



St. John the Baptist Junior Boys' School Newsletter September/October 2018

A thuismitheoirí agus a chaomhnóirí,

Fáilte ó chroí: A big welcome to our new pupils—Conor and Frankie - and all the new junior infants. We hope you have a very enjoyable and fulfilling four years with us- it might seem like an age away, but it will pass in a very short time indeed. Welcome too to our new parents- we hope that you find us welcoming and approachable. I am in the yard almost every day and do please ask if there is anything about which you are not sure. Also, phone calls are always returned if you would find it more convenient to phone. The new infant boys have settled very well and have made many new friends. As you know, we use 'friendship groups' at morning break time. Boys are encouraged to play with their table-buddies and so no one is left out, each boy makes new friends and learns the vital skills of negotiation, sharing, turn-taking and most importantly 'moving on' once any difference is resolved.

Staff changes

In July we said a sad farewell to Mrs. Michelle Carty who has moved to a new teaching post. Michelle made a great contribution to the school over many years and we wish her every success in her new position. Ms. Maeve Daly, Ms. Maria O' Dwyer and Ms. Sarah Oonan have joined the staff teaching team for the coming year. They are joined by Mrs. Cliona Hurley who has joined us as a special needs assistant. We wish them every success with us and I know the boys will make great progress under their care and guidance.

Yard safety: Collection time – especially for infants who are new to the School - is the busiest and most fraught time of the day. Seafield Road is exceptionally busy at collection time too. You can help to make collection time safer for your child by taking a few simple safety precautions-

- Please allow the class to line up fully before you approach teacher to collect your son.
- Always make sure children are beside you as you leave the yard and never allow anyone in your care to exit yard without you.
- Very young children should be kept beside you at all times.
- Any child using a scooter or bike must walk beside it in school yard.
- No drinks cups in yard please.
- Only dogs which can be carried in arms and assistance dogs are permitted in yard.

Boys collected by other Parents: As boys make new friends and go to play after school, a few simple tips - always ensure the teacher knows who is collecting - parents usually mention it in morning or previous day. If you plan a playdate - do not leave it to the child to tell his teacher. Please send a note.

Traffic at collection time: There is no avoiding the fact that traffic is very heavy at the end of the school day, but especially at 1:20. Safety rather than convenience is our over-riding concern in the School, so can I ask parents and minders not to double-park anywhere outside the School. It is unsafe and not fair to road users who have no connection with the School. Dublin City Council have paint road markings at school gate and no parking is allowed in front of it. This is to allow access for emergency vehicles should they be necessary.

Safety

- **Vernon Court:** Mr. Conor Ryan has mentioned to me on more than one occasion that some drivers collecting children from our school at 2: 20 have not shown due regard for pupils exiting from his school. Cars turning on Vernon Court are a risk and so can I ask once again that

Don't forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie

collectors and minders give themselves plenty of time to find a safe parking place.

- **Ramped area:** The ramped section on the footpaths at the junction of Vernon court and Seafield Road West is strictly a no parking zone. Cars parked here force pedestrians- many of whom have buggies and very small children- either towards the road or between parked cars.
- Please do not block gateways across from the School.
- **Disabled bay:** Please note that the disabled bay outside the blue gates is restricted on a 24 hour basis to motorists who display a blue badge. It will be required each day by a parent in the Infant Girls' School
- **Crossing the road Safely:** We are very lucky to have Marie as our traffic warden at the Vernon Court junction. She and her warden colleagues are unfailingly polite and they look out for the boys in a most caring and professional way. Please follow Marie's directions and do please cross with her only- to do otherwise undermines our safety message and gives poor example. I will be reminding Parents of this as we go on.
- **Castilla Park:** Residents of the Park have contacted the school to ask that those collecting children show courtesy and safety awareness by not blocking gates and by driving with extra care.

Change of address: Do please let Marguerite know if you have moved to a new house during the summer. Similarly, as we favour text messaging as a way of delivering news (our Green Schools initiative!) please make sure you let us know if you have changed your mobile number.

Homework Meeting/Jolly Phonics Meetings: These important meetings were very well-attended, and I want to thank you for your support on behalf of the staff. I would also like to acknowledge the preparation and presentation of these meetings which took place in the staff's own time.

Voluntary contributions: Thank you to everyone who made this contribution last year- it is your generosity which enables us to maintain and replenish our school resources.

School Charges: These charges are necessary for the continued successful running of the school and are entirely spent on providing classroom requisites and on funding our extra-curricular arts programme, reading folders, book rental etc. If you have not already done so, please deal with this matter as soon as possible. If you need to discuss these with me in confidence, please make an appointment.

