

Sept. 2016

Autumn is upon us again and we are back in the classroom and working hard. The warm weather is keeping our spirits up and with all our activities starting again we are looking forward to another busy and exciting year.



Maria Alcaraz and our Junior Infants. What a happy bunch!

Be an Upstander not a Bystander

If we expect our children to be fair and kind, if we

expect them to speak up when they are not happy about something, if we expect them to stand up for themselves and for each other then we should be prepared to do the same ourselves. We have a wonderful, successful and happy school. We have the best of teaching and support staff. I do not need to remind you of all our achievements to date. We can't and won't compete with larger schools. We are unique, we are family and we are community. Our pupils are cherished and supported and appreciated as individuals. We need to shout from the rooftops about our wonderful small school. And we need to do it now.

Bláthnaid

Board of Management News

At our first meeting of the year the board reconvened in positive spirits. We discussed progress on our four-year plan. Linda Coyle (parent rep) has written the following to update you all on our plans;

The Board of Management are currently finalising the four-year plan. As you'll recall, back in April we encouraged parents, pupils and the wider community to contribute to our Inspiration wall. We did this to get an idea of your vision for Darrara N.S. over the coming four years. We received such a fabulous range of ideas that it would not be possible to list them all, but here are a couple of examples...

'Change the carpet in the middle room'

'A new notice board with a lock at the gate'

We've sifted through all the ideas and have grouped them into categories - namely education, extra-curricular activities, environment, communication, school PR, maintenance and

miscellaneous. We're now in the process of finalising which ideas will go into the four-year plan. How are we choosing the goals? Well, we're basing it on a couple of questions:

How will this goal benefit the pupils and/or school community?

Could this goal be achieved within the term of the current BOM? Does the school have the resources (money and people power) to achieve this?

Is this something that is part of a BOM plan or is it something which parents or the PA can lead?

We also discussed the excellent academic results that have been achieved this year. We have attached these at the back of the newsletter with an explanation by Michael Crowley (board member, parent and community representative). This is proof that the BOM and PA investment in Literacy Lift Off and the BOM investment in Maths Recovery in recent years is paying off. We are extremely proud of our pupils and teachers for the work that they have done and look forward to maintaining these results going forward. We hope that it also continues to foster a love of reading in our scholars:

Ellie and Ben as Matilda and Fantastic Mr Fox



Proposed Changes to the School Day

Following a staff meeting and input from some parents, the BOM discussed changing the school start time from 9.10am to 9.00am. This would facilitate parents who have to be at work by 9am. Morning supervision would start at 8.40am. The school day would finish at 2.40pm. We will be sending home a ballot paper next week and would ask that all parents take the time to consider the change and choose the best option for you and the community. We propose to start the new school day after the Christmas break.

We will be updating a number of policies this academic year. They will be available in draft form on the website when it is launched. You will have the opportunity to read these policies, comment on them

and suggest amendments. Finally, the BOM will decide on and ratify each policy. Staff will work on a number of subject policies this year too.

Welcome:

We are thrilled to have Ms Courtney back from her time in Dubai. 5th and 6th class have settled quickly and great work is planned for the year. Ms Courtney and the senior classes hope to continue the tradition of going to the Primary Science Fair at the Young Scientist. The plan is to be accepted for the exhibition for the 5th year in succession. 4th Class will be taking part in the project work and trip.

Ms Harrington; who has become a valued and important member of our staff and school community, is off to a flying start in the middle room. Literacy Lift Off starts this week with Ms Breslin, Liz and Maria helping. Below is a piece Ms Harrington has written for this month's newsletter:



The Superheroes in 2nd, 3rd and 4th class have settled well into training

school where they are using their superpowers of listening, sharing, concentrating and participating. They will continue to use and learn new powers throughout the year. Let's see how their personalities unfold!!

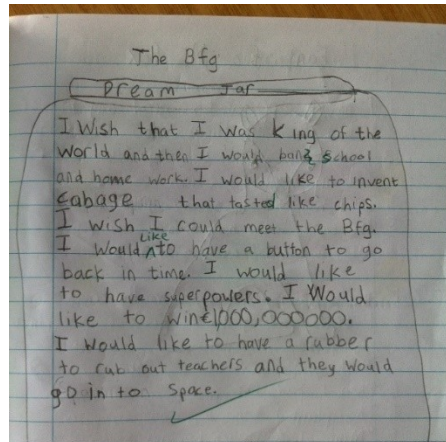
We are all delighted to know that Rafa, our class mascot, will return to the classroom this year. He couldn't stay away from a great school with such beautiful children in it. He's ready for another year of fun and adventure in West Cork.

We celebrated Roald Dahl's 100th birthday last week and the children learnt lots about the books he wrote. We will continue to read Roald Dahl books throughout the year. The children created their own 'Dream Jars'. "Dreams is full of mystery and magic.....Do not try to understand them".
Roald Dahl, The BFG -



Amanda Thripp and Matilda on Roald Dahl day.

