of you. 😊

As you can see from all the activities that have taken place the staff of St Marys have done their utmost to ensure the children have sampled plenty activities in a safe way.

For this I would like to thank the teachers, the SNA team and all the management and staff at St Mary's JNS for all their help in getting us all safely through the year.

A big thank you also to families at home for all their support and hard work in getting you here especially during lockdowns.

Finally a special thanks for every member of the school community in making my first year as Principal memorable and I look forward to meeting you all again in August.

To all the children enjoy your Summer, get plenty of fresh air and don't forget to help out at home whenever you can.

Take care, stay safe and be kind,

Le gach dea-ghuí,

Maura O'Shea

We hope you and your families have a lovely summer.



The Board of Management & Staff of

St. Mary's Junior School.