

Sligo School Project



Newsletter



February 2022

Dear all,

Over the last two years the impacts of Covid-19 were felt intensely by everyone in the school community. In every walk of life changes to routines and habits were difficult to make and we wish to express our sincere thanks to parents/guardians and children in supporting us and each other by adhering to the health advice that still guides our everyday practices.

A particular thanks goes out to all parents/guardians for co-operation in relation to not entering the school premises. Please keep in mind that at any time you should feel free to leave messages on the school phone if you wish to talk to a teacher 071 9143073. Our answering machine is checked every day after school closes and calls are returned.

With the recent developments and the easing of restrictions we hope to be soon able to return to what we have learned to appreciate as our normal school environment.

With this newsletter we revive a tradition that got lost in the rather tumultuous times since 2019. We hope the information provided in the newsletter is useful.

Carmel Morley

Skittles

Every morning at assembly time, the children are given the opportunity to play in the hall. For many children this is a lovely way to start the school day. A popular game that is suitable for all age groups is Skittles. It includes elements familiar from dodge-ball, but also a requirement for quite skilful toppling over of - exactly: skittles. Your child will most likely be able to explain the game to you.

Work in small groups

After assembly, the junior group is working in smaller clusters on their literacy and numeracy program. Deirdre and Máire work together here to allow the children progressing on their own individual level and speed. The smaller groups make it possible to support the children better in their efforts. In SSP we use the Jolly Phonics program (literacy) and the Ready Set Go program (maths). These are generally well established means for developing a good understanding of language and of maths.

Chess

There is a history in SSP of the children learning to play chess. Chess is a game that involves concentration, strategy and forward thinking. It requires mathematical thinking and as such, it is a wonderful help for children in developing their maths skills. This year, Deirdre has taught the children of 1st and 2nd class the basics of the game. The children in the senior room often play with the 1st and 2nd class during buddies time to further develop their knowledge of the game. Learning here is two-sided, as one of the most impressive results of teaching others is that the teachers nurture and stabilise their knowledge themselves. Before Covid we regularly invited children from other schools to visit us and play chess with them. We hope that this will be possible in the future again.

Music Generation

For the last number of years, Cranmore Regeneration Programme has funded a music programme in SSP. It is called *Music Generation*. Last term, the children in

the senior room learned to play keyboard with the help of Karl Burthom, one of the Music Generation tutors. Deirdre supported Karl and ensured that the children practised between lessons. Since January, Karl works with the junior class on a music programme. The focus will be on enjoyment of all aspects of music including, rhythm, singing and percussion.

Woodwork

We have reopened the woodwork room for guided activities. Children from first class on take turns working in pairs on individual projects. For the younger children this includes first of all getting familiar with basic tools, and yet produce something nice for themselves, or also to bring home. You may be the proud owner of a wooden snake or a smiley face made from birch-wood already. These woodwork pieces are a source of great joy for the children both in the making and when finished. Older children who have developed a certain level of mastery of tools frequently work on more demanding projects. Some of them also create their own designs, be that a wooden sword, a robot, a puppet bed, a toy town, or whatever can realistically be fabricated in the school.

Izaq 9 Cubes

The children in the senior room have started using "Izaq 9 cubes" as part of the maths curriculum. These cubes allow the children to co-operate to solve various maths problems. The children are working together in groups of three or four on their tasks. There is an Izaq 9 website that we can log onto, where many tasks and activities are given to the children using the interactive whiteboard. The activities can be challenging and the idea is that each team collaborates to complete the task.

Dodge Ball

On the yard at present, dodge-ball is a popular game. With Carmel's guidance, the children from 1st to 6th class play together most days. Children and adults agreed the rules of the game at our school meeting and it is working very well. Two of the 6th class pupils are teaching the junior and senior infants how to play dodge-ball. We try to give the children opportunities to mix with each other as it creates a trusting atmosphere in the school. The juniors look up to the

seniors and the seniors take good care of the juniors, and are wonderful role models for them.

Movie Project

During this school year Carmel's class is working on a movie project. The children started off with some brainstorming sessions about their own future (what they imagine themselves to do, or to be in twenty years time). The different characters that were imagined were then woven into a story-line. The story turned out to be a crime fiction. The older children in the class transferred the narrative of the story into a script for the movie. They created dialogues and scene settings that will be used as directions for the actors in the movie. We expect to do rehearsals soon and the recording of the movie should take place in May.

For the movie production we are still looking to find someone who owns a vintage car and would be happy to allow us using the car for some of the scenes - obviously under their supervision 😊. If you know of someone who could be approached in this regard, please contact Leon or Alex in Carmel's group.

Symposium Child-Centredness

All members of the school community are invited to participate in the symposium on the topic of child-centredness which will take place in Sligo School Project on Saturday, 21st of May, 2022, in the time from 11:00 - 17:00 h.

There will be three sessions in which always a guest speaker will give an introductory presentation of approx. 30 minutes, followed by an open discussion of 60 minutes.