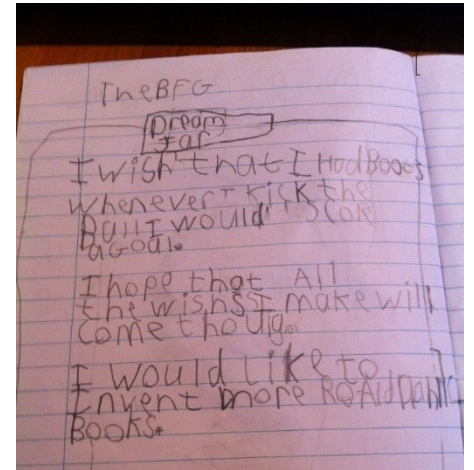
My Dream Jar by Oran O'Donovan, 3rd class.



They wrote about their own fantastic dreams. They ranged from the weird to the wonderful. Above and below are just a couple of examples of their fabulous imaginations.

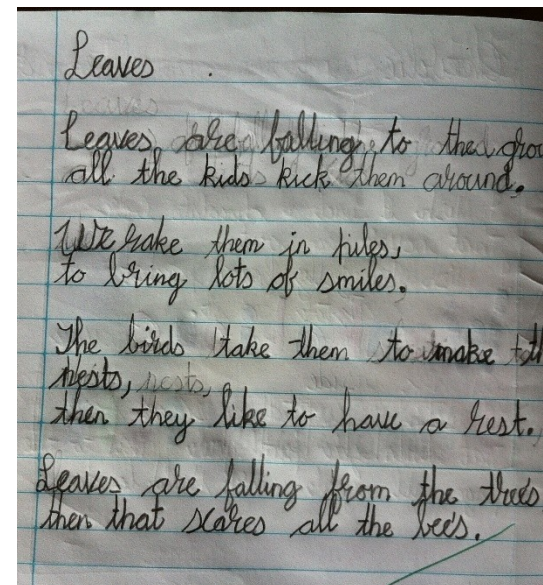
We hope that all their dreams like to come true!

My Dream Jar by Alex O'Regan, 2nd class

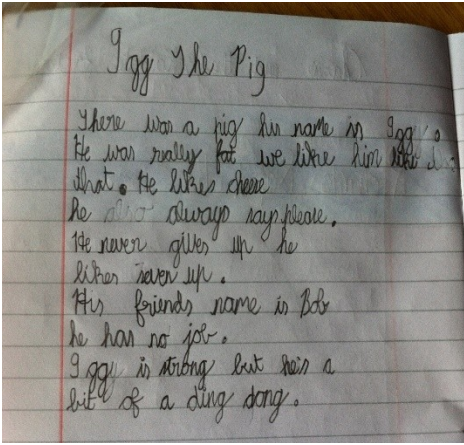


We're poets and we know it!!

Fourth class were writing rhyming couplet poems last week. Have a read of their own creative work.



By: Adriana Cullinane, 4th class



By: Richie Walsh, 4th class

Reminders for Parents:

At the beginning of each year we remind you of a few requests that we have:

Parking – please leave a gap between your car and the wall so that the children can pass safely into the school without passing reversing cars on the road. Please observe the rules of the yellow box. Under no circumstances should you park in this area, even if it's just for a quick drop off.

Official morning supervision begins at 8.50am. Children should never be left unaccompanied at the school.

Under no circumstances is a teacher or other staff member to be called on their private number or approached about school issues outside of school.

Teachers are not available without an appointment. A short note in the homework diary covers most eventualities. You can make

an appointment in this way or though the contact form on the website when it is live. Please note that teachers use the time before school starts to prepare for the day, to consult with colleagues and to relay information to each other.

We ask that you bear with us while we try to replace Cathy. We hope to have a new secretary in place by the middle of October. In the mean time we ask for your patience, as all other staff members teach on a full day basis. We will endeavor to check the answering machine a couple of times per day. Mary White is employed by the school in a temporary capacity until the new secretary is appointed, however she has limited hours with us.

ALL money no matter how small the amount, or whether it is in cheque form should come to school in an envelope with **the child's name, the amount and what it is for written on the outside**. If there are a number of items in the envelope it would be a great help to have these listed. Where possible payment by cheque or bank transfer is preferable to cash.

You may be aware that we have been a Health Promoting School for a number of years. In previous years this initiative has focused on promoting healthy eating and as a result the following applies to ALL lunch boxes:

No fizzy drinks.

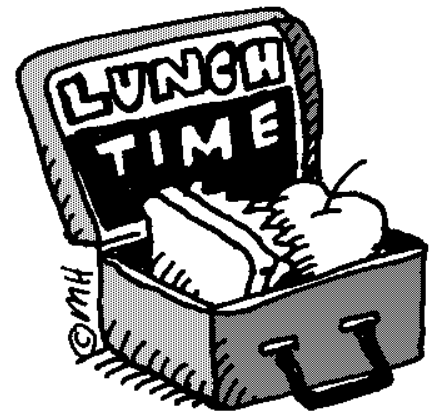
No breakfast bars – of any sort.

