***ST JOSEPH’S PRIMARY SCHOOL, CROSSGAR***

 **:028 44 830 810**

 **:https://www.stjosephsps.org.uk/**

 **:4 Ballynahinch Rd, BT30 9HS**

 ***Principal: Mrs S McArdle***

25/3/2024

Dear Parents and carers,

It is so hard to believe we are finishing our second term this year already!

It has been a short but busy one for everyone in St Joseph’s. Our primary 3 children made their first confession and primary 7 celebrated the sacrament of confirmation. They were all amazing and enjoyed the class celebrations afterwards.

The children from primary 1 to primary 4 have continued with their Irish lessons with Maria and we are very impressed how well they are progressing and engaging in her lessons. I want to congratulate Ruby, Evie, Patrick and Michael who represented our school in the local Irish quiz against other schools. They were delightful to take out and came second place in the quiz which was a fabulous achievement. Maith Sibh buachaillí agus cailíní!

Primary 6 & 7 enjoyed the dance programme this term with the final one in Down Leisure Centre and are currently in Tollymore Education Centre on their school residential taking part in outdoor activities. We hope they have an amazing time and know they will build lasting lifetime memories from this trip. We will be expecting some very tired children (and staff!) home on Wednesday. A special thanks to all the staff who accompanied the children on this adventurous trip.

The children took part in many other activities this term, one being Safer Internet Day, learning about staying safe online. This is an important event in our school calendar to help teach children about the dangers of using the internet, including giving out personal information online. We all want to keep our children safe and recognise the huge advantages of accessing information online, but in a safe way.

World Book Day was again a great success, and we want to thank all of you for your support in helping the children prepare and dress up as their favourite book characters on this day. The children enjoyed the activities on the day and reading to younger children in the school. Thanks to the staff also for leading the activities and dressing up.

On Friday the children took part in Yes Day. It was a fun day for all, and the children loved choosing some of the activities for the day. The disco was a popular choice with the children, and of course football! There was extra excitement in the primary 1 & 2 classroom as they made their very own class teddy bears with Bear Necessities who visited our school. The children as a class were able to pick their bear and clothing, and even picked pyjamas. Primary 1 decided to call their bear Jo and Primary 2 called theirs George. We know there are great adventures ahead for these 2 teddy bears. Yes day was organised as a PTA event and we want to thank all of you for supporting this day by helping to raise funds for our school.

I want to extend our huge gratitude to our PTA for the fantastic work they do throughout the school year. It is heartening to see more people join to help us work towards funding new resources and events in school. Recently PTA donated £2404.10 to our school to purchase new Maths resources across the school, new indoor play equipment for the younger children and a defibrillator for our school, which has been ordered and we are waiting for its arrival. Every child in our school has benefitted from these resources and they are vital for enhancing our children’s learning. Having a defibrillator in the school is absolutely amazing, being very expensive to purchase, but a very important piece of equipment which may at some point save lives. We cannot express our thanks to everyone enough for their support with all of this.

You will have received the letter and very short survey regarding homework. We believe it is very important to listen to your thoughts about this and were delighted with the large response. We have analysed the results and 88.8% parents agreed that less written work would benefit the children. Parents strongly felt that this would leave more time to learn key skills like phonics, spelling, reading, number bonds and mental maths. This can also take the form of ICT tasks / games to reinforce learning. Written work will be reduced but will still include areas being taught in the classroom. Children working towards the SEAG transfer exam will have more written work however in addition to tests and after school classes. We strongly recommend that parents continue to support children with homework on a daily basis and ensure the non-written tasks are completed well, which the teacher will set, at a level suited for the child / class. Paul Hopkins, a lecturer and research in Education has investigated this concept and indicates that children would not suffer as a result of this change. We are also aware of a couple of schools who currently have this in place and feedback indicates that they believe children are not negatively impacted, but rather key skills have improved. We will trial this arrangement, but if you have any concerns during this period, please speak with your child’s class teacher.

Our Easter raffle will take place on Wednesday. You should have received raffle tickets which were sent home. Please return these by tomorrow morning. If you want more tickets, contact the office today and we can send them home with your child. A special thank you goes to Mrs Edemen in the office and Mrs Di Brita for organising the raffle and creating the beautiful hampers and prizes.

You will be aware earlier in the term we informed you that Mrs Prior retired from her post as a classroom assistant in St Joseph’s. We want to welcome Miss McMenamin to St Joseph’s in her place and it is great to have her back in St Joseph’s this time as a member of staff, previously a past pupil. We are delighted to have her work on our team bringing great enthusiasm and warmth to the children. I also want to welcome Miss Brennan officially, who has been with us for a while, back to our school as a member of our staff team, working as an assistant in the primary 4 classroom. I know the primary 4 children were delighted to have her in their classroom. I also want to welcome Mrs Connolly to St Joseph’s who is working as an assistant with the primary 3 children and know her lovely calm nurturing ways are a great asset to our school.

We are saddened that Miss Colhoun will be finishing in her current role with us on Wednesday. Miss Colhoun has always shown great care to the children, always ready to listen and reassure them when needed. She has been a great asset in helping with many things around the school including our choir, Christmas plays, assisting with special needs and being a member of our PTA, working to help raise funds for our children. Her kindness will never be forgotten, and we hope she will come back and visit us all again soon. We wish her luck on her next journey.

Ms Canavan will be returning to school full time, teaching the primary 4 children after Easter. We are all very excited in St Joseph’s as Ms Canavan gets married on Thursday and we wish her and her husband Marcel every happiness and blessing for her future. When she returns after Easter her name will be Mrs Slagter (pronounced as Slackter) and we look forward to working with her again.

More exciting news in St Joseph’s as Miss Mooney also gets married over the Easter holidays. We know she has been busy planning for this very special occasion, and we look forward to seeing her after Easter as Mrs Gribben. We wish her and her husband Paul every happiness and blessing also on this very special sacrament.

As we draw closer to the end of the spring term, we have a few important dates for your diary.

* We return on Monday 8th April for the new summer term
* Bank holiday School closures, Monday the 6th & 27th May
* Staff days only May 24th & 28th and 14th June (pupils off)
* School finishes at 11:30am for all children on 27th June.

As we lead into our final term, I wanted to remind you of a few details:

* Morning care will continue from 8:15am. Bookings should be made on school money for this.
* All other children, in all classes, should arrive between 8:50am-9am promptly and go directly to their classrooms. Only children attending morning care should be on site before 8:50am
* Primary 1 and 2 finish school at 2pm and primary 3-7 finish at 3pm (except on a Friday 2pm finish for whole school)
* After school care runs from 2-5pm daily (Monday - Thursday) at £3 per hour. Bookings should be made on school money for this.
* All primary 1-3 children should be accompanied by an adult into school.
* If children arrive after 9am they should report to reception with their parent/carer who will sign their child in as a late arrival, with a reason for being late – this is required for correct coding on our attendance records. No child should be sent into school late alone.

Any arrears on our school Money system should be paid up to date right away.

We wish all our parents, carers, and children of the St Joseph’s a very Happy Easter and hope you all enjoy the break. We look forward to welcoming you all back on 8th April. Take care.

Kind Regards

Mrs S McArdle

Principal