Child-centredness is one of the principles underlying the practices in Sligo School Project. It is also a concept that informs the national curriculum. In the symposium we wish to discuss ideas, images, theories and practices in schools. The symposium provides a very informal space for dialogue and discussion between people from all backgrounds. We hope to bring together parents, friends, staff of SSP, other interested persons, and invited guest speakers for a day that combines the joy of a social gathering with the excitement of inspiring discussion.

Guest speakers:

Leah O'Toole and Thomas Walsh (on historical developments of the national curriculum in Ireland),

members of Sudbury School Sligo (on educational concepts and their reference to child-centredness), Amelia Hempel-Jorgensen (on child-centredness in relation to working class children).

Participation in the symposium is free of charge. For parents who wish to take part and want to bring their children with them we will organise child-minding on the day. Families, parents, guardians who know already that they intend to participate would help us a lot if they were to let us know, particularly if you need child-minding.

For the breaks during the symposium we are going to organise home-made food. If you know already that you will take part in the event and that you would be happy to bring some home-made food with you, please let us know. It reduces the work load of coordinating immensely.

On our webpage there are still a couple of impressions available from an earlier round of similar events in the years between 2010 and 2014.

For all inquiries and comments in relation to the symposium, please contact Robert via the school email (sligosp@gmx.com).

Room 19 - our new kitchen

Since summer works have been going on to convert a room that was used as a storage space for resources into a kitchen that can be used by the children for proper cooking and baking sessions. This room is now finished. A new floor has been put in, it has been painted freshly, two cookers, a sink, worktops and cabinets have been installed. And now we are ready to go. Don't be surprised if you hear the children talking about baking cakes or buns, making pancakes or pizzas, boiling eggs, potatoes or spaghetti in the near future. We'll keep you updated about the menu.

Winter Party

Due to Covid-19 we did not stage our traditional Winter Performance in December. Instead the children organised a "Winter Party" with a day full of games, performances amongst themselves, and a real disco, with sound, lights and snacks - pretty cool in fact.

Parent-Teacher Meetings

Usually we hold parent-teacher-meetings on a day in November. But you will have noticed that there was no invitation for such meetings on a particular day. This is due to Covid-19; we wanted to avoid a constant coming and going in the school and adhere to the advice to limit contacts as much as possible. However, please feel free to contact the teacher/s at any time in case you would like to speak about any issue in relation to your child's experiences in school. We will always accommodate such requests.

School Webpage

There is a lot of material on the school's webpage and a couple of new postings have been added recently. You may enjoy reading and looking at the pictures. You find the webpage under: www.sligoschoolproject.ie

Phone calls to school

Please remember that phone calls to the school normally run into our answering machine. We don't have a school secretary to answer calls during school hours. But we check the answering machine regularly and will always return your call if required.

Shoe-laces for snakes

We are always looking for old shoe-laces to use them for different purposes in creative activities in the woodwork room, the chill-room, or also in the school garden. Hence, should you have some old shoe-laces that you don't use any more, we would be happy if you were to pass them on to the school.

Sandpit

The sandpit has been covered for the winter months as usual to preserve it over the wet and cold season.

We will open it again for the children to use during break-times once the weather is going to be warmer.

Policies

School policies are under constant monitoring. They are regularly reviewed and updated. The most recent policies updated in June 2021 are our Anti-Bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement and Data Protection Policy. You can find these policies on our webpage. Feel free to contact Carmel directly at the school office for a hard copy of the school policies. We are always pleased to receive input and feedback from parents/guardians in relation to policies. In line with our checklist for annual review of Child Safeguarding Statement we invite parents/guardians to give feedback in relation to the school's compliance with the child safeguarding requirements of the 'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools 2017'.

Parental support

We wish to thank all parents for their continued support. The informal support that is available to teachers and children on an ongoing basis is greatly appreciated. However, if there is a desire on the side of parents for the more formal setting-up of a parents association we will happily support such a step and would ask you to contact us directly in this regard.

Covid-19

We wish to sincerely thank all parents/guardians for your continued cooperation with the measures that have been implemented in the school to ensure the health and safety of the school community during the pandemic. The Board of Management Covid-19 Response Plan is under constant review. Parents are welcome to obtain a copy of the plan from the school office.

Martin Ryan passed away

It is with deep sadness that we hear of the passing of our school warden Martin Ryan. Heartfelt condolences to Katie and all of Martin's family. He was a much valued, kind and gentle member of our school community. He will be greatly missed by the children and adults in our school

Extra holiday & school closure 21st of March

The new public holiday introduced in Ireland 2022 falls on the 18th of March. This is Friday after St. Patrick's Day. At Sligo School Project we had already scheduled this as a discretionary holiday. With the new public holiday introduced we are now moving the discretionary holiday to Monday, 21st of March. This means that the school will be closed from 17th of March to 21st of March inclusive. We will be back in action on Tuesday, 22nd of March. You can also visit our webpage for a visualisation in the school calendar.

School Garden

We are currently revamping the school garden. After two years growth the willow hut has been cut back, the old compost heaps are emptied and earth works are going on to create planting beds that can be used in the coming months. We manage the garden on a purely chemical-free basis.

If parents would like to get involved in some of the gardening activities (and probably take care of a specific planting bed/allotment), we would be happy if you were to contact us in this regard.

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