



## Abbeyleix South National School

*Scoil Náisiúnta Mainistir Laoise Theas*

Telephone no 057- 8731920

Email address

[abbeyleixsouthns@gmail.com](mailto:abbeyleixsouthns@gmail.com)

or

[office@abbeyleixsouthns.ie](mailto:office@abbeyleixsouthns.ie)

September / October

### School Staff

Principal:	Mrs. Ruth Wallace
Deputy Principal AP1:	Ms. Geraldine Whiteford
Assistant Principal AP2:	Mrs. Orla Mythen
	Mrs. Wendy Costelloe
	Mrs. Honora Bergin
	Ms. Nicole Brophy
	Mrs. Marian Kenny
	Ms. Karen Lynam S.N.A.
	Ms. Margaret Hogan S.N.A.
	Ms. Georgina Galvin S.N.A.
	Ms. Carol Stanley S.N.A.
	Mrs. Hazel Wellwood (School Secretary)
	Mrs. Avril Twiss (School Secretary)
	Mrs. Anne Austin (Cleaner)

### Welcome to our new pupils and indeed their parents also

We welcome the following pupils who have started in Abbeyleix South National School:  
Junior Infants: Rory Bennett, Alice Bradley, Lillie Cash, Hugh Coburn, Matthew Gee, Elizabeth Hanniffy, Annie McEvoy, Robyn Moran, Eve Reid, Anoushka and Nicholas Sharma.  
First Class: Emma Sweetman  
Second Class: Ella Cash and Lucy Sweetman  
Fifth Class: Ciara Cash  
Sixth Class: Jack Cash and Rebekah Clegg

### Introductory Afternoon for our New Junior Infants

Mrs. Mythen met with our new Junior Infants pupils and their parents on a staggered basis on 18th August.  
It was a very exciting afternoon on a for these pupils, their parents and teacher.

### Farewell

We wish Andrew O'Sullivan and Tadhg Murphy all the best as they move to new schools.

Best wishes and thank you to Ms. Joanne Kelly who was with us for 3 years in a Job-sharing capacity.

We wish Mrs Kerr all the best on Parental Leave.

We wish Mrs Mary Murphy well in her new school.

We look forward to Mrs. Marie O'Shaughnessy returning to our staff.

### Intention to Apply Forms

Anybody who wishes to send his / her child to the Abbeyleix South National School next academic year 2021—2022 please contact the school for the Intention to Apply Form.

## Sixth Class Farewell and Graduation



The enforced absence from school was particularly tough on our 6th Class. In normal times, the end of the summer term would have heralded the end of their Primary Education and the excitement of moving onto their respective secondary schools. Mrs. Mythen, 6th class teacher and all the staff prepared a very special Graduation video to mark their special day. In August Sixth Class met with Mrs. Mythen, Ms. Whiteford and Mrs. Wallace for a final get-together, outdoors, on the school grounds where they enjoyed a very special Papa Noni's Pizza. We wish Ethan Bezuidenhout, Adam Bohan, Ellen Harvey, Ellianna Hudson, Brooke Hilliard, Leona Hughes, Sophie Igoe, Aishling Kirwan, Thomas Petkevicius, Méabh Rafter, Harry Roe, Ruth Talbot, Bartosz Trela and Ross Zborovsky all the very best in the future.



### The Clonking Cup:

This cup is awarded to the pupil who has attained the highest marks in their exams but this year the marks were taken from English, Irish and Maths assessments completed up to 12th March.

### Méabh Rafter

**The Telford Trophy:** This trophy is awarded to the most helpful and diligent pupil throughout his / her years in the school. This Trophy has been awarded to two pupils :

### Ellen Harvey and Aishling Kirwan.

**Outstanding Attendance:** This trophy has been awarded to **Ellen Harvey** who only missed **5 days** during her 8 years in Primary School.



View all about our school on

Website: [www.abbeyleixsouthns.ie](http://www.abbeyleixsouthns.ie)

Blog [www.abbeyleixsouthns.scoilnet.ie](http://www.abbeyleixsouthns.scoilnet.ie)

Search for us on FACEBOOK

## Principal's Reflection on School Year 2019—2020

The extraordinary times in which we have been living for the past number of months means that instead of delivering this speech to you in person at our End of Year Service in St. Michael and All Angels' Church, I am obliged to send it to you by way of this written address.

The last three months have been very challenging for all of us and we have all had to adapt so many aspects of our daily lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on how we communicate and how we learn. And we have all learned valuable lessons on maintaining friendships, staying connected with family, taking care of our health and well-being and showing even greater respect for our elders.

When we were obliged to shut the school doors on March 12th, we set work lists on the school website and have been working hard to ensure that the pupils continue to be supported in their learning.

Parents are, of course, the primary educators but having their children at home for a prolonged period without the norm of classroom teaching adds pressure and stress in any household. We certainly did not wish to add to that burden, yet have continued encouraging the pupils to submit some work and to keep in contact. It is pleasing to report that that approach was well received.

Our priority and focus were to ensure our children were happy and creative, worry-free and not stressed. Parents have played a major role here by collaborating with the teachers to balance schoolwork at home with other forms of education and developing life skills, while also protecting, nourishing, educating, supporting and entertaining. I am so happy that the lines of communication between the school and families have continued to be strong.

