

## Star of the Month Award

Congratulations to all recipients of our Star of the Month Awards. View photos on our website.

## P.E. Coaching in St. John's

Thanks to **Mr Liam Hardy** and **Mr Ryan McShane** for their continued commitment to the children of St. John's. Every Tuesday Mr Hardy works with the older pupils and every Thursday Mr McShane continues to coach the younger classes.



## Principal's Message

As we approach the end of another very busy term and prepare to celebrate Easter I am delighted to have this opportunity to acknowledge the numerous achievements of our pupils and to celebrate their success.

Sincere thanks to Mrs Sweeney, Editor of our Newslink for keeping us informed of all that has been happening.

I am pleased to be able to put on record my thanks to all the staff for their continued hard work and commitment to St. John's.

Thanks are also extended to our Governors for their invaluable support.

To you, the parents and many friends of our school community, please know how much we appreciate and value your generosity and co-operation. I trust everyone will have an enjoyable Easter break.

## Healthy Break

We continue to provide a piece of fruit to all pupils free of charge three days each week.

Thanks to those parents who provide a healthy choice for break on the other two days.

Fruit will be provided on Tuesday 25th April and continue until the end of June.

## Contact Details

Have you changed your phone number or moved house recently?

If so, please ensure our contacts are up to date.

Many Thanks.

## School Holidays

School will close for pupils at noon on Wednesday 12th April. The summer term will begin on Monday 24th April.



# Newslink

## Confirmation 2017

Earlier this year a consultation process regarding the wearing of school uniform for Confirmation was undertaken with the parents of the children in our school and in St. Colman's.

The majority of parents were in favour of initiating this policy. The intention of this change is to reduce expense on parents, bring uniformity to the ceremony and more importantly focus attention appropriately.

Therefore the Confirmandi of 2017 were the first to wear their school uniforms and the general feeling on the evening was that the children looked very smart and comfortable. They were a credit to their families, schools and parish.

Congratulations to all the boys and girls from the parish who were confirmed by Bishop McAreavey on Thursday 6th April.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Canon Powell for his chaplaincy and support.

Visit our parish website to see photographs.

St John's P.S.  
Gilford

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We take this opportunity to thank Mr Battersby for preparing the children to receive this sacrament. We extend our thanks to Mrs Power, the parish choir and Mr Martin White for the beautiful singing and music and also to the children and staff of St. Colman's P.S. who helped to make this such a memorable occasion for everyone.

## Easter Preparations

As part of our preparation for Easter, pupils and staff will attend Mass on Tuesday 11th April.

We would like to thank Canon Powell for giving pupils from P4-P7 the opportunity to go to confession in preparation for Easter.



## Service of Light

As part of their preparation for receiving the sacrament of Confirmation P7 pupils from our parish participated in a Service of Light in St. John's Church on 14<sup>th</sup> March. Thanks to everyone who attended and who made this such an uplifting occasion.



## First Holy Communion

We ask you to remember in your prayers the children from Primary Four who are preparing to receive their First Holy Communion.

They will receive this sacrament at Mass on 27th May 2017 at 11am in St. John's Church Gilford.



## Once Upon a Time . . .

Throughout the whole year reading is positively promoted in St. John's but to coincide with the celebration of World Book Day in March we run further reading programmes at this time. These programmes give children opportunities to share the joy of books with parents and grandparents.



### Paired Reading Programme

Children from P4 and P5 participating in the Paired Reading programme are encouraged to discuss and recommend preferences with their friends, through discussion and written book reviews. Congratulations to everyone who completed the programme.

### Grandparents' Reading Programme

Thanks to all the grandparents who spent the month of March reading with their grandchildren. We look forward to meeting them when we invite them to school to acknowledge their participation.



## Attendance Matters in St. John's

Congratulations to P3 who have been awarded the "Best Overall Class Attendance" for November-December 2016. We look forward to finding out which class has best attendance for the Spring Term.

Check our website for more details.

### Teaching Practice

Congratulations to Miss McQuade who is a student at St. Mary's University College Belfast on completing Teaching Practice with P1. We wish her every success with her exams and future teaching career.



## Extended Schools' Cluster cont'd

### Internet Safety

On 21<sup>st</sup> February Carl Brown from REIM Training Solutions facilitated a workshop for parents on 'Internet Safety and Social Media'. This highly informative evening made parents from St. John's P.S. and Gilford P.S., aware of the online dangers that face children in today's world. They looked at the importance of keeping children safe online and making them secure enough to speak to someone if they were ever to come across something that was not suitable for them or caused them distress. They also looked at the Apps that are widely available. Parents were made aware of those which can potentially lead to problems and affect the well-being of their children.



