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

 **:028 44 830 810**

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

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

 ***Principal: Mrs S McArdle***

Dear Parents,

It is so hard to believe that we are in our final week of the year again! It has been another year which brought many challenges with covid but we made it! I am sure everyone is looking forward to the holidays and hope you all have a lovely rest. It has been a busy term again in St Joseph’s and I hope the children enjoyed all the fun events leading up to the end of the term. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my appreciation to our staff for their dedication and commitment to the children, and to you our parents and guardians, for the support you have shown us throughout the year. I would also like to acknowledge our wonderful children, who have worked so hard and impress me every day with their lovely manners and great behaviour. They really are a credit to you and make us all very proud.

You will all receive your child(ren)’s school reports soon. We hope you find these informative highlighting your child’s strengths and areas to focus on. Please remember all children are different and shine in different ways. Don’t compare your child with others as each child is talented and unique in their own ways.

We hope everyone enjoyed our sports day. A special thanks to Kilmore Rec for allowing us the use of their premises and to our primary 7 helpers on the day with primary 1 and 2. The children should be very proud of their achievements and efforts. Thanks to Mr Miskelly, our PE co-ordinator for organising the event and to all our staff for helping on the day.

Our Shared Education Peace IV programme was very successful this year with all classes taking part. The children enjoyed taking part in many events and trips along with their friends in Glasswater Primary School. We are continuing with the programme next year. I want to thank all of the staff for taking time to plan the events and lessons to make the programme so successful for both schools.

I would like to wish all of our primary 7 children good luck in their new schools and hope they settle quickly and easily. We have always been very proud of their achievements and will miss them all next year. We hope they will always remember their days in St Joseph’s and enjoy wearing their leavers’ hoodies that were presented to them at their leavers’ assembly. I was delighted that they were able to go on residential again as this is something the children in St Joseph’s really treasure. Our primary 3-6 enjoyed a brilliant day at Tayto Park and loved being out on a fun trip with their class friends.

We are excited to be welcoming 22 primary one children into St Joseph’s in September and look forward to working with them over the next 7 years. It is great to see our numbers are continuing to grow in St Joseph’s. By September, we will have 129 children in the school, which is a significant increase from our enrolment a few years ago.

Due to the large increase in school numbers and the numbers of pupils in the individual year groups, the board of governors have agreed that we should continue with six classes. We are delighted that this has been approved again as we believe the smaller classes will give children greater learning opportunities. This will be reviewed next year and will be subject to our school budget allocations.

Mrs Cousins’ career break has been extended for a further year. All our existing teaching staff will be in place again next year which we are delighted about.

We would therefore like to confirm class placements for the next school year 2022-2023.

P1 – Ms McClean and Mrs McConnell

P2 – Miss Dunn

P3 – Mr Swail

P4 – Ms Canavan

P5 - Miss Colhoun

P6/7 - Mr Miskelly

We hope the children enjoy their new classes we look forward to working with you again next year. To help the children transition to their new classes, we are having a transition morning on Monday to allow the children and their new teachers to get to know each other a little and see their new classrooms. We hope this will reassure the children who find change more difficult and helps them to relax over the summer.

We would like to send a very sincere thank you to our PTA for all the excellent fund raising events they have organised and led again this year. Thanks to them and all the support from parents, friends and extended family members who attended the events organised. We were delighted to receive a donation to fund a new interactive whiteboard touch panel for our primary 1 class and this has been an invaluable teaching and learning resource for both staff and children. We are currently aiming to get another one installed and cannot thank our PTA enough for their support with this. Our PTA plays a vital and very important role in our school and their support has been greatly appreciated by everyone in our school. We hope they will continue with their excellent fund raising next year and would welcome more parents to join and help them. We have a small number of members and would love more parents to come along to help. It is usually one meeting per term, some emails and helping at events.

Another person I would like to extend my thanks to is Mrs Joanne Curran, for all her support this year with our application for match funding through Santander. We are hoping to get match funding following our sponsored walk fundraising. Thanks to all of our children and parents for supporting this event. We were totally overwhelmed at the support shown from this event and the generosity shown by our whole school community.

As you can see we now have our tarmac laid on the back area behind the mobile classrooms which looks fantastic. We are still waiting on the soft surface area to be finished and fencing and gates installed. This area will add huge value for outdoor learning and a play space for the children. I was delighted when my continuous efforts to get this area developed were finally approved and funded.

Having been dealing with the effects of covid 19 on the children, we were delighted to welcome Katie the counsellor into our school to work with some children. I know the children enjoyed their sessions with Katie and they looked forward to seeing her each week.

As a school we have been working hard to help improve the children’s health and wellbeing across each class to help build their self-esteem, resilience and wellbeing. A range of agencies and resources were purchased and used to help facilitate this and the children have greatly benefitted from this.

As we begin our preparations for our new school year, please note: - If you think your child may be eligible for free school dinners / uniform grant, please log onto the Education Authority website and search for free school meals. If you are in receipt of any benefits or on an income of less than £16,000, your child may be eligible. For those currently entitled to free meals, you need to reapply each year. ***Please ensure you complete this as soon as possible as this takes time to process and needs to be in place for 1st September.***  If your child is entitled to free school meals but does not take them, I would still encourage you to renew it or apply for it, as the school can get additional funding. This is very important given current financial constraints in education as we are working within a very tight budget.

We are planning to continue to offer our Morning Care and After School Care next year. The slots will continue to be broken into hourly slots costing three pound per hour. We hope more children will be able to avail of this service during the next school year to make it financially viable.

We hope to have our clubs after school up and running early in the new school year. Details of these will follow in due course.

If you have any school books, reading books or text books in your home, it is essential that these are returned to school as these can be very difficult and expensive to replace.

It is important that all arrears outstanding in your School Money account are paid promptly before next Tuesday for dinners and all clubs. If you have difficulty paying for these please call the office.

Please remember, school closes for the children on Tuesday 28th June at 11:30am for summer. Children may come to school in their own clothes as it is a non-uniform day. Please arrange to collect your child, or the older children can walk home if permitted. We look forward to welcoming the primary 1 children into St Joseph’s and hope they will enjoy their new school environment. There will be no after school care available on this day but morning care is available if you should need it.

Primary 1 children start on Tuesday 30th August and Primary 2-7 start on Wednesday 31st August. School begins at 9am for the children and all children should be in school before this time, between 8:50-9am. Children finish on both of these days at 12:15pm as there are no catering facilities. Your child will not need lunch on these days. Please refer to your holiday list for next year, for further information. Children should not be left alone at the school gates or in the carpark for safety reasons.

Thank you so much for all your support during the school year and we look forward to working closely with you in the new school year. I hope the boys and girls have a wonderful and well deserved holiday, and you as parents and guardians of course.

Take care.

Yours Sincerely,

Siobhan McArdle

Principal