The enforced absence from school at this time of the year is particularly tough on our 6th Class. In normal times, the end of the summer term would have heralded the end of their primary education and the excitement of moving on to their respective secondary schools. They would now be recalling past experiences in and out of the classroom and with Mrs. Mythen they would be preparing their End of Year presentation to the school on a particular theme.

I know each of our 6th Class so well, having taught most of them for four years, having rejoiced in their successes and having enjoyed seeing their progress and development. I am so proud of them all and what they have contributed to the school.

Education is a journey and I hope that they will look back on their days at The South School as a happy and successful first phase of that journey. While you an't be good at everything, you should believe in your abilities, set new goals and look forward with confidence.

Despite the shortened academic year, 2019-20 was still a remarkably busy year for the South School as we complete our 9th year in the 'new' school building.

Our three-way partnership involving pupils, parents and staff continues to work exceptionally well, even allowing for the added dimension of Covid-19 restrictions.

### **The Pupils**

The pupils' appetite for involvement in a wide range of activities and experiences continued unabated. The highlight was winning the Best Mixed Media Award at the FIS Film Awards ceremony at the Helix Theatre in Dublin last November, a project that benefited from the expert input of one of our parents, Richard Reid.

Our film "Breaking News" was based on the novel 'James and the Giant Peach' by Roald Dahl which the pupils had been studying in English class.

In December, the Nativity Play had an Egyptian theme to it. The most advanced digital planetarium system in the country visited Abbeyleix as our pupils' Christmas treat. We had the arrival of Balance & Climbing Equipment in December also. And our music lovers had a real treat in January when the world-renowned Irish musician Sharon Shannon not only visited but also performed with all of the pupils!

Pupils participated in Maths Week and Science Week and the Credit Union Art Competition (with some winners too!) as well as Workshops on Road Safety, Biodiversity and Heritage in Schools. On the sports front, we had swimming lessons in February and March and workshops in tennis, basketball and gymnastics over a four-month period. These were all possible thanks to the Senior Infants' Parents whose fundraising of a marvellous €3,000 benefited all the pupils.

We have always been active in charity donations and this year was no exception. Proceeds of last Summer's Sale of Work were presented to Portlaoise Action Towards Homelessness (P.A.T.H.) while the Children's Collection at the Harvest Thanksgiving was donated to Social Services Meals on Wheels.

Third and Fourth Classes were disappointed that the Restaurant Evening they were planning for their parents on April 1st by preparing a 3-course meal couldn't take place. That's a perfectly natural reaction but they – and we – are all now learning how to deal with life's trials and tribulations.

## **The Staff**

The pandemic meant our teachers had to learn – and learn very fast! – how to create work online for the pupils to help them maintain a reasonable level of progress in various subjects.

It was no easy task, believe me, but we managed it! We are indebted to Cliona O Connell for the massive work she put into posting our suggested worklists on our school website and Facebook page. Cliona has always maintained the website and Facebook page for us. Her commitment of time and expertise is very much appreciated.

We have four classroom teachers, two Special Education teachers who job-share and four SNAs. Sadly, we have to say farewell to Ms. Joanne Kelly after three years when she job-shared with Mrs. Honora Bergin (who will now share the role with Mrs. Wendy Costelloe whom we welcome back after maternity leave).

As always, Hazel and Avril in the office can be relied on to ensure the smooth running of the administration end of things and have been a great help to me as Principal over many years. And Anne Austin is always on hand to make sure the school is clean and tidy.

While the Board of Management is not exactly staff, the members play an important and active role in the school's administration and we are blessed to have such willing individuals to give so generously of their time and expertise. A special Thank You goes to Canon Harvey who stepped down as Chairperson in December last after a remarkable 28 years of dedication to the role ( just a few months short of 29 years) . We are, however, most fortunate in having as his successor Mr. Glascott Symes who brings a lifetime's experience in education, having retired some years ago as Deputy Principal of The King's Hospital School in Dublin.

## **The Parents**

Last, but by no means least, I must thank the parents for their ongoing support in both physical and financial forms.

At the forefront of this support is the Parents' Association led by Chairperson Liz Lane. Their drive and enthusiasm, allied to their organisational skills, made all the difference in getting special projects off the ground. One was the visit of the Dublin Welsh Male Choir last November, which involved a huge effort, and Liz Lane personally put a massive amount of work into the success of this evening while also securing a grant under the Community Enhancement Programme for our amazing balance and climbing equipment which was installed in December. Our parent body is a fantastic asset to the school, ever willing to help out in any way they can. I thank them for their invaluable support.

It is the combination of all these factors which contribute to a vibrant school community.

We look forward with some confidence to living with the 'new normal' when we meet again in September.

In the meantime, enjoy the summer and we look forward to seeing you soon. I leave you with this inspirational poem by Douglas Malloch:

### ***Good Timber***

*The tree that never had to fight  
For sun and sky and air and light,  
But stood out in the open plain  
And always got its share of rain,  
Never became a forest king  
But lived and died a scrubby thing.*

*The man who never had to toil  
To gain and farm his patch of soil,  
Who never had to win his share  
Of sun and sky and light and air,  
Never became a manly man  
But lived and died as he began.*

*Good timber does not grow with ease,  
The stronger wind, the stronger trees,  
The further sky, the greater length,  
The more the storm, the more the strength.  
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,  
In trees and men good timbers grow.*

*Where thickest lies the forest growth  
We find the patriarchs of both.  
And they hold counsel with the stars  
Whose broken branches show the scars  
Of many winds and much of strife.  
This is the common law of life.*