### Irwin's Top Secret Bakery

Primary 3 had the opportunity to see inside the wonderful world of Irwin's top secret bakery and watch some of Ireland's most mouth-watering baked treats being produced first hand. Irwin's have been baking bread for over 100 years and now in 2017, the bakery employs over 450 staff and operates 24 hours a day, 363 days a year. The bakery delivers around a thousand baked bread treats every day from their bakery in Portadown. As well as producing bread, Irwin's bakery also produce rolls, muffins and other delicious bakery products. As the children toured the factory they were given an overview of bakery operations and they watched the making of the iconic Nutty Crust loaf. Many thanks to Irwins for the "Goody Bags" they provided at the end of the tour.



## Catholic Schools' Week

Sunday 29th January to Saturday 4th February 2017

**'Catholic schools: Learning with Pope Francis to care for our common home'**

Catholic Schools' Week is an annual all-Ireland celebration which invites schools to give expression in an exceptional way to the ethos of Catholic education. It acknowledges the tremendous contribution that our Catholic primary and post-primary schools make, not just to Irish society, but to the mission of the Church.



This year's theme, **'Catholic schools: Learning with Pope Francis to care for our common home'** has been informed by *Laudato Si'*, the 2015 encyclical by Pope Francis on care for our common home.

Pope Francis is asking us to work together to create a better world for future generations and to take care of, respect and value our common home. To mark the beginning of Catholic Schools' Week in St. John's, Mr King led a whole school assembly and this was followed by daily activities in each class.

A number of staff and pupils travelled to **St. Peter's Church, Lurgan** on Wednesday 1st February to join with schools from the Dromore Diocese in celebrating Mass to mark this special occasion. **Bishop McAreavey and Priests of the Diocese** celebrated this Mass.



On Thursday 2nd February all pupils and staff joined with parishioners for Mass in St. John's Church to celebrate Catholic Schools' Week. Our thanks are extended to Canon Powell, for making this Mass so special. The week concluded with a closing assembly on Friday 3rd February. Visit our website for more photos.



## Trócaire Lenten Campaign 2017 Working for a Just World

Trócaire is an Irish charity and the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland. It works with partners in over 20 countries in the developing world to empower communities to improve their lives, meet their basic needs and ensure their human dignity. In Ireland, it raises awareness about the root causes of poverty and injustice, and advocates for change.



**People living with poverty are always the worst impacted.**

Right now, people in Honduras are struggling to survive hurricanes and constant flooding. Families in South Sudan and Somalia are suffering extreme hunger caused by drought and conflict. Our support can make a difference. Please remember to return Trócaire boxes to school or to the Church.

**Give them your support them this Lent.**

## EASTER RAFFLE

Our Easter Raffle will take place on Tuesday 11th April.

Thanks to everyone who supported our raffle by donating prizes or buying tickets. Proceeds will be donated to Trócaire.

Visit our website [www.stjohnspsgilford.com](http://www.stjohnspsgilford.com) for a complete list of prize-winners.



## A Trip to the Zoo for Primary Two

A trip to Belfast Zoo provides an exciting opportunity to complement work in the classroom and bring learning to life. Children from P2 enjoyed such an experience when they visited the zoo on 31<sup>st</sup> March with Gilford P.S.



The children were encouraged to use their senses to observe the animals and by touching a reptile under guidance, they could see and feel that animals are different. They also experienced how and why animal calls are so varied and that some of the animals have very distinctive smells. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the day. Visit our website for more photos.

## BELFAST TRIP FOR P7

On Thursday 9th February P7 pupils from St. John's joined up with pupils from Gilford Primary School on an Extended Schools' trip to Belfast. Their first stop was **Crumlin Road**

**"Step back in time to Victorian Belfast and witness the harsh realities of crime and punishment in a bygone era."**



**Gaol** where the children were taken on a journey back in time, reliving the sights and sounds of child prisoners who entered the Gaol over one hundred years ago.

Next stop was the **Ulster Museum** where they had the opportunity to enjoy the many exhibits on display.

Finally before boarding the bus for home they had time to enjoy the **Botanic Gardens** and walk around the grounds of **Queen's University** where some of their brothers and sisters are students.