Yard volunteers: We have a very strong tradition of parent involvement in the School. I wish to thank those parents who volunteer in the yard. It really does make a big difference to us and to the safety and wellbeing of children in the yard.

Entrance to School: If you are late bringing a child to school, please enter via the JBS gate only. If there are boys in the yard, Marguerite will direct you around to the senior school door. Please remember to sign your son in if late and out if leaving early or attending an appointment.

Milk: If you sign your son up to receive school milk, we expect him to drink it all. Milk cartons which are not emptied very quickly become a hygiene issue for us. Teachers will send unused cartons home with boys.

Lunches: Reminder that our Healthy Lunch Policy allows for one small treat on Fridays only. The great majority of the boys come to School with a healthy lunch and the staff and I want to affirm this. As part of our Green School Flag campaign, the boys will always bring unused lunch items and wrappings home in their lunch boxes. I have noticed a lot of whole apples in the compost- I suggest checking to make sure there is not too much in the lunch box and perhaps half apple a day? We also do not allow boys to share lunches as we have a number of pupils with various allergies. For the same reason we ask you not to send in cakes for the class on your son's birthday or on the days of holidays or breaks. If a boy has no lunch, we will make arrangements through the office.

Attendance: Following the introduction of the Educational Welfare Act, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was set up. This organisation is now known as Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The role of Tusla is, among other things, to monitor and promote attendance in schools. Each school is assigned a Welfare Officer who checks on attendance in local areas. Under Section 21 of the Act, every school is obliged to inform Tusla when a child is absent for 20 days for any reason. We are also obliged to indicate a reason for each day of absence.

The list of reasons is:

A: Illness; B: Urgent Family Reasons; C: Expelled; D: Suspended;
E: Other (Religious observance, Death of student, Emigration, Holidays);
F: Unexplained; G: Transfer to another school.

Please give your son's teacher a note when your child is absent for any reason. Your son's teacher notes are then filed and used to report the reason for the absence. If a note is not received we have to describe the absence as unexplained.

Children are expected to be present for the full day, until 13.20 for Infants and until 14.20 for 1st and 2nd. We will write to parents when their child's absences reach 15 days cumulatively to alert them that they are approaching the reporting threshold.

Sign in/out book: We ask you to come to the office to sign in if coming in late—after 9.30—or out if collecting early. We need to keep a record to show that you have collected your son early.

Fun Friends Programme: Four of our teaching staff have now been trained in the Fun Friends Programme, a whole-class programme designed to support pupils who may be experiencing anxiety as well as fostering increased resilience among pupils. Training for this programme was organised under the aegis of NEPS and through our psychologist Ms. Judith Leslie. Having run the programme for the past three years, we are hoping that three classes will complete the programme again this year. It is our intention that all boys passing through the school will complete the Fun Friends Programme in either first or second class. Mr. Harvey's class and Ms. Daly's class have started the programme and the teachers involved have met with the parents to outline the content of the programme and answer any questions. Ms. Martin's and Ms. O'Dwyer's first classes will start the programme in 2019.

Meeting your son's teacher: Parents are always welcome in the School and staff are available to meet with you to discuss any concerns you may have. We do ask that while teachers are generally happy to facilitate parents with a quick chat at the end of the school day, for more serious issues it is always best to make an appointment. Meeting teachers in the morning as they lead their lines to class is simply not possible as it delays the orderly journey to class- feel free to hand me a note, put a note in an envelope for the teacher, ask me to deliver a message to the teacher or phone the office.

Parent-teacher meetings: These will be held this year for Senior Infants, 1st and 2nd classes on 20th and 22nd November. Parent teacher meetings for Junior Infants will be on 29th January and 31st January 2019.

Literacy: This year our school has moved to "pre-cursive" font for handwriting for all class levels, as is considered best practice for literacy. This edition of the school newsletter has been produced in this font to share it with parents.

Nut Allergy – Important Notice: Parents, especially those of children in rooms 1, 2, 7, 9, 11 and 12 (sesame seeds) are asked to ensure that only nut-free food is brought into school for lunches. Please ensure children are warned not to swap any part of their lunches.

Lost Property: We have an array of school tracksuits in lost property – please feel free to search if you are missing or short of some items. Please ensure your son's name is on his school jumper, coat and on the **inside** of his schoolbag.

Don't forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie

Tracksuit Bottoms: A former parent has kindly offered to put patches on tracksuit bottoms. Cost €5 and all money go to charity. Please send such tracksuits to the office with Marguerite and remember to attach your name and phone number.