No sweet snacks Monday to Thursday unless they are homemade.

Children may bring **one** treat to school on a Friday. This can include a small chocolate bar, a few sweets etc. – it is not acceptable to include more than one treat. Fizzy drinks are not acceptable.

No crisps or tortilla chips – sesame sticks and popcorn are ok.

We encourage the children to sip water throughout the day. We would encourage you to put water in their drinks bottles rather than cordial.



Liz O'Regan and Maeve Beechinor return to our ranks.

You may have heard that Tina had a baby girl in August. Baby Isla Mae is thriving and we hope that Tina, Mason and Isla Mae will visit us soon. We are very happy to have Liz back with us to cover for Tina's maternity leave. Liz has been a permanent member of our staff in the past and is our SNA super sub. She knows us all very well and helps every year

with our communion flowers.

Ms. Roycroft got word during the summer that she has been seconded to the Special Education Support Service. We are delighted for her. She has a lot of expertise in this field and will be a great addition to their team and we will miss her. The SESS provide crucial professional development and training to teachers in the area of Special Education. Ms. Beechinor will cover for Ms. Roycroft for this academic year. Mr. Murphy, who covered for Ms. Roycroft last academic year declined to continue in the role as he is an expert tutor in an anxiety relieving breathing technique for children and he is setting up his clinic. We hope that he will be available to sub for us. As with last year Ms. Curtin will cover Principal Release days - these are the days in the year that Ms. Breslin uses to attend to school management issues. There are 15 release days in a year.

Although we knew that Cathy was preparing for the next chapter of her life in her new home, near her extended family, we were devastated when she handed us her notice in late August. Cathy was in the school for 9 years and we considered her to be our Mother Hen. She will be sorely missed by all of us. We wish her the best of

luck as she settles into her lovely new home away from West Cork. I have asked her permission to include these few lines from her letter informing us that she was leaving - it sums up her love for the school and mirrors how we all feel about her - 'Thank you so much for the opportunity to work for the past 9 years in this role. I've greatly enjoyed and appreciated the opportunities I've had to work in a beautiful school such as Darrara. I have learned a lot from this job, all of which I will take with me throughout my career. I will greatly miss all the staff and the current and past children that I have met throughout my time in Darrara N.S.'

Achievements

Last year we asked you to email us with photos of your child's achievements - big and small - from extra-curricular activities. We are continuing this again this year but will no longer be sending texts. We have an achievements wall that is being looked after by Ms. Beechinor. Please send photos and announcements to her for inclusion on the wall. We will also include these in the website when it goes live.

PLEASE NOTE : Vision and hearing for 1st and 6th classes will no longer be offered by the HSE to schools. If you have any concerns please contact them directly.

Parent's Association News

The Parents Association is holding their Annual General Meeting on **Wednesday 5 October at 8:00 PM**. During this meeting we will review the previous year's activities and elect the new Executive Committee. The Executive Committee of the Parents Association directs the efforts of the Parents Association and decides how to spend our hard earned money. We look for a representative from each class so that we have a broad perspective and can represent all the parents of the school. It is not a difficult job - we try to keep meetings to a minimum and it's a great way to stay involved in your child's school. Please text or ring Wendy Cullinane [087 981 2335](tel:0879812335) if you are interested in representing your child's class or want to find out more.

We're working hard to ensure that we have nominees on the ballot - so there will be NO JOBS given out on the night. Which leaves us to look at the slideshow of all the fun the kids have had this past year and have a look at the school's new website.

It is VERY important that we have at least one member from each school family come and attend this meeting - so we're working hard to

make sure it's an enjoyable night.

This is the launch night for the school website. We'd love to see you all there.

INTERNET SAFETY TALK FOR PARENTS ONLY



Has your child got a mobile phone? Do you allow your child to use your phone? Do their friends have mobile phones? Do you know what they get up to on those phones? Do you know all the people that your child interacts with? Learn the risks (and benefits) to going online. Learn how to help your child be a good 'netizen' and protect themselves. Please join us for a very informative discussion about internet safety. Wednesday 28th September at 8:00 PM. This discussion is less a lecture and more of a discussion so the content is NOT suitable for children.

As we will not be in a position to supervise children on the night they must not be brought to the school.

A note of thanks:



On behalf of the children, staff and Board of Management, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Parent's Association and all the parents who have supported them over the last year. Without their hard work, bills would not have been paid, the communion breakfast would not happen and we would have no annual swim or Halloween disco. Huge thanks to the parents who give their time to pack bags, paint the school or clear the slip way of slippery algae. We all enjoy their baked goods and sandwiches - particularly the surprise cakes that appear in the staff room occasionally. We love the baking fairies!

Dates for your diary:

Confirmation for 5th and 6th class Tuesday April 4th .

First Holy Communion for 2nd Class Saturday May 13th.

Full day closure for staff training Wednesday May 31st.