## Extended Schools' Cluster

On 24<sup>th</sup> March P5/6 enjoyed a visit to the Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra with Gilford P.S. The children learned about homes, schools, town and rural life in the past and interacted with the costumed members of staff.



On the same day Mr King's class was also in Cultra with their peers from Gilford P.S. exploring the Land, Sea and Sky Galleries as well as the Rail, Road and Car Galleries. Everyone gained a wonderful insight into methods of transport used in the past.



Visit our website  
[www.stjohnspsgilford.com](http://www.stjohnspsgilford.com)  
to see more photos from  
Cultra

## Drama Workshops

Thanks to Miss Dervla Power for providing an opportunity for some of our children along with children from Gilford P.S. to enhance and develop their drama skills. These workshops were enjoyed by everyone who attended.

## WORLD BOOK DAY 2017

World Book Day is a celebration! It's a celebration of authors, illustrators, books and most importantly it's a celebration of reading. In fact, it's the biggest celebration of its kind, designated by UNESCO as a worldwide celebration of books and reading, and marked in over 100 countries all over the world. This is the 20th year of World Book Day, and on 2nd March everyone in St. John's celebrated.



Children from P1 and P2 came to school dressed as a character from one of their favourite books. There was great fun when Minnie Mouse ( Elaine Livingstone) came to visit. She shared lots of stories with the children and introduced some of the books which they could get in exchange for their WBD token. To celebrate World Book Day Mr King's class created their own books based on their current class novel 'Charlie Crow Sorts It!' and read their finished books to P2. It was an enjoyable experience for everyone.

Celebrating WBD, Mrs Sweeney's class spent the day enjoying books by award winning author Jeanne Willis. At the end of the day they dramatised scenarios from their favourite books.

Many thanks to Ms Livingstone and her colleague Colleen from ASDA who made WBD extra special for P1 and P2. We hope the gift of a £1 book token will encourage everyone to read at least one book. Go to our website to see more photos.

## Extended Schools' News

### Irish Dancing

#### Festival Time

Congratulations to all the dancers who participated in the Folk Dancing Section of **Ballyclare Musical Festival** on Thursday 30th March. Pupils enjoyed great success and received lots of praise and encouragement from the adjudicator.

Congratulations also to all those dancers especially our younger members of the troupe who took part and enjoyed great success at **Portadown Festival**.



### School Choir Participate in Peace Proms

As Peace Proms celebrates culture and diversity and promotes peace, unity and tolerance through music, it was fitting that the choir from St. John's were united in this experience with their peers from Seagoe P.S.

"Recognised internationally as an invaluable Arts Education & Peace initiative, the programme already engages over 20,000 children from 500 schools in Ireland, giving them the unique opportunity to perform in a large-scale production, work with leading professional conductors and soloists and sing with a full symphony youth orchestra."

Peace Proms 2017 did not disappoint! It proved to be an inspirational and thrilling experience for choirs, teachers, parents and audiences alike! Go to [www.stjohnspsgilford.com](http://www.stjohnspsgilford.com) to see photos.

## RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch 2017

Children in Mrs Sweeney's class have been learning to identify the birds that visit our playground and so were delighted to participate in the **RSPB Big Schools' Birdwatch** at the beginning of the Spring Term. We counted the birds outside the classroom for one hour.

With over 100,000 birds spotted by 70,000 people taking part, Big Schools' Birdwatch offers a valuable snapshot of the birds that use the habitats provided by schools to survive.

### RESULTS 2017

The birds have been counted, the numbers crunched and the 2017 Big Schools' Birdwatch results calculated.

The **blackbird** triumphed once again, securing the top spot as the most-seen bird, cropping up in **88%** of schools. Second place was held by **starlings**. These noisy, speckled birds showed a higher average count per school than in 2016. **Woodpigeons**, continued to increase in number cementing their top three placing from last year, beating **carrion crow** despite their increase in number.

Around our school the top four birds were:

1. **starling**
2. **carrion crow**
3. **rook**
4. **blackbird**



Even though the Birdwatch is over for another year, the children are continuing to enjoy not only the birds around school but also around their homes.





## Success at Portadown Festival

**Congratulations** to all our pupils who participated in **Portadown Festival**.

Many pupils won certificates and medals. **Special congratulations** to all those who were awarded trophies and medals. Visit our website [www.stjohnspsgilford.com](http://www.stjohnspsgilford.com) for more details and photographs.

