



Scoil Mochua Newsletter October 22nd 2020

The children have all settled back into school with happy smiles and a sense of relief that comes with familiarity. We have new policies and procedures in place to protect us all, but the business of teaching and learning, and the business of having fun is continuing as normal.

Brief Snapshot of School Life

Couch to 5K – Led by Mr Eoin Murphy and his 5th class pupils, and joined by most of the other senior classes, everyone followed a programme of training with the emphasis on health, fitness and fun. 5 classes ran a circuit in Celbridge on Friday 16th October. We looked like Ireland's fittest school as children, teachers and parents ran the course! A huge thanks to the PA and the large number of parents who turned out on the day to marshal the course, and thanks to St John's Ambulance for being on standby.

NUIM Dream TV – many of our 4th, 5th and 6th classes are participating in a pilot **STEM** project run by NUIM. We are delighted to be taking part. The children have already shown great teamwork while building windmills and designing board games. We are seeing engineers and problem solvers of the future at work. Thanks to NUIM for the great initiative.

Chalk Art – Our lovely Junior Infants had a ball with a few boxes of pavement chalk a few weeks ago. They decided to brighten up the dull grey wall at the side of the PE hall. I think their uniforms were almost as brightly coloured as the walls by the time they had finished! Well done to our budding artists.

Celbridge Library – Our local library does a phenomenal job in promoting reading, and also in promoting all things Science. Some of our classes have already engaged in Zoom workshops which were organised by the library, and we have more lined up for after the mid-term. Topics range from Lunar Landing, to Maths Secrets to Ukelele lessons. How lucky are we?! Thanks so much to Ciara Hogan and the team in Celbridge library for enhancing our children's education.

Ukelele – Mr Costello's 5th class decided to spend their profits from their successful Junior Entrepreneur project on a class set of Ukeleles. They arrived to much excitement a few weeks ago and we are looking forward to a performance soon. Well done!

Digital Technology – All classes are learning to engage in Digital Technology in an age-appropriate way. For the most part, Infants – 2nd are using Class DoJo, and 3rd – 6th are engaging with Google Classroom. Lots of teachers are setting some elements of homework via these platforms. Please support us by engaging with the technology and becoming familiar with it. We are determined to be well prepared in the (hopefully unlikely) event of partial or full closures. It is a really good idea for everyone to get used to submitting work digitally. This is the ideal opportunity to iron out any issues that may arise. Please let your class teacher know if you have any challenges in accessing the technology.

School Garden – As always, Tom the gardener is doing a superb job with the school garden. Given that he cannot deliver face-to-face lessons with the children at the moment, he wanted to find ways to keep the children interested in the garden. He has labelled everything and written short pieces on many of the items of interest in the garden. He has also recorded some short video clips

featuring the garden. Classes visit the garden regularly and new discoveries are made on each visit. Ms Corr, our in-house web designer and Junior Infant teacher, has created a page on the website dedicated to our lovely school garden. You can find it here: <http://www.scoilmochua.com/school-garden.html>

Dress Up: The children are invited to dress up in their Halloween costumes on Friday. It will be a lovely, fun (and noisy!) way to end the half-term. It will also be a lovely way to celebrate a very successful 8 weeks of being back at school. Of course, we do have a few rules: please leave all accessories at home, including masks and wigs. Witches hats and such are allowed, but will remain in the classroom at lunchtime to avoid the temptation of sharing! Please leave the broom stick and other such items safely at home. As always, hair dye and face paint is not permitted. Teachers are planning to get a good night's sleep on Thursday night in advance of the spooky fun!

The Great Outdoors: In line with DES and HSE advice, teachers are bringing classes out regularly, ensuring plenty of fresh air and exercise. There are nature walks, outdoor sketching, reading, gardening, cycle safety lessons, GAA coaching, Couch to 5K training and PE lessons. It is great to see, and a positive development. And we are delighted with the huge number of children who are walking, cycling and scooting to school. We have had to increase the number of bike racks twice since the start of term – a great complaint! Please keep this up, even as the weather gets colder – just make sure to wrap up warmly.

Book Fair: Our much-loved Book Fair, a week where we promote reading, will take place in a different format this year. We are very excited about it and know the children will love it. Further details to follow soon – but keep the last week of November free for lots of reading. There will be opportunities for parents to stock up on lovely Christmas presents.

Twitter

We have a very active Twitter account. Please follow us @ScoilMochua for lots of updates on what's happening around the school.

Health Expert

Niall Roche, the health expert we liaised with during the summer, visited the school last week and observed our practice and procedures while school was in operation. He observed a range of classrooms, the staffrooms, the cleaning routines and products, the PPE, the arrival at school of the children, yard time, resource rooms. His feedback was very positive, and he gave us a few pointers for improvement, all of which are now in place or in progress. We are always striving to ensure that our practice is as safe as possible, and we appreciate his expertise and support.