Coats and jackets: As part of being an 'Active School', we continue to explore ways to maximise opportunities for physical activity for the boys while with us during the school day. We hope to get the boys to play outside on as many days as possible. We plan, as a staff, to take breaks in the yard wherever ensure your son's name is on his coat/jacket. Also, please encourage your son to put on and zip up his coat- independence in these matters makes his school life more enjoyable.

Maths Week: For the past two weeks we have been deeply immersed in all things mathematical, thanks to the hard work of Mrs. Gray. This year, Maths Week saw our students explore a variety of concrete mathematical materials in the school foyer, where lots of fun learning took place. Back in the classrooms, students teamed up with their "buddy" classroom where older students taught younger students how to use their counting and addition skills to play board games. We were also introduced to the "Maths Eyes" project – where students look for maths in their environment and generate questions or riddles based on a photograph they have taken - and all classes await with anticipation the results of the "How many camels in the jar?" contest to see who has won "extra yard". Many thanks for the great efforts that went in to organising Maths Week.

Jersey Day: We held our GOAL Jersey Day on Friday 12th October and raised €560. All proceeds went to GOAL's valuable development work in countries where there is great need.

Head Lice: Please check your child's hair and do let us know if you notice anything 'untoward'. Bugbusting kits available from Marguerite's office at a cost of €11.

Birthday invitations: We do not allow distribution of birthday party invitations in class or in the yard. The Parents Association have organised a list for each class so Parents can organise such events outside of School.

Yoga: Karen Hazzard from the Yoga Factory has completed her yoga sessions with boys in the infant classes. These sessions contain activities in hand-eye co-ordination, fine and gross motor skills as well as a relaxing meditation session at the end. An important part of the lesson for us is that boys get practice at independently finding, putting on and fastening their shoes correctly. First and Second Classes will start yoga on 11th January.

Tennis: Luc from Tennis4kids has been taking our first classes for lessons since September 12th. This too is going really well and again reinforces many of the skills taught in the various PE strands such as throwing and catching, turn-taking and teamwork.

Active School Flag: Four years ago, we were awarded the Active School Flag in recognition of our efforts to achieve a physically educated and physically active school community. In June 2018, we became one of the first schools in the country to earn our second active school flag, thanks to the trojan efforts of the students, parents, staff and Active School Committee of Belgrove JBS. We were also selected by EUCHRODIS (European Joint Action on Chronic Diseases) as a model school to host European delegates considering embracing the Active School Flag initiative in their home countries. The Active School process is a whole school initiative. The goal is that all members of the school community work together to promote the importance and benefits of physical activity as part of daily life, and to this end, your role as parents is essential.

Our second flag required a focus on Physical Education (as distinct from physical activity) and this was assisted through the introduction of "Move Well, Move Often" guidelines from the PDST as well as the introduction of PE homework on PE days. We enhanced our Physical Activity through well-established

Don't forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie

activities like bootcamp, nature walks and seasonal activities, and also launched our “Active Walkway” in the yard with the help of past pupil and Rio Olympian, Mick Clohissey. There is an AS tab on the website, so you can view our most recent activities.

Our A.S. mascot is Active Archie - a bear whose home is on a table in the school foyer. As his name suggests, he likes getting lots of exercise and he really enjoys trying new activities. We invite boys and their families to bring Active Archie along with them if they are doing any kind of physical activity (sports, walks, treasure hunts), or going to a sporting event as either participants or spectators. Boys then bring back a picture or photo, and a description (one line is plenty!) of where they brought Active Archie, and this is pasted into an album of “Active Archie’s Adventures” which is located beside him in the foyer. Archie’s adventures range from sleepovers, to St. Anne’s Park, and even to the Rugby World Cup and Rio Olympics! If you would like to take Active Archie somewhere please let us know in advance so we can ‘book him in’. We will leave a book on Archie’s table in the foyer so feel free to come in (or e-mail activeschool@belgrovejbs.ie). You can then sign him out with your son, at his shelf in the foyer and sign him back in at 8:50 the following morning.

“This is Hallowe’en” flash mob and Hallowe’en walk. Having checked that we were not going to clash with any of the other 3 Belgrove Schools and fortified by a bank of willing volunteers, the AS Committee have been planning the “This is Hallowe’en” flash mob and walk for over a month. For the week leading up to the walk, students and staff had been practising the dance regularly.

The day started scarily enough but thankfully fine weather helped, and boys arrived in a wide array of costumes and disguises. Staff and parents also got into the “spirit” with their costumes and helped create a fully participative and highly entertaining morning for all. As boys appeared in evermore elaborate costumes, the challenge of walking our Hallowe’en route became clear. Teachers wisely brought the boys to their classrooms where all scythes, tridents, swords and other ordnance were decommissioned - at least for the duration of the walk. Thankfully, our bank of Active School volunteers were on hand to marshal the walk and ensure the safety of each boy. Parents gave great support along the route and within ten minutes or so, the assorted monsters and characters made their way back to school.

