

Killowen Primary School Acting Principal

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 **Faith, Friendship & Understanding**

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Dear Parents & Guardians,

As we begin the 3rd month of remote learning, let me firstly begin by congratulating you on the commitment that you and your children have made to continuing their essential education throughout the most turbulent period of Lockdown so far. I particularly want to commend all those who have weathered the challenge of online learning in the context of the demands and anxieties wrought by Covid 19.

Much of the work produced, photographed or submitted has been very impressive, but most importantly, the virtual classrooms allowed us to keep communicating and remain in contact to check on learning and well-being during another enforced isolation.

**DEMONSTRATION DAY**

Facing into yet another month of remote learning, especially for our Key Stage 2 children is problematic in terms of motivation, frustration and progress. I have no doubt that you are now digging deeply into all your reserves of endurance and resilience. Moreover, it must come to a stage this month when the pupils encounter new concepts and learning objectives that they cannot master easily and that cannot be explained away by simple instructions. Therefore, this month the teachers will be introducing Demonstration Day, whereby they will post a pre-recorded video demonstration or teaching point so that pupils may continue to move forward and improve without undue stress. Pupils and parents are encouraged to let the teachers know what specific challenges pose the biggest hurdles to home learning, and the teacher will attempt to resolve any problems on Demonstration Day. In any given week, the most requested issues will be prioritised.

Our teachers have now also been trained in the use of Collaborate Ultra, which is the only approved platform for live teaching sessions for Primary schools. If we are not permitted to reopen for all pupils straight after the Easter break, then we will begin to schedule live lessons for any classes still at home. Special arrangements will be made for P6 pupils intending to apply for whatever Transfer Test arrangements might be put in place this year.

**LET’S CELEBRATE READING WEEK**

This week to coincide with World Book Day on Thursday 4th March, we have been hosting a week of focussed reading activities. Reading for pleasure is one of the strongest social indicators of a pupil’s future success, so on Thursday the school Library will be open all day from 10am – 3pm. Families are welcome to drop in and have a 10 minute individual browsing time slot to choose a new book. The Library will be well ventilated and everyone will be requested to use hand sanitiser on arrival. Adults are expected to wear masks. Thank you.

The highlight of the week will be The Masked Reader competition. A video will be posted in the Seesaw classrooms of staff members in disguise reading a snippet of a well-known children’s book. Parents and pupils are invited to guess the identity of the reader and the book. Scoring is 1 point for identifying staff, 5 points for identifying the book and you can earn an extra 10 points by uploading your own Masked Reader video to your Seesaw class. We are delighted that children’s author Declan Carville introduces our competition and has donated signed copies of his books for the winners. Declan will be with us later this year for workshops in storytelling and creative writing.

There is a national campaign promoted by celebrities to help children read more at home called Turn On The Subtitles, where parents are encouraged to turn the TV subtitles on during children’s programs and cartoons as well as on iPad, Xbox and PlayStation games, which increases children’s exposure to environmental print and creates more opportunities for reading. Further information can be found at <https://turnonthesubtitles.org>.

**RETURN TO SCHOOL**

On Monday 8th March we welcome back Reception, Primary1, Primary 2 and Primary 3 children. We can’t wait!!

School dinners will be available for pupils in these classes.

According to the Dept of Education, free school meals will not be available for the Key Worker children who are here at this time because parents will receive a direct payment instead. They may continue to bring a packed lunch or pay for a dinner. The dinner menu for March is attached here.

**STAFFING**

Miss Ciara Malone will be the full-time teacher in Reception/Primary 1 going forward from Monday 8th March until Mrs. Evans returns.

Myself, (Mrs. Murphy) will continue with the P2/3 class.

Mr. Rob Belt will now manage the supervised learning of the Key Worker children 3 days a week, with Mrs Cruz and Mrs Cunningham continuing to cover the other 2 days.

**SAVE THE DATES**

P7 Sacrament of Confirmation will be on Thursday 20th May @ 7pm.

P4 Sacrament of First Holy Communion will be on Saturday 22nd May @ 11am.

The P4 Sacrament of Penance is to be confirmed at a later date.

**CONDOLENCES**

The entire school community offer condolences to staff members Mrs Evans and Mrs Sloane who both lost family members this term. Our thought and prayers go out to them, and indeed to all our families who have been affected by bereavement in recent months.

**WORDS OF WISDOM**

Hope is on the horizon and the pathway back to a sense of normal life is being tentatively planned by The Executive, but still with another month of home-schooling to navigate, I know you as parents are in much need of a boost of support to see you through to Easter. So I have asked our home grown experts Bronagh Vos and Shane Neary to share their experiences and advice.

**10 Tips for Surviving Home Learning, by Bronagh Vos.**

1. Home learning and school learning are two very distinct and different experiences. Children learn differently in both and neither way creates a disadvantage, but they are different in approach.

**It is virtually impossible to recreate a true school environment at home.**   
**2**. Worksheets are the evidence teachers use to collect and assess information as part of an overall lesson. Worksheets are not the lesson itself.

**Completing endless worksheets is not evidence of true learning.**  
**3**. Children learn best when they feel safe, loved and motivated. Your role as a Parent is way more important than your role as a teacher. Follow your instinct: **if something isn’t working there is a reason why.   
4**. Children learn naturally through play.

**Create opportunities for discovery, play and adventure.**  
**5**. Yeats said that “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” **Create an environment of opportunities and access to books and art.**   
**6.** Boredom isn’t a bad thing. Resist the temptation to fill each day with activities. **We all need space to relax and do nothing sometimes.  
7.** Remember that your child learnt to speak one of the most difficult languages in the world simply by listening to your voice. They learnt the difficult skill of walking knowing your arms were there to catch them when they fell. **Be confident that they will learn exactly what is needed for this moment in time and that you are more than capable of meeting their needs.  
8**. Learning is a life-long adventure and every child will learn different skills at different times. This pandemic has put everyone’s lives on hold.

