



Week beginning Monday 17th January 2022 Newsletter

www.stmaryspsportaferry.com

STEP IT UP

There are many people walking the roads around Portaferry this week as they begin the PSG Step It Up challenge. This week we took delivery of hi-vis jackets and reflective gear from the Police and Community Safety Partnership who kindly sponsored these for all participants. It is not too late to join in. Contact the school office or any member of our PSG if you want to join in the fun.



COVID UPDATE

The latest advice we have with regards to Covid is that if you have symptoms of or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 you must self-isolate. If you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, follow the guidance on self-isolation and testing below using the link

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-self-isolating-and-close-contacts>

If the school is informed of a positive Lateral Flow test result from a pupil a text message will issue to the concerned class via our text messaging service, for your information.

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

At the end of this newsletter you will find a letter from the Minister that we have been asked to share with all parents.

NURSERY / PRIMARY 1 APPLICATIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2022

The application portal is still will open. Visit our school website for further details and if you need any advice, just contact the school office and we'll be happy to help.

<https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/admissions>

AFTER SCHOOLS CLUB

It has been a very successful week with our After School club. However, going forward we must insist that if you intend your child to attend our After School Provision that you notify the school each Monday morning with a clearly labelled envelope containing exact money and stating at the front what days your child will be attending. From next week we will be unable to accept mid-week bookings or bookings at short notice. Please remember session are from 2pm - 3pm or 3pm - 4pm at a cost of £2.00 per hour.

In conjunction with the After School's room we also offer after school activities on the following days;

Tuesday 3.00-4.00pm P4/5/6/7 Irish Dancing

Wednesday 2.00-3.00pm P1/2/3 Irish Dancing

These Irish Dancing sessions are also £2.00 per hour.

JUDO

Thursday

2.00-3.00pm P1/2/3 Judo

3.00-4.00pm P4/5/6/7 Judo

This club is being run by Peggy Magee and payment for this is independent from the school.

Registration is done using the link

<https://www.teamo.chat/club/register/psj>



The class is £4 a class but there is discount for those already a club member

SCHOOL ABSENCE

If your child is absent from school, for whatever reason, we ask that you contact the school by telephone on 02842728278 or email to info@stmarysps.portaferry.ni.sch.uk to notify us of the purpose of their absence. A follow up letter of explanation must be brought into school upon your child's return to school.

HIGH FIVE

The latest edition of the EA's High Five is available to download. The theme is to Be Thankful. When you take a moment to notice all the things in your lives we can be thankful for, it helps us to feel happier and more content, even if things are not going our way. This issue is full of activities to use to inspire support and challenge your child to be the best they can be. <https://www.eani.org.uk/high-five-primary-behaviour-support-provisions-newsletter#high-five-newsletter-issue-35>



SCHOOL DINNERS

School Dinners will be served as normal during this incoming week.

| | |
|-----------|---|
| Monday | Savoury Mince & Onion, Fresh Baton Carrots, Broccoli Florets & Mashed Potato Chocolate and Orange Sponge & Custard |
| Tuesday | Breaded Cod Fish Fingers, Baked Beans, Sweetcorn, Mashed Potato Swiss Roll & Custard, Fresh Fruit |
| Wednesday | Roast turkey, Gravy, Herb Stuffing, Cranberry Sauce, Fresh Carrot & Parsnip, Fresh Savoy Cabbage, Dry Oven Roasted Potato Mashed Potatoes Homemade Rice Pudding & Pears |
| Thursday | Breast of Chicken Curry with boiled rice, naan bread, French Green Beans & Tossed Salad Flake meal Biscuit & Mandarin Orange |
| Friday | Hotdog, Sauté Onions or Beef Fajita, Carrot and Cucumber Sticks with Homemade Garlic Dip, Peas, Chips or Baby Boiled Potato |

Raspberry Ripple Ice Cream & Fresh Fruit Salad

BREAK

Monday

Toast 30p or Pancake 50p

Tuesday

Toast 30p

Wednesday

Toast 30p or buttered bagel 50p

Thursday

Toast 30p

Friday

Toast 30p or homemade buttered scone 50p

Also available daily!

Apple/ Orange juice 40p; Milkshake 40p; water 50p; Selection of fresh fruit 25p

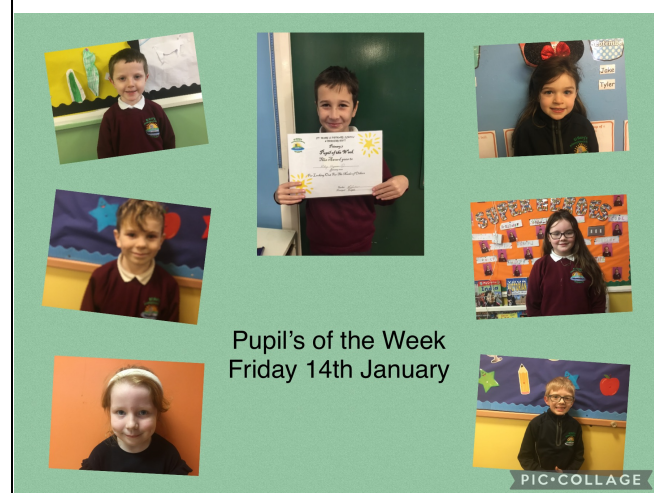


PUPILS OF THE WEEK

During the month of January the focus is on "Looking out for the need of others."

