

I write this April newsletter during very strange and difficult times for our entire school community, I hope that this finds you well and that you and your family are staying safe. Safety is the most important aspect of our day to day living during this pandemic and I would like to remind you that anything after this is a bonus, so please do not be too sore on yourself if you are finding ‘crisis schooling’ at home challenging. You will find more details on helping your child at home in this newsletter. The format of this letter is very different, having no diary dates or exciting school events to report to you. I feel that it is still very important that we stay connected and therefore, the Board of Governors and I believe there is still value in creating a newsletter this month. This newsletter firstly looks back at the last month in school and then moves to current arrangements this month. Please remember that a copy of this newsletter can be downloaded from our website [www.steugenesps.com](http://www.steugenesps.com) at any time. We encourage our parents, grandparents and extended families to ‘like’ and ‘follow’ our Facebook and Twitter accounts to be kept up to date with all the latest news and developments at St Eugene’s PS.

Miss Gormley

Newsletter 08

April 2020

**RELAX KIDS**

Thank you to Shannon for completing the Relax Kids programme with our Foundation Stage and Key Stage One pupils. The boys and girls thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and learned so many new skills to help promote confidence and calmness. Shannon has provided a calm down hamper for the classroom that our children will be able to use when we return to school. Our Key Stage Two children would have been due to begin their sessions this month, we hope to be able to offer this programme again when the new school year begins. Thank you to the McHale Foundation for providing the funding for this fantastic programme.

**WORLD BOOK DAY – THURSDAY 5TH MARCH 2020**

We were delighted to have Michaela Boyle (Mayor) and John Kelpie (Chief Executive) of Derry City and Strabane District Council join us for our celebrations on World Book Day. The pair enjoyed a tour of our school and were able to see the high quality teaching and learning that is a daily occurrence in St Eugene’s PS. The visit ended with a musical performance from our Key Stage Two children and a presentation from our own Pupil Council. The staff and Board of Governors then enjoyed tea and scones with our special visitors and talked about how the ways in which the Derry City and Strabane District Council can support our school.

**NEW SIGNAGE AT ST EUGENE’S PS**

You will all have noticed the beautiful new signage that has been erected at our school entrance/exit gates and above the main doors. This signage will definitely help put our school on the map and for those who didn’t know there was a school in Victoria Bridge, there is certainly no denying it now! The funds for this project were supplied from our Friends of St Eugene’s Group and the work was carried out by GMG Logos, Strabane.

**FRIENDS OF ST EUGENE’S COFFEE MORNING**

The Friends of St Eugene’s Group organised a fabulous Mad Hatter’s Coffee Morning which took place on Saturday 7th of March. This event was a great success and raised almost £1000 for our school. Thank you to all of the members of the group who worked so hard preparing for the event and also hosting on the day, your efforts were certainly worthwhile and were rewarded by such amazing support from our families, the community and beyond. Thank you to each and every person who bought tickets, donated prizes and food and to those who came along on the morning to enjoy the event. So far this year F.O.S.E have used the money that they have raised to buy equipment to improve Wi-Fi within the school for our pupils, to provide hospitality at the opening of the Trim Trail, to buy cups, mugs and saucers for the school to use at events and over the mid-term break they paid to have our school hall repainted. You will have read above that they also purchased the new signage for our school. The group have now secured funding for a wooden outdoor playhouse and sports equipment which will be coming our way when normality resumes. Thank you to the group for all their efforts and for the difference they are making for the children in our care.

**SUSTRANS**

A big thank you to Ronan from Sustrans for all his active travel support during the month of March. On Tuesday 10th of March many parents/guardians of children in P1/2/3 attended a ‘DITCH THE STABILISERS’ workshop. This workshop was full of great tips and information for helping your child to ride their bicycle without stabilisers and it was just so exciting to watch our boys and girls ‘take off’ for the first time on two wheels. Well done to all those who attended and took part! Later that day some of our P6/7 children conducted a ‘Big Street Survey’ and were able to identify spots around Victoria Bridge for meeting and crossing during our active travel events. They collated some great information for our school to hold, and this was then put to the test on Friday 13th of March when we held our Feet First Families walk to school. It was great to see every single child in our school taking part in the event and arriving safely at school.

**INTERGENERATIONAL CELEBRATION WITH GLORIA PERRY**

Thank you to all the adults and grandparents who attended the celebration event on the 11th of March in Sion Mills Primary School with Mrs Cawley and Miss Gormley. It was a lovely morning and a great way to bring the project to a close. We hope that your fabulous sculptures are taking pride of place in your homes! Thanks again to Gloria, Ita and Mrs McNelis for hosting us.

**FIRST CONFESSION**

Well done to our P4 pupils who received the Sacrament of Reconciliation on Wednesday 11th of March. We are very proud of you all. Thank you to Mrs Connolly for preparing the children so well. First Communion is not likely to go ahead as planned, which we understand is disappointing for our boys and girls and their parents. Please be assured that our P4 parents will be the first to know about any developments in relation to First Holy Communion.

**THANK YOU AND GOODBYE TO MISS MCALEER**

Miss McAleer, our student teacher from St Mary’s University Belfast had been teaching P1/2 throughout this term. Her placement came to an abrupt end at the beginning of March when the College felt it was no longer safe to have student teachers in school due to the threat of coronavirus. We never got to say a proper goodbye but perhaps she will come and visit us again in the future. We thank Miss McAleer for all her hard work and congratulate her for everything that she achieved during her time with us at St Eugene’s Primary School. It was an absolute pleasure to help another young teacher on their journey towards qualification.

