

School Update – December 2024.

Speech and Language

The school have partnered up with Let's Expand Communication this year. Let's Expand is a team of independent speech and language therapists, specialising in the highest standard of therapy for pre-school and school aged children throughout the North. Our therapist, Rachel Dickson, attends school every Wednesday to deliver her programme to a range of students that have been identified with a need in this area.

Early identification of possible speech and language difficulties and intervention is key to ensuring a child achieves their full communication potential. Let's Expand Communication works closely with the school enabling us to feel confident about helping our children's speech, language and communication needs. They take a specific targeted approach for each child that they have the opportunity to support. They offer evidence-based practice for a wide range of speech, language and communication difficulties including; autism, development language disorder, delayed speech sounds, stammering, selective mutism and developmental delays.

Therapeutic Counselling

Katie Sparham-Brown is a therapeutic counsellor who is now working to support our children in Sacred Heart P.S. every Tuesday. Her approach integrates listening, talking, CBT skills and resources, play, art, sand, symbols and mindfulness techniques. She has specialised training in working with primary school aged children as well as those with SEN and learning difficulties.

Katie's service is invaluable to the school and to the support of our children, especially those with social and emotional needs. We look forward to working with Katie for the rest of the academic year, ensuring that those children who need the support the most get to avail of it.

Outside Agencies

In Sacred Heart P.S. we work with a range of outside agencies who we collaborate with in different areas for the benefit of the children under our care. The following is a list of agencies (not exhaustive) who we interact with:

RISE, Emotional Support Dog Tula, EA Literacy Service, AAIS (Autism Advisory Intervention Service), PBSP (Primary Behaviour Support Provision), SENIS, Educational Psychology, Language and Communication Service, Sensory Service, Children and Young People's Services, Statutory Assessment and Review Service and REACH.

Interventions

After an internal review of the school's operations in relation to our interventions programme, a change in how it is delivered was instituted from the beginning of September. Children who avail of intervention have been earmarked for it after the analysis of a range of testing data that shows up trends in low attainment or underachievement in Numeracy and Literacy. These children now receive daily interventions in Numeracy or Literacy (or both) from our classroom assistants under the auspices of the class teacher. The programmes used focus on the utilisation of Toe by Toe for Literacy and Plus One and the Power of 2 for Numeracy. The Harberton Reading Scheme is also a mainstay and is used where applicable.

Throughout the school year, children who receive intervention support have their progress measured via assessment tools. These help identify areas that are being improved upon as well as those areas that continued support is required in. The introduction of Evidence Me is a welcome addition to the monitoring of interventions and allows parents to get an idea of the scope of work that goes on within these sessions.

Teacher Development Days

To enable the continued professional development of our teachers and to empower them to undertake work in relation to their subject areas, a schedule of days and time has been allocated to each teacher for this purpose. This arrangement is invaluable as it gives our teachers the opportunity to work on

areas of school improvement as well as crucial tasks in developing their subject areas. During these days a substitute teacher covers the class with the plan for the day given by the class teacher with all aspects taught and work completed.

ASPIRE (Shared Education)

We are delighted that we will be able to formally continue our link with Knockevin Special School through the new ASPIRE project. ASPIRE (Advancing Shared Partnerships through Inclusive Relationships in Education) is a replacement for Shared Education and our P1 and P7 classes will both get the opportunity for full engagement with this moving forward.

Extended Schools

The Department of Education's extended schools' programme aims to improve levels of educational achievement for disadvantaged children and young people by providing the additional support that they might need to help them reach their full potential. Extended schools' activities are designed to support learning, raise school standards and promote healthy lifestyles, enabling schools to work closely with members of the wider community and connect local people with local services. Some examples include: breakfast or homework clubs, sport, art, drama, ICT, programmes for parents and families and community use of school premises.

Extended schools' funding is targeted at those schools serving the most disadvantaged communities. To qualify for Extended Schools' funding, schools must meet set criteria in order to ensure those in the greatest need receive additional support. For 2024/2025 our school has met the criteria and thus have been given funding that will be spent appropriately in a number of beneficial areas. We have also received clustering financial support which will be used for staff training in connection with St Mary's P.S. Aughlisnafin and St Malachy's P.S. Kilcoo as well as parental workshops.

Wraparound Care

Our After School Club provision operates from 2pm to 4:45pm (Monday to Thursday) and from 2pm to 3pm on a Friday. The aim is to keep the clubs as fresh and varied as possible and each term there will be tweaks to the schedule. Clubs operate at a cost of £2 and £3 with the school on occasions supplementing the overall price for a provider in order to keep a high level of affordability for parents.

After School Club delivery isn't compulsory for schools and there are many establishments who do not offer any sort of wraparound care. In Sacred Heart P.S. we believe that it is essential, especially in supporting working parents. Therefore, to enable sustainability for the clubs moving forward, I'd ask that payments are made in full on SchoolMoney on a daily/weekly basis and that this is done consistently so as to assist efficient clerical operations.

Breakfast Club runs Monday to Friday from 8am to 8:45am. The latest a child can attend is 8:30am. The cost is £1.50 a day. Again, payable on SchoolMoney.

Start/Finish Times, Attendance and Punctuality

School starts for all pupils at 9am sharp. Children can be present in the yard each morning from 8:45am. Please do not drop off your child before this as there is no supervision until 8:45am. P1, P2 and P3 finish at 2pm with P4, P5, P6 and P7 finishing at 3pm. All children finish school at 2pm on a Friday. In relation to pick up times, if a class or classes are out in the yard partaking in PE or an activity, could all parents please hold off on entering the school grounds until the activity finishes.

Punctuality is absolutely key. Children arriving after 9am causes a lot of disruption for the class as well as the child themselves. They are late getting settled, can miss out on important information and it provides an inconsistent start to their day. Please ensure that your child is in school on time.

I am glad to note that our average attendance in school is up and this is an encouraging trend that we hope to see continue. If your child is going to be absent from school, please contact the school secretary Carmel on 437 51293 or send a SeeSaw message to your child's teacher.