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**School Newsletter**

**Newsletter 5 – January 2024**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Happy New Year and welcome back to the second term of the 2023/’24 school year.

**Junior Infant Enrolment**

Enrolment for next year’s Junior Infants is now open and the school is accepting applications. The school’s annual admission notice and enrolment application forms are available on our website [www.heathns.ie](http://www.heathns.ie). Please note that the closing date for applications is Friday 2nd February.

Parents are reminded that the school has been heavily oversubscribed in recent years and children including siblings not living in the school’s catchment area are not guaranteed a school place. Places will be allocated according to the following criteria which are set out in our enrolment policy (available from the school office or on our website www.heathns.ie):

1. Children born before the 1st March (ie. 4 by the 1st March) in the year they wish to enrol will be given priority according to the following criteria:
	1. Children who live in the Heath school’s catchment area
	2. Children who have or have had siblings already in the school
	3. Children of permanent staff in the school
	4. Children whose parents are past pupils of the school
	5. Children not residing in the catchment area whose permanent home address/Eircode is closest to the school as determined by the distance indicated on google maps.
	6. Any remaining applicants.
2. Children born on or after 1st March (ie. 4 on or after 1st March): If enrolment is not filled by children born before 1st March it will be filled on an age basis ie. Priority to the next oldest child.

**Parents Council**

The Parents Council would like to thank parents for their support of the Tractor Run before Christmas. The event was a great success and raised over €3,000. The Parents Council will run their annual Table Quiz on Friday 1st March.

**Parent/Teacher Meetings**

This year’s parent – teacher meetings will take place on Thursday 1st February from 2.30 to 5.30. Teachers may also offer additional time slots for meetings during the week of the 29th January to 2nd February before and after school. Time slots for parents to book on the Aladdin App will be released on Monday 22nd January from 10am and bookings will close on Friday 26th January at 12.00.

**Medications**

A reminder that no child should be sent to school with medications, this includes inhalers. Parents should contact the school in the event that their child requires any form of medication during school hours. For the safety of all children medication is kept in the school office and its usage is recorded.

**Hot School Meals**

School meals have been provided by the state to children attending schools in disadvantaged areas for over twenty years. These schools are designated as DEIS schools and children attending these schools are provided with a breakfast, lunch-time snack and a hot dinner every school day. The programme is run by the Department of Social Protection and as additional funding becomes available the Department has begun widening the scheme to non-DEIS schools. An additional 900 schools including our own have now been invited to join the school meals programme.

Before replying to this invitation, committing to the considerable extra work this scheme entails for the school and overall looking at the suitability of hot meals in our school, The Board of Management would like to hear what parents think. To help the Board make an informed decision please click on the following link to complete a short survey <https://forms.gle/bfBd2Eoi5tHkmPid8>. This link will also be sent to parents via the Aladdin app.

How it works: If the Board decide to proceed a procurement tendering process will be run to appoint a company to provide the hot meals. The successful company will ask parents to download an app similar to our current lunch providers. Parents will select a meal for their child/children for each school day. The company will deliver the meals to the school each morning. The meals will be reheated in newly installed ovens and then distributed to the children at lunch time. The children will eat the meals at their desk in their classroom. Unfinished or unwanted food will either be sent home or binned according to the policy of the successful company. Parents can opt out of the service if they wish to do so. Children will only be provided with a hot school meal, they will not be provided with lunch or breakfast snacks.

More information about Hot School Meals can be found at <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/>

**Other Activities**

* **Catholic Schools Week:** Next week Monday 22nd – Friday 26th January is Catholic Schools Week. The theme this year is *Catholic Schools - Communities of Service.* Mass will be held tomorrow, Saturday at 6.30pm in the parish church to launch Catholic Schools Week. All families are welcome to attend. On Tuesday grandparents of Junior and Senior Infants are invited to visit their grandchildren in school at 11.30 with refreshments at 12.00.
* **Swimming:** Swimming for Junior Infants, Senior infants, 5th and 6th classes has commenced on Wednesdays. Juniors and 6th swim at 11.15am and seniors and 5th at 12.00. The swimming takes place for 5 weeks, one week less than normal due to the earlier than usual school midterm, with a reduced cost of €42. A payment link is available on the Aladdin app. Children require a swimming hat, swimming togs and towel. Goggles or armbands should be provided if required. Infant parents are welcome to come to the pool to watch their children swimming or **to assist in changing their own child only.** Parents assisting their own child must be available for the five weeks, be there before and after swimming and not give or purchase treats for their child. Parents should not feel under pressure to attend as there will be sufficient school staff to assist the infant children. It would be of great assistance if parents practiced dressing/drying etc. with their children. If you have any query, please contact either the class teacher or the school office.
* **Dance Classes:** 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th have commenced their dance classes which will continue for 5 weeks.
* **Computer Classes:** Computer classes re-started after Christmas and will continue every Wednesday up until Easter. If you have yet to pay for the classes, you can do so at any stage before Easter.
* **Music Generation:** Our thanks to Nuala and the Music Generation musicians who enriched our Christmas performance in the Church of the Assumption. Our thanks to everyone who donated on the night which allowed the school to cover the cost of the concert. Music Generation continues this term and we will run a fundraiser in the last term to help offset the cost of the programme this year.
* **School Quiz:** The school quiz has started and will continue during January & February with a round of questions each week for 1st – 6th classes. The quizzes will be divided between 1st/2nd, 3rd/4th and 5th/6th. The quizzes are school, general knowledge and current news based with the aim of making the children more aware of what is occurring around them and in wider society. The school also hopes to participate in the Cumann na mBunscol interschools quiz, the local Credit Union Quiz and new this year the Laois Today inter-schools quiz.
* **Quiet lunch-time:** Quiet break continues on Thursdays for children from 3rd – 6th who would like a break from the hustle and bustle of yard. The activity takes place at 1pm.
* **School Draughts:** Our traditional school class draughts leagues commence in January and will be played off between now and Easter.
* **Chess:** Lunchtime chess has started on Tuesdays for children from 3rd to 6th who are interested in learning how to play. 3rd & 4th class play at small break, 11am and 5th & 6th play at big break, 1pm.
* **Football Coaching:** Our football coach Paul, courtesy of The Heath GAA, continues with his weekly sessions for all classes.
* **Debating:** Our debating team our out again next Thursday when they debate against St. Josephs NS Templemore in the area semi-final.
* **HSE Eyes and Ears Screening:** The HSE school screening service will visit the school next Friday 26th January to conduct vision and hearing screenings on junior infants. Parents should ensure that they have returned the consent form.