This week our Pupils of the Week were;

| | |
|----|---------|
| P1 | Rosa |
| P2 | Cora |
| P3 | Charlie |
| P4 | Oscar |
| P5 | Luis |
| P6 | Cora |
| P7 | Mikey |



Saint Mary's Primary School

After Schools Clubs

Week beginning Monday 10th January 2022

Monday - Thursday



P2/3 Pupils
2.00pm - 3.00pm



P2/3/4/5/6/7 Pupils
3.00pm-4.00pm



Primary 2/3 pupils can stay on
until 4.00pm



Activities will vary each day
Cost: £2 per hour
attending



This can be paid weekly

Our After School Club will be held in a room at the "old end" of the school building. All pupils will exit the building via the "old end" entrance facing the chapel car park at their allocated time.

All weekly bookings must be made in advance and confirmed at the beginning of each week with name, days attending and money included stated clearly at the front of a sealed envelope.



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Department of Education
Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

13 January 2022

Dear Parent

Firstly can I say that our children and young people should be praised for adapting so well to the impact of COVID on their education. As parents you have continued to offer invaluable support to our schools and educational settings to enable your children's learning to continue, particularly during periods of disruption. Our educational staff have continued to ensure that children remain at the core of all of their work despite the range of difficult challenges that they continue to face. Everyone in the education sector will continue to work as hard as we can to ensure our children and young people can continue their learning in a safe environment.

We are now in the midst of another phase of the pandemic, with the new Omicron variant leading to significant case numbers across our communities. Case numbers in children and staff are likely to continue to reflect those in the community and we can expect some disruption in the coming weeks. My focus has been, and remains, on the continuing provision of education within our schools for all our children.

The pandemic affects us all and so much of our lives has been disrupted by the need to follow the public health advice. Your children have already endured very significant disruption to their education. I want to reassure you that the NI Executive continues to have a shared objective to keep schools safe and open, because the best place for children and young people is in school.

There continue to be measures in educational settings to help manage COVID-19, including those put in place locally by each school and setting. These include:

- use of face-coverings in post-primary schools;
- a twice weekly asymptomatic testing programme;
- maximising natural ventilation;
- retaining pupils in consistent groups wherever possible; and
- promotion of good hand and respiratory hygiene.



Young people aged 12 and over and all staff have also been able to access the Executive's vaccination programme. All of these measures together are helping us to keep our schools open and reduce risk. The current public health advice does not recommend any additional measures and the Chief Medical Officer said at the Health Committee last week *"There is no magic one thing that can be put in place in schools other than a continued focus on all those things that work."*

Much has been said on the importance of ventilation in reducing COVID risks. I have been advised by Health colleagues that natural ventilation, by opening windows, is the single most effective measure. The installation of air filtration units would not, for example, allow schools to close the windows as natural ventilation remains paramount. Opening windows periodically can, at this time of year, result in cooler classrooms. Schools will do their best to keep classrooms at an appropriate temperature and I have encouraged them to be flexible in their uniform policy to ensure pupils are able to be comfortable. If your school has any issue with ventilation, be assured that my Department has made funds available to carry out any necessary works.

We do have to recognise that in some cases over the next few weeks schools may not be able to continue to operate as normal. There may be staff shortages due to illness or self-isolation and there could be significant numbers of pupils absent as well. Schools have plans in place to deal with these issues and this means your child may experience some changes to their normal school day. This could include the need to use more substitute teachers, to prioritise teaching for those pupils sitting key exams, or in some cases to move pupils to remote learning for short periods until pressures have eased. I have confidence in the leaders of all our schools and education settings to do all that is necessary to protect and support our children and their learning in the time ahead.

On Monday [I outlined in the Assembly](#) how we are helping schools who are having difficulties with teacher sickness levels, including asking recently retired teachers to come back to work and seeking to bring other qualified teachers back into schools. I have also asked student teachers to provide additional help in the coming weeks.

The intention at present is for public examinations to go ahead across the UK. CCEA, the local examination board, has made changes to GCSE, AS and A Level qualifications to take account of the disruption experienced by students. This means that students will have to take fewer examinations in Summer 2022. More detailed information is available on the [CCEA website](#). CCEA will also ensure that grading for students in 2022 takes account of the disruption experienced by learners and that they are not disadvantaged due to the pandemic.

There are also back-up plans in place for pupils who miss exams due to illness or self-isolation. Should the public health situation change and public examinations have to be cancelled, I have agreed contingency arrangements for qualifications to be awarded on the basis of teacher judgement, as in 2021. All of our young people will be enabled to complete their qualifications and progress to the next phase of education, employment or training.



Although there is likely to be some continued disruption in schools in the time ahead, I want to recognise how all of those involved have continued to show extraordinary determination and resilience throughout this pandemic. It has been a long and difficult road that we have all travelled over the last two years, I hope and trust that there are much brighter days ahead.

Regards

Michelle McIlveen

Michelle McIlveen MLA
Minister of Education

