

**Parents Association  
St. Mary's National School,  
Ballygunner**

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**Newsletter  
Issue 66 – Christmas 2023**

#### **A Message from Mr. O'Reilly**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

With Christmas holidays fast approaching on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>, I wish to thank you for your continuing support since August. It has been a challenging, progressive and rewarding first term, as school life races along and pandemic times behind us.

Our pupils are superb. They do their very best each day and I enjoy weekly assembly in classrooms so much. The tried and tested format of *Welcome, Name Game, Class News, Group Activity, Questions for Me and Principal Awards* is wonderful. Our pupils are enormously proud of themselves and so they should, most especially our Junior Infant pupils in Ms. O'Connell, Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Piper classrooms and of course their 6<sup>th</sup> class buddies!

A close link between home and school is essential for the academic, social and emotional progress of your child. Please remember we are here to help. Our school office number is 051 878388 and email [office@ballygunner.ie](mailto:office@ballygunner.ie). Kerry our secretary will assist you.

A huge thank you to all our school staff. They ensure your child arrives into a warm, kind, caring classroom each morning. It is tremendous how positive our staff are and how every colleague helps maintain a supportive and inclusive school climate

and culture.

School self-evaluation and improvement continues, as we strive to improve pupils' learning experiences and outcomes. 2023/24 is implementation year for phonics/spelling, preparation for teaching/learning and inclusion. This work is ongoing in tandem with investigation year for New Maths Curriculum and Wellbeing. It is essential our pupils have the skills to deal with worries and disappointments, feel confident in coping with new challenges, have social skills to form new friendships and are motivated to learn.

A huge thank you to all parents who volunteered to help recently. We must have more active parental involvement in our school. The library, lost property, the garden and book distribution is a great starting point. Parents have a role to play in enhancing learning experiences for pupils and inviting you to speak in your child's classroom will grow.

I want to thank our outgoing Board of Management for their work, support and guidance. I look forward to working with our new Board of Management (2023-2027).

I hope you and your family enjoy time together this Christmas. I wish you a Happy Christmas and New Year. If you are travelling over the holidays, please drive carefully and allow plenty of time for journeys.

Thank You,  
Killian O'Reilly,  
Principal Teacher



## What's going on at School...

### School Improvement Planning

This year our school is focused on improving the 'Teaching and Learning of Spellings' across our school. Some terrific work has already been done this term. Our dictation programme from Third to Sixth Class has been updated. Second Class pupils are delighted to be practising their alphabetic skills using new colourful dictionaries. Our younger classes are also starting a new Phonological Awareness Programme this year to further help them in developing their early spelling skills. Improvement planning for all classes progresses into the next term. Thank you for your continued support with homework each week.

### Go Phone Free



For 2024 and beyond our school is hoping to work together to GO PHONE FREE.

Here are some research facts about mobile phones and social media.

54% of 9-year-olds own a phone. This creates a high level of concern as children believe what they see online.

**It is not what children do on phones, it is what they see and they cannot unsee it.**

No child in primary school should be on social media. Setting a device with public access and lying about age causes huge issues.

Group chats are not good, they are overwhelming with up to 300 comments unread in the morning.

Cyberbullying and exclusion continue to co-exist 24/7, via these apps.

There is a severely negative side to gaming and playing +18 games is massively concerning.

Parental Responsibility: There is so much we can all do to help and support our children, giving them what they need not what they want. Let us begin to work on this as a whole school community in 2024.

If any parent has expertise in this area, please contact Mr. O'Reilly via the school office.

### The Chess Club

Many children in the school enjoy playing chess and since October any sixth-class pupil who wishes to play or learn chess can have a game at lunchtimes on Friday. From November we have now included any fifth-class pupil who wants to play or learn chess too. Ms Morris and Ms. Kearney are facilitating this. At the end of January, there will be an interschools chess tournament in Waterford and details about this will be shared with the children in January. Keep up the chess skills over the holidays!!  
Catherine Morris, Liz Kearney

### Debating Team

Tommy O'Connell, Eve O'Donnell and Sam Mullan represented our school for the first time in many years in the Concern Primary Schools' Debating Competition this year. The trio recorded a fine victory in their first outing when they defeated Butlerstown NS in early November. Unfortunately, they were defeated in the first week of December by Ardmore NS in what was an extremely close affair at the quarter final stages. Plans are on foot to extend and expand our debating sessions come January to involve more children in the experience. Thanks to Mr. Breheny and all involved.

### Senior Infants Christmas Choir

Well done to our three Senior Infant Classes who represented our school in the WLR 'Be a Little Star' fundraiser for St. Vincent de Paul in the Sacred Heart Church on 5<sup>th</sup> December. Five Choirs from across the city performed on the night. The three classes performed; Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, Bualadh Bos, When Santa got Stuck up the Chimney, I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas and I'm Getting' Nuttin for Christmas. Well done to all pupils, they were fantastic! Don't forget to tune in and listen to the show on Christmas Eve! Well done to Ms. Dennehy, Ms. Kennedy and Ms. Hayden's classes!

