

8<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Dear parents,

As we come to the beginning of yet another school year, on behalf of the school Board of Management I would like to thank you all for the very generous support you have given to the school throughout the year. In particular I wish to highlight the very positive way you represent the school in the community. The evidence of this close co-operation between school and community was clear in the way we work together to support all the different school fundraisers, the Pink Ribbon cycle, the Grace Kelly film festival, Mayo day, support for the people of Nepal and the Rás. Our involvement with community projects has created a collaborative culture and we also are given a chance to showcase the positive aspects of our area and school. Our Fifth and Sixth class pupils attended a very informative programme in Letterkeen last Friday for the launch of the wilding of Neiphinn.

As the country has hurtled through a deep recession, our school community has taken responsibility to ensure our children are somewhat cushioned from the most pernicious effects of austerity. You have taken charge of the things which are within your control and ensured that there is progress despite the economic climate. It is this self-belief which is now engrained in local culture which will ensure the success of our pupils when they are ready to work in the wider world. There is a very serious body of research which states that by being involved with your child's school (in any capacity) you as a parent enhance their learning and facilitate them to reach their potential.

Ours is a Catholic school which offers the primary curriculum to children of all faiths and none. We have many faith families within our community all of whom are respected and valued equally. We celebrate the major Christian festivals. In conjunction with Fr Nigel, class teachers and parents prepared children for the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation this year. Our catholic ethos permeates through the way we treat one another with respect and value the uniqueness of each individual. We welcome Fr Tod Nolan who was introduced to all the children last week. Fr Tod, as school chaplain, will visit us regularly.

As enrolment into Newport N.S. increased in 2015 we were delighted to announce the appointment of an additional class teacher bringing our number of mainstream class teachers to seven. Ms Linda Cheatle from Furnace was appointed in late August and is teaching second/third class. This will mean a lower pupil to teacher ratio for the coming year. We are blessed with committed and caring staff which includes seven class teachers, five special needs teachers, five classroom assistants, a school secretary and principal. Aisling Doherty is currently replacing Ms Molloy. Our teachers and SNA's all undertook additional training during the summer. It is this commitment to professional development that enables us to provide a high quality learning environment for our children. A huge thank you to Aisling Doherty, Norah Kelly, Liz Hughes, Laoise Walsh and Ann Chambers, all of whom worked during July to provide a wonderful summer camp for the children who have autism. Sinéad English and Declan Holmes also ran two very interesting and successful summer camps for children during July.

It is expected that everyone on the staff is approachable and professional in their communication with children and their families. We are proud of the open and welcoming culture we foster in the school. We have a complaints procedure which enables a parent to make an appointment to discuss an area of concern with the child's teacher. We are thankful to you all for always bringing matters to our notice through the correct channel.

Since its introduction in 2013, the school has participated in formulating a school improvement plan. Last year the school focused on improving literacy through the school based initiatives we informed you about.

These included a focus on learner engagement, comprehension and reading for pleasure. In the coming year 2015/16 the school will focus on the area of numeracy. A detailed programme will be set out for 2015/16 and a dedicated notice board and regular updates will keep you informed of our plan.

We are continually improving the environment of our school for which we are regularly complimented. Last autumn Tús employees worked at the school planting spring bulbs and clearing scrub to make way for these flowers. The fruit of their labour was very much in evidence when the school was a riot of colour as our daffodils bloomed successfully. During the autumn recess we also painted a number of classrooms and the remaining classrooms will be attended to over the course of the coming year. We have installed additional shelving in order to free up space in classrooms. A couple of classes were re-carpeted and we will gradually work our way around the school.

The Parent Association spent many hours working together to plan activities which enhance children's experience of school. Their fundraising enabled the school to host an educational visit from the planetarium and we refurbished some of our older electronic equipment from the donation of €1,200 raised at a very enjoyable quiz night. Throughout the year the Parent Association host a number of social receptions to coincide with events taking place in the school. Children value the role that parents play in their lives and this overlap between home and school is vital to their enjoyment of school. The AGM of the Parent Association will take place **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September at 7pm**. We would love to see a good attendance as we set out our plans for the coming year. This is an informal gathering followed by a cuppa. No one will be given a position unless they volunteer so come along and join the fun!

As an increased emphasis on the health benefits of involvement in sport are debated on the airways, we continue to offer our students a wide P.E. curriculum. The addition of the astro turf and basketball court has broadened the scope of our activities. Our children have represented us well at competitive events such as cross country, camogie, swimming, soccer, Gaelic, handball and badminton. A big thank you to teachers and parents, who travelled to many venues with children on their own time to train and participate in competitive events. We offer a wide range of active after school clubs which are provided by some school staff and by outside private providers.

We offer a broad and comprehensive curriculum and our children are a happy and progressive bunch of students. We regularly take education outside the classroom environment. Last year all classes visited the Marine Research Institute where they took part in the educational programme devised for schools. We had school visits from Tracy Heraty who brought a spring lamb to the children and from Noleen Haylett who brought along Mr Hoggs. All children are encouraged to go on the annual school tour.

The Board of Management has secured planning permission with Mayo County Council to create a second ASD class, sensory room, resource rooms and an extended P.E. hall. This development will benefit all children within the school as this investment is for facilities which are accessible to all children both in a special class and mainstream. This project will begin after Halloween. Work will be carried out to improve insulation and heat retention. We intend upgrading electrical provision and general restoration of fences will be undertaken when the main building project is complete. We have decided on replacing all remaining single glazing.

Finally I would like to thank each and every person who made a contribution to ensuring that our school is one of the best around. All of the people who planned and worked on the various projects did so in a voluntary capacity and are worthy of our admiration and thanks for all they have sacrificed in order to give time to school improvement. While every initiative instigated by the Board is not perfect, it is worth bearing in mind that each new change is done following reflection and discussion and at its core is the notion that it will benefit all our children. This work done by volunteers is very rewarding and we hope that with continued support Newport NS will continue to flourish into the future.

Yours sincerely,



Bríd Chambers, Principal  
on behalf of the Board of Management