As an additional layer of protection, we are asking all children, after the mid-term, to have a school pencil case, and another one that is left at home. This will minimise the movement of items between home and school. As the movement of books is unavoidable, and low risk, we will continue this practice, but to reduce the risk further we ask that the number of people handling school books is kept to a minimum, and that all books are replaced in to the school bag the evening before returning to school. This is an additional precaution, but we believe that the more layers of protection that are in place, the safer the school will be.

Celbridge First Responders

The school had pledged a donation of €2,000 to Celbridge First Responders from monies raised during the annual Readathon last year. Unfortunately, the much-loved Readathon was cut short, but

not before our fabulous readers raised enough money for us to fulfil our pledge. A cheque was presented to CFR back in June. The money will be used to purchase a defibrillator which will be located locally. This will benefit the whole school community. Well done to our children for raising the money and thanks to our parents for such generosity. Keep up the good work CFR! We are delighted to support you.

Policies

Our **Child Safeguarding Statement** and our **Health and Safety Statement** have been updated with changes related to Covid-19. They have been reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management and will be uploaded to our website in the coming days.

Please note that our **Acceptable Usage Policy (AUP)**, which relates to the use of digital technology, was updated last April 2020 to include remote learning (see the addendum at the end of the policy). This is available on our website.

Finally, our **Enrolment Policy** was updated in line with new guidelines from the DES. This was approved by the Patron in July 2020, and subsequently ratified by the BOM. It will be available on the website, along with the new **Admissions Notice**, in the coming days. All schools in Celbridge have agreed on a common window for enrolment for September 2021, from 11th January 2021 – 5th February 2021. Scoil Mochua will accept applications during that four-week window, after which all applications will be processed and places offered. Full details are in the Enrolment Policy and Admissions Notice. All of the above policies, along with other important school policies, are available [here](#).

Infectious Diseases

While Covid-19 is to the forefront of our minds right now, we must also refer to other illnesses that can occur in a school environment. It is the policy of the Board of Management of Scoil Mochua that all infectious diseases shall be notified and steps taken to ensure the safety of staff and students against all such diseases. Parents are requested to notify the school immediately if their child contracts an infectious disease e.g. measles, mumps, chicken pox etc.

Medication

If a child requires the use of an inhaler / antihistamine medication on a frequent or infrequent basis, parents are requested to inform the new class teacher in writing at the beginning of each school year.

Covid-19

As the country enters Level 5 of restrictions, it is more important than ever that we stay strong and remain committed to the measures that will prevent the spread of Covid-19: Hand Hygiene, Cough / Sneeze Etiquette and Physical Distancing. The wearing of masks is advised where physical distancing cannot be maintained. It is imperative that we all work together to keep Covid-19 out of our school, and to ensure that if it is introduced, transmission is kept to an absolute minimum. Thanks for your tremendous support to date in keeping sick children home from school, and in your prompt response when called to collect a child from school.

Given the seriousness of the situation in the community, we ask that parents wear masks at drop off and collection times if maintaining physical distance is challenging. We are aware that at Junior Infant collection time space is limited in the staff car park, and parents naturally need to make

themselves seen by their children. It is not possible to maintain physical distancing, so please wear a mask to ensure everyone remains safe. We hope you will support us in this matter.

Internet Safety

Technology has been a blessing in many ways during lockdown. However, supervision and vigilance is essential with increased screen time for children. Please refer to www.webwise.ie/category/parents/advice/ for excellent advice for parents on internet safety including social media, screen time, live-streaming and more.

Parents' Association

The PA continue to do great work despite the restrictions. Many thanks for the generous contribution to the 5th class Cycle Safety lessons that are taking place at the moment. Many thanks also for organising the Christmas Cards. We can't wait to see the finished products when they return from the printers.

In previous years, the PA ran a very successful, monthly Swap Shop in the school foyer. Parents could drop in and pick up a used (always in very good condition) uniform to have as a spare, or to replace a tracksuit bottom with a worn knee. Whatever the reason, the PA have a huge selection of almost new items of uniform. In the current climate, they cannot run the Swap Shop. However, they are happy to bag uniforms of various sizes, and make these available to you, free of charge. Please email pa@scoilmochua.com if you are looking for a uniform, and Maria Pollock, the Chairperson will respond. Similarly, if you want to find out more about the PA, or if you are interested in joining, email Maria and she will be happy to help you out. Thanks to Maria and the whole team for the wonderful support they give to the school in so many ways.

Have a lovely Mid-Term break everyone. Stay safe, stay positive, and we look forward to seeing you all again on Monday 2nd November.

Catherine Carragher, Principal