**Teachers are skilled professionals and they will work hard to make sure everyone gets back on track when school returns.   
9**. You know your child best: follow your instinct and trust your heart.

**Children need you most right now: fractions, grammar, punctuation can wait.  
10**. Teach skills like peeling vegetables, baking, gardening, look for inspiration in the natural world around them, go for long walks and read books together. **Take this gift of time and make the most of it.**

**Home Schooling – My Story and Your Questions answered by Shane Neary**

Hi parents,

I hope you are all well and in good health.

This year has been challenging and no matter who you are or where you are from we have all been touched or affected to a degree by Covid and regulations.

If you are reading this, then I want to encourage you that you are doing better than you know.  Your success is not measured by all the good you do or the results you hope to achieve while home-schooling.  I want you to tell yourself in the mirror that the person you see is doing a great job and that you are an amazing human being.  Be kind to yourself.  Be kind to others around you and watch the good things happen.

All I can do is share some of our story with you in the hope that it may benefit any readers.  I will keep it brief because I know we are all busy.

We have a large family by today's standards.  We have home-schooled all our kids for 30 years now and during that time it has not been a straight walk.  Our kids have been, and are in public school, some have only had home based learning, some have had third level education some are in vocational learning or employment.  We even had one or two children unable to attend school for health reasons because they were always in hospital.  Another one of our children went on to leave school because they struggled so much with Dyslexia and not getting the correct help.

During these experiences it becomes clear that education and learning is not based on fulfilling worksheets, exam results and school attendance alone.

  One of our children was not physically able to attend school for the first 7-8 years due to health reasons.  This child is now happy, healthier than ever and is on the right path to lead a successful and rewarding life.  I would like to help parents understand that this past year may seem like a set- back for your child’s education but actually, if we see the potential, it may be the beginning of something beautiful.  Our whole chocolate business was born in 2008 during the last recession and now in 2021 we ship worldwide!

Einstein once said:

* "imagination is more important than knowledge".
* The only person who is **educated** is the one who has learned how to learn …and change.”
* Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a **fish** by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.

Motivating children can be hard, especially when certain elements that used to motivate them like friends or social events (depending on your child, some are more introverted and enjoy alone time).

We have to adapt to learning at home and you are not on your own.

To answer a few questions that were asked recently:

* **how to motivate them to learn at home?**  
  I am a firm believer that 99% of a child’s education is communication and understanding.  Listen to your child’s interests and desires and see if there’s something you can do together to share these passions.  This takes time, don't try and do too much in a day - you both will burn out and fight.  Also, everything you do together at home is of benefit.  I know university students studying Astrophysics and can't cook a meal, make their bed or look after pets.  These days are not typical home based learning, it's quarantine, so extracurricular activities we would normally employ are not an option.  We have to watch out for opportunities to bring the best positive outcome to the day.  It is up to you to decide which option is best for mental health, each child is different and they can't learn if they are not happy, loved and safe.
* **how to stop every day becoming a battleground?**  
  Some things are worth a battle but pick them wisely, weigh up the cost of the fight to get your kids to do things and what really is the goal here?  We are all struggling to keep motivated and keep on track but the reality is that the track has changed now and we have to adapt to loving each other and working out a plan together which will likely preserve our relationships while still enjoying learning.  Downtime is not a bad thing, quiet time is not a bad thing and sometimes boredom is the precursor to something creative.
* **how do you know if they're doing enough?**  
  It just takes belief that your child has learnt English (or another native language), learnt to walk, create, build and more without you doing too much.  You just need to listen, pay attention and support.  Comparing yourself to others and to your own expectations will bring you nothing but misery.  Love your kids believe in yourself and believe in them - you are all doing enough if you are asking this question and one day you will see the benefits!  Surprisingly your kids are amazing and resilient and they are learning much more than you give them credit for - worksheets do not begin to reflect the complexities of all your kids are doing and learning. Nothing is wasted.

Your home is not a school, it should remain a home, your kids will catch up and this idea that they are always behind creates unnecessary pressure which will bring you both pressure and unhappiness - they are fine, great, learning and exactly where they need to be right now.

*"What is most important and valuable about the home as a base for children’s growth into the world is not that it is a better school than the schools, or as good as the schools, but that it isn't a school at all"*

Thanks

Shane

**On behalf of Killowen B.O.G., staff, parents and pupils, I offer a sincere abundance of gratitude to Bronagh and Shane for their immense contribution to this supportive school newsletter. Órla Murphy**

MENU WEEK BEGINNING 8th March

MONDAY

Fish Fingers

  Chilli Chicken Wrap

  Chips

  Baked Beans/Coleslaw

  Selection of Desserts

TUESDAY

Spaghetti Bolognaise/Crusty Bread

  Grilled Beef burger/Gravy

  Sweetcorn

  Mashed Potato

  Vanilla Sponge & Custard

WEDNESDAY

Chicken Curry & Rice/Nan Bread

  Grilled Sausages/Gravy

  Peas

  Mashed Potatoes

  Rice Krispie Square

THURSDAY

Roast Turkey & Stuffing

  Carrot& Broccoli

  Mashed Potatoes

  Chocolate Brownie

FRIDAY

Chicken Goujons

  (Spicy)Salt & Chilli Chicken & Rice Chilli Sauce

  Chips/Mashed Potato

  Sweetcorn/Gravy

  Ice-cream Mousse