### Knitting Club 2023

This year, our club began in September and pupils were eager to attend. We decided upon Christmas lap blankets for a Nursing Home as our primary project for this term. Pupils learned the knit stitch and those who attended last year learned the purl stitch. Lot of squares were created this term and we have created 9 different blankets to donate as Christmas presents to a local Nursing Home. Many thanks to those parents, grandparents and other

relations who sent in squares for the blankets.  
In the last two weeks of term, pupils have created yarn decorations for their Christmas trees.  
Knitting club will resume on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> January.  
We will begin with Spring crafts.  
Crochet club will begin on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January after school from 2.45-3.30 in Ms. O'Shea's classroom.  
While some crochet hooks will be available, it is advisable to bring your own if possible- size 4mm or 5mm.  
Thanks to all for your support with our knitting club.  
We look forward to crafting in the New Year.  
Therese O'Shea & Deirdre Cullen



### Christmas Play

The boys and girls of St. Mary's were so excited to showcase their talents and all their hard work during their Christmas plays this week.  
The school was a hub of singing and dancing as teachers, SNAs and students delivered for the big performances to parents and grandparents.



### Sport U10 Boys Football

We had great interest and numbers training this term for U10 Boy's Football. The boy's played seven games overall this year with over 30 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Class boys putting on the Black and Red jersey for the first time. On the final day of the U10 Blitz the team were narrowly beaten by a strong Holy Cross team who went on to win the tournament. We are looking forward to U11 hurling starting in the New Year. Well done to all involved.

### U10 Girls Football

There were 2 fantastic days of Girls' Football in Ballygunner GAA Grounds on September the 28<sup>th</sup> and October the 12<sup>th</sup>.  
Ballygunner, with over 30 girls from 4<sup>th</sup> Class participating, along with Gaelscoil Phort Lairge, Waterpark and St. Ursula's played a series of games over the 2 days. Despite the poor weather throughout September and October, the sun shone brightly on both days in what was a fantastic display of skill and commitment from all involved.  
In only the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of U10 Girls' Football in Waterford, Ballygunner won the Shield final against a hard-working Waterpark team. Keeva Kinsella accepted the trophy on behalf of her teammates and it has now visited each and every household of those involved. It will reside in the school trophy cabinet for a well earned rest for the remainder of the year.

Well done everyone - super work!





## Camogie Final

### Ballygunner Girls Journey to the County Final

The first match we played was against Rathgormack. We lost by a goal and a point. The final score was 5-6 to 4-5. However, we rebounded from this defeat and went on to win the rest of our group games. Then, there was the Eastern final. We had a great first half, leading throughout but then we got a bit tired and three goals went in! We ended up winning by 1 single point. We were very lucky!

The days were getting closer and closer to the county final. We started off in the first half very strong. Once again, in the second half we got tired. We tried to defend as best we could but unfortunately it just wasn't enough. We ended up losing the County final by 1 point. Overall, a great season was had by all the Gaelic football girls!

### U13 Boys Gaelic Football: A Season of Growth and Determination

As the holidays are coming it's time to reflect on the achievements and growth of our talented young athletes, particularly the U13 Boys Gaelic Football team. This season has been marked by resilience, teamwork, and significant progress.

The journey began with the first game where, despite a valiant effort, our boys faced a tough challenge and, unfortunately, came up short, losing by 12 points to Holy Cross. However, as the saying goes, it's not about how you start but how you finish, and our U13 team certainly exemplified this spirit.

In the second game, a stellar performance against St. Declans turned the tide in our favour. The boys displayed exceptional skill, determination, and teamwork, securing a well-deserved victory. The momentum continued into the final group game against Butlerstown, where our team once again triumphed, showcasing their growing abilities and dedication.

The pinnacle of the season was reached in the final, where our boys faced a formidable opponent in Holy Cross. Although the result was not in our favour, losing by a narrow margin of 2 points, the match highlighted the tremendous improvement the team had made over the course of the season. The boys demonstrated true grit and sportsmanship, leaving a lasting impression on all who witnessed their efforts. Throughout the year, the U13 Boys Gaelic Football team has not only improved their athletic skills but has also learned valuable lessons in teamwork, perseverance, and the importance of a positive

mindset. Mr O'Neill and I, as well as the entire school community are immensely proud of the boys' dedication and progress.

Well done, boys! Your commitment and improvement throughout the season have set a commendable example for all to follow in St. Mary's N.S, Ballygunner. We look forward to witnessing your continued success in the years to come.

### School Calendar 2024

School will re-open following the Christmas break on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

<b>Christmas Holidays</b> Early closing on Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December 2023 Re-opening on Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>St. Brigid's Day</b> School will be closed on Monday 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
<b>Spring Mid Term Break</b> School will be closed on Thursday 15 <sup>th</sup> and Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> February 2024. Re-opening on Monday, February 19 <sup>th</sup> 2024
<b>St Patrick's Day</b> School will be closed on Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
<b>Easter Holidays</b> Early closing on Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2024 Re-opening on Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> April 2024
<b>May Bank Holiday</b> School will be closed from Monday 6 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 until Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2024 Re-opening on Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
<b>June Bank Holiday</b> School will be closed on Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2024
<b>Summer Holidays</b> Early closing on Friday 28 <sup>th</sup> June 2024

### Early closing:

- 11.45 Special Classes for pupils with ASD.
- 12.00 Junior Infants & Senior Infants.
- 12.10 All other classes (1st to 6th).



**Kids Corner – Laughs & Giggles**

Q: How do you help someone who has lost their Christmas Spirit?

A: Nurse them back to elf !!

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Q: What do Santa's elves drive?

A: Minivans

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Q: What do you call an elf wearing ear muffs?

A: Anything you want – he can't hear you !!

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Q: What do you call Santa when he stops moving?

A: Santa Pause

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Q: What happened to the thief who stole a Christmas calendar?

A: He got 12 months !!

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Q: What do you get when you cross a snowman and a vampire?

A: Frostbite

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Q: What do you call a greedy elf?

A: Elfish !!

*Wishing everyone a  
wonderful & peaceful  
Christmas !  
Best Wishes for 2024*