## NSPCC SPEAK OUT STAY SAFE PROGRAMME

On 5<sup>th</sup> April specially trained **NSPCC** staff delivered an assembly presentation firstly to P5-P7 and then to P1-P4. This was part of their **Speak Out Stay Safe Programme**. The aim of the programme is to ensure that all children aged 5-11 learn essential safeguarding information in a lively, interactive and memorable way and feel empowered to speak out and stay safe.

With the help of their mascot **Buddy**, the programme provided a child-friendly, interactive assembly to help children know how to get help and the sources of help available to them, including their **Childline** service.

The **NSPCC** staff will return to school next term to conduct a workshop with **P6** and **P7** pupils when they will help children to understand abuse in all its forms and recognise the signs of abuse and know how to protect themselves from all forms of abuse.

As a charity the **NSPCC** can only provide this programme to schools as a result of their generous supporters. They rely on **87%** of their income from members of the public - funding vital services for children, including their work with schools. Therefore on **10<sup>th</sup> April** children from **P1-P7** engaged in a sponsored jog and the sponsorship will be donated to the **NSPCC** to allow them to provide this worthwhile programme in other schools.



## Music Tuition

We take this opportunity to thank our music tutors **Mrs McConville** and **Mrs Shanks** who continue to provide music tuition for strings and woodwind instruments each week. Thanks also to **Pat McAlinden** who provides singing lessons.

## Maths Clubs

Mrs Power and Mr Battersby continue to provide children with an opportunity to practise and develop their maths skills by participating in these clubs.

More importantly they develop the children's confidence in their ability to engage with maths. Mrs Power works with P2/P3 children and Mr Battersby with Key Stage 2.



## Literacy Club

The Literacy Club continues to meet every Thursday afternoon facilitated by Mrs Sweeney. As the children give up their free time to come to the club we try to make it as much fun as possible. The children continue to develop literacy skills through board and computer games.



## Eco Club

Mrs Grimley meets with members of the Eco club every Thursday. They recently planted lavender in an effort to deter the many cats from digging and spraying in the beds around the school. While cats have a "right to roam" there are so many around the school they are becoming a nuisance. We would appreciate if the owners of these cats could take more responsibility.

## Extended Schools' News cont'd

### Football Coaching with Mr Battersby

Mr Battersby continues with coaching sessions every Thursday. Children of all ages thoroughly enjoy this after school club.

### Soccer Coaching with Paul Evans

As a new term begins many of our pupils are looking forward to another 10 week soccer training programme with **Paul Evans**. Children from **St. John's** meet up with their peers from **Gilford P.S.** to enjoy these coaching sessions. Children from P1 and P2 have especially enjoyed this after school activity.

### Internet Safety

On 11<sup>th</sup> January **Ms Eleanor McKenna** from **REIM Training Solutions** delivered an **Internet Safety** workshop for **P6 and P7**. The children were reminded of the ways in which they can keep themselves safe whilst using online apps/ games. Eleanor taught the children an easy way to remember the rules. **STOP! BLOCK! TELL!**



### Cycling Proficiency Scheme

**Mr King** and **Mrs McConville** will continue this programme for our senior pupils this term. The **CPS** teaches children who can already ride a bicycle, how to do so more safely. It covers what to wear, bicycle maintenance and the rules of the road. It also allows children to practise cycling manoeuvres in a safe environment. As well as the practical aspects, pupils must pass a theory test on relevant sections of the Highway Code.



## SHARED EDUCATION

Our Shared Education Programme continues to afford the pupils from St. John's significant opportunities to interact and develop friendships with pupils from a different religious background and to contribute to the development of tolerance and mutual respect.

Since Christmas there have been additional enhanced educational experiences brought about through collaboration amongst pupils and teachers from both St. John's and Seagoe P.S.

On Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February P4 pupils enjoyed a wonderful morning participating in a range of PD&MU activities. All pupils identified a range of feelings and emotions based on different situations and engaged in role play scenarios .



On 14th February P3 participated in a PD&MU lesson in Seagoe which explored how difference should be celebrated.

On 21st February the School Council from Seagoe P.S visited St. John's P.S for a joint School Council meeting. They worked together on team building exercises.



On 9th March P2 pupils from both schools worked together on a range of numeracy and mental maths activities.



On 26th February the choirs from both schools participated in the Peace Proms. Celebrating culture and diversity is at the heart of the Proms and so this proved a rewarding experience for those involved. **Visit our website for more information and photographs of all of these events.**