**COVID 19**

All children in P1-P7 received a home learning pack on Friday the 13th of March accompanied by a letter explaining that we as a school wanted to be prepared for the potential shut down of schools at short notice. This pack contained work to last up until the Easter Holidays. It was then agreed that the school would move 3 staff development days from later in the year forward to allow the staff to prepare more work for home learning and to effectively ‘buy more time’ for parents not wishing to send their children to school due to fears of Covid-19 infection. During this time, it was announced that all schools would close from Monday 23rd of March 2020. As a result of this announcement new home learning packs were put together for children in Reception – P7 to enable the children to have all the work that they needed until the end of this academic year. Thank you to the staff who prepared this work at short notice and to all our parents/guardians who came to collect the packs. On Monday 23rd of March the Board of Governors then held an emergency meeting to examine the coronavirus risk assessment, assess the situation, look at any requests from key worker parents and determine if it was possible to safely provide for any children looking for care on our school premises. Since this date all staff have been working to support you remotely. In your learning pack you will have all log on information and details for contacting your child’s class teacher.

**HOME LEARNING**

In your April-June learning pack you will have email addresses for contacting your child’s class teacher, and also information for logging on to various online platforms. These details can also be found in the ‘files’ section of our website at [www.steugenesps.com/files](http://www.steugenesps.com/files).

* Rec/P1/2 – contact Miss Gormley at lgormley873@c2kni.net and Mrs McDermott at cbrennan207@c2kni.net
* P3/4/5 – contact Mrs Connolly at dconnolly699@c2kni.net
* P6/7 – contact Mr Gormley at tgormley142@c2kni.net

Queries will be answered during working hours between 9.15 and 3.15, Monday to Friday, please be patient whilst we respond as there is a high volume of emails to work through. Many parents have been sharing wonderful photographs of their children at home and keeping in touch using our school Facebook page. We have had excellent feedback from our parents and grandparents on all that is going on, on Facebook, it is helping us all still feel connected and as always it is lovely to see what everyone is getting up to. Facebook is also being used to communicate updates to our website and offer advice, tips and activities to do at home.

**MY SCHOOL**

All Passwords expire 120 days after they were last reset. If a password expires, or needs to be reset and the user knows their old password they can go to: <https://services.c2kni.net/ums>

Enter the required details and the new password will be registered.

**MATHLETICS**

Children in P2 – P7 have passwords for Mathletics which can be accessed through Google or by downloading the app. If you are experiencing difficulty in logging into Mathletics contact your child’s teacher. There has been some lovely feedback from you our parents, about Mathletics. We have been informed that children using it are even arranging to go online at the same time as their friends so that they can compete against each other in the Live Mathletics Class Challenge. Staff are monitoring each child’s progress and are delighted to see so many taking part.

**ONLINE TASKS FOR KS2**

This week the first online task for children in P6/7 was added to our school website. Children are asked to complete the task and email it back to Mr Gormley for marking. The first task is ‘Report Writing for P6/7’. Parents are informing us that the children are enjoying this interaction and are excited to submit their reports. Reports can be emailed to Mr Gormley by attaching a typed response as a word document or by taking a photo or scanning a written response. You can scan documents using the Notes App on your mobile phone:

* Step 1: In the Notes app, open a note and then tap the Edit button.
* Step 2: From the formatting bar, tap on the + button.
* Step 3: From the popup menu, select **Scan Documents**.
* Step 4: You’ll now get into the document scanning screen.
* Step 5: You’ll now be able to crop the page.

**USEFUL WEBSITES AND ONLINE RESOURCES**

A list of useful websites and online resources can be found in the files section of our website www.steugenesps.com/file should you wish to avail of any of these. ‘Twinkl’ [www.twinkl.co.uk](http://www.twinkl.co.uk) are also offering free membership to parents during school closures and have just today developed interactive resources for those of you who do not have a printer at home.

**ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE**

I am currently trying to educate myself on how to use zoom for video conferencing if I am successful I will aim to hold a group session with any children and staff who wish to join in before the Easter holidays, just to say hello and allow us all to see each other. I will let you know on our Facebook page if this is able to go ahead and you will be invited to email me for the log in details, for safeguarding purposes I cannot post these details on social media.

**FINAL NOTE**

Please do not let the points above about home learning and using technology make you feel under pressure. We understand that many of our families do not have access to the digital world and this is why the paper packs were made available. Do not feel that you are compelled to do any of the tasks set, these are simply to guide you, if you wish to be guided. These are difficult times and it is important to remember that you are not a teacher and can only do your best. If your best is only a bedtime story, then that is sufficient. We understand that many of you are working from home and to do this and complete school work is just not possible. Remember that many of the day to day home activities provide wonderful learning experiences such as helping with household chores, baking, cleaning and washing up, to name but a few. Whilst there are educational opportunities within these tasks, remember that you are promoting basic life skills that your child will use growing up and that in itself is invaluable.

May I take this opportunity to say well done to you for your efforts to date, the Easter Holidays are on the horizon and children should not be expected to complete any school tasks between the 9th and 20th of April. It is important to take a break and allow your children some down time. Most importantly stay safe and continue to follow social distancing and isolation as advised by our Government.