

Scoil Naomh Íosaf, Baltinglass



Board of Management Report to Parents Following their Meeting on December 21st 2020

- **School Protocol/Response Plan:** The Board approved the fourth update of the Covid-19 Response plan in light of updated guidance from the Department of Education (DES) in relation to ventilation in schools and the arrangements for Christmas performances. This along with a suite of documents pertaining to the procedures relating to Covid-19 are available on the school website www.snibaltinglass.ie
- **Operation of School** very successful for first term – no cases of Covid-19 reported. The Board acknowledged the dedication of the staff in adhering to the Covid-19 Response plan and thanked them for their dedication to teaching and learning. The Board were very appreciative of the commitment of pupils and parents to following the Covid-19 requirements and ensuring the school remained Covid free. All teachers have done Christmas class performances, including, plays, readers theatre and songs and poetry readings. Classes have been practicing outside and recording were done outside also, weather permitting. The class performances were presented to families via. Seesaw.
- **School Admissions:** The school admissions policy and related documents have been uploaded to the school website. Admissions for September 2021 will open on January 14th.
- **Curriculum and Teaching and Learning.** Teachers have focused on Literacy, Numeracy, Mindfulness/Wellbeing and SPHE. The emphasis was on bridging the gap between March and September initially and then covering aspects of the curriculum that were not taught due to early school closure. Extension activities were commenced when foundation skills were in place. Art, PE and mindfulness activities were engaged with on a regular basis.
- **Virtual Meeting with the School Inspector John Mescal:** The Principal, Deputy Principal and Lead Worker Representative had a Zoom meeting with the school inspector Mr. John Mescal. The inspector was very satisfied with the level of engagement by Scoil Naomh Íosaf with the Covid-19 Response Plan. Mr. Mescal affirmed that the staff and pupils were following protocol and were implementing the curriculum as recommended in the DES Guidelines. Following discussion on whether children should have a class ball on the yard, both parties agreed that this was beneficial for the children once the ball remained within the class bubble, was cleaned/sanitised on return from the yard at each break and that the children sanitised their hands exiting and entering the classroom at break times.
- **School Ethos:** Fr. Ger comes to the school to chat with children in class groups while they are lined up on the yard. Fr. Ger also prays with/talks to all the classes over the school intercom system by appointment.
- **Communication/Teaching and Learning Platform.** The staff are using Seesaw for blended learning, Aladdin for communicating with parents and forwarding information and Zoom calls for communication between staff and for BOM meetings. All teachers have a school email address for two-way communication with parents and all parents have the principal's email to contact her as necessary. WhatsApp is used for communication

between staff both on a whole staff, group (e.g. SEN) and individual basis. The staff have taught children how to access Seesaw and post student work. Pupils have had homework on Seesaw to facilitate familiarity with blended learning.

- **School Self-Evaluation** – is on hold for the first term in line with DES guidelines. Teachers are following the school Literacy Plan and associated comprehension and oral language strategies
- **Fire Alarm, Fire Drill and Fire Alarm Policy** are being updated and will be finalised when the external works are finished.
- **Mindful Heart Curriculum** – Two teachers have had training on the Mindful Heart Curriculum and this is being implemented in First Classes.
- **Friends for Life** programme is being implemented in third classes and with small groups/individuals across the school as required.
- **Individual and Class photos** taken by Michael Chester.
- **Professional Development** – Marion Flanagan from PDST facilitated a mindfulness session for staff to assist with their personal mindfulness and also to give ideas for mindfulness in the classroom. Three teachers attended ‘A Balanced Approach to Literacy’ online in Kildare Education Centre; Another engaged with the NCSE two-day Autism Course; One teacher completed a Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) course and two teachers engaged with ‘Words Their Way’ – an alternative approach to teaching spelling. Staff shared their knowledge with their partner teachers/SEN Team
- **Completion of Playground** – Our fabulous new playground installed by KOMPAN was completed and all safety features and installation checked and certified. Lucia Evans forwarded the installation certificates from the Company. The Playground officially opened in early December and the children are truly enjoying this fabulous facility. The Board commended and thanked the Parent Association for their tremendous work and dedication in continuing to raise funds to pay for the playground.
- **Syrian Refugees:** The Board and staff at SNI are delighted to welcome five pupils who are part of refugee families now resettled in Baltinglass.
- **Attendance** is excellent to date. The attendance report to the Department of Education is due by December 22nd. We have had similar attendance to with the same period last year.
- **School Psychologist:** Our new NEPS psychologist Patricia McTegue has been supporting a number of pupils in the school and will be undertaking two assessments with the children in greatest need of this.
- **Critical Incident Policy and Bus Escort Policies:** both policies were approved and ratified by the Board.
- **Thank you:** The Principal and Deputy Principal sincerely thanked all the BOM for their support and encouragement over the past term and wished them a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year
- **Next Board of Management Meeting:** February 11th 2021