Back in the yard, parents took their places around the perimeter of the yard as our courageous parent volunteers lead the boys in our school dance to “This is Halloween” (huge thanks to Gavin Synnott, Colette Blake, Joanne Giles, David Lambert and Ann McMahon for leaving their pride at the school gates!). Fantastic involvement and performance by all – well done to the Active School Committee, our students and teachers for putting in such hard work and to our volunteers who made it all possible. Photos will appear on the school website very shortly, but I want to congratulate the boys and affirm the efforts of parents in costuming the boys.

Swimming: Ms. McCaughey’s room 7 have started their swimming session in the CRC pool. This forms the aquatic strand of our PE programme and again helps in no small way to develop co-ordination and more importantly, water safety awareness among the boys. We will be looking for parents to accompany the class to the CRC as well as lifts for wet days.

GAA: Ger Dinan, the Games Promotion Officer attached to CLCG Cluain Tairbh has been taking our senior infants and second class boys for ball skills sessions on Wednesdays. Participation and skills development are his focus and we are very thankful to the club and Ger for his input. He will begin coaching with junior infants and first classes in January.

School website: This is the showcase for everything we do in the School and has photos and news items on all the events in which we are involved as a school community as well as policies, news items and a calendar of events. www.belgrovejbs.ie

Don’t forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie

Parents' Association:

The Parents' Association would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new Junior Infants and their parents, we hope the boys have settled in well at big school. The BJBS Parents' Association supports non-curricular activities ranging from hosting tea/coffee receptions at key school events e.g. new starters' day and following the First Holy Communion. Thank you to all who volunteered to provide teas and coffees to the parents of our new Junior Infants on their first day in Belgrove, it was very much appreciated by all.

The annual Junior Infant Family Afternoon was a great success. It was a great opportunity for both the boys and parents to meet each other outside of school hours. Many thanks to Amanda Ward who set everything up and to all who helped on the day.

We were very lucky to have the opportunity to host an information evening presented by Alex McCluskey last week. Alex, a Guardian et Litem and former Child Protection Social Worker, kindly offered to give a brief introduction on Child Protection for parents. The evening was a great success and gave parents who attended a very informative insight into child protection. We would like to thank Alex for sharing her expert knowledge and for giving up her time to come and talk to us. Thank you also to Alex's daughter, Aisling Madigan, for arranging the evening.

Tusla have a free online Child Protection course which we believe would be highly beneficial to all parents. The course takes approximately one hour to complete. If you are interested in this course please follow the link below (this link is also available on our website): <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/programme> A certificate is produced on completion of the course.

It is vital that all parents who volunteer to help out in our school are Garda Vetted. A step by step guide to becoming Garda Vetted is now available on the Parents' Association section of the school website.

We are hoping to transform our school garden into a Sensory Garden in the coming months. If there are any gardeners among us who can assist with the transformation or share their expertise with us it would be greatly appreciated. Please contact us via email at pa@belgrovejbs.ie if you are in a position to help.

The Parents' Association will be hosting a Parents' information Evening on 29th November at 8pm following the Board of Management AGM at 7.30pm. Our guest speaker Joanna Fortune will be giving a talk entitled, "Raising Happy Healthy Boys". All parents are invited to attend.

Any parent with boys in the junior school is welcome to join the PA or volunteer to support any of the activities which are listed on the PA section of the school website. If you would like to join our Parents' Association please contact us via email at pa@belgrovejbs.ie. New members are always very welcome.

Upcoming Events:

- Science Week – 5th to 9th November. Big Bear Planetarium visits the school on 5th November.
- Athletics visits first and second classes on 13th November.
- Graffiti Classics visits the school on 19th November.
- Parent Teacher Meetings for Senior Infants, First and Second Classes on 20th and 22nd November.
- Westmidlands Theatre will visit the school on Monday 26th November with their production of "Old King Cole".
- **Christmas Concert** – Parents of Junior Infants and First Class – Monday 17th December.
- **Christmas Carol Service** – Tuesday 18th December at 12 noon in St. Gabriel's Church.

Don't forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie

Príomhoide: John O'Sullivan
Áine Duffy

Príomhoide Tánaisteach:

St. John the Baptist Junior Boys School
Seafield Road West
Clontarf
Dublin 3

Telephone: 8336539
Email: Principal: principal@belgrovejbs.ie
Website: www.belgrovejbs.ie

Fax: 8533045
School office: info@belgrovejbs.ie

Don't forget to check out the photos of all events on www.belgrovejbs.ie