

Parental Information Note – September 2018



Welcome back

Welcome back to a new academic year. I hope you all enjoyed the summer break and have been able to come back to the new term rested and ready to go!! A very warm welcome to our P1 children as they embark on their primary school career; to the children beginning Nursery and to all new families who are starting with us – either in these classes or through other classes in the school. As the school continues to grow, there will be many new challenges and opportunities and I hope that we can face and embrace both in equal measure. I am very conscious that this is a lengthy information note but it carries a lot of information for the new year.

Welcome to new staff

I would like to take this time to welcome some new members of staff to the school as we completed the recruitment process over the last term and summer. Indeed, I would also like to pay tribute to the members of the Board of Governors who have been so generous with their time and commitment in the recruitment process.

In the teaching staff, we have a new face with Mr Damian McArdle taking up the P6 post in school. We also recruited Miss Catherine Burns to a permanent post before the summer break.

On the support side, we have also recruited Elaine Devlin to the P1 team on a permanent basis. As well as this, we have several new and returning faces to the school team, so I wish Shannon Grant in Nursery (PM); Lyndsay O'Connor (P2) and Thomas McKibbin (P5) all the best in the coming months.

Change of circumstances over the summer.

Should contact details/addresses/mobile phone numbers etc. change it is very important that you inform staff in the office so that they can make the necessary amendments.

If there has been a change in family circumstances, it is also important that the school is kept up to date with care arrangements. In the event of an emergency it is distressing for all not to be able to contact parents or the parent / carer with responsibility on that day.

Finishing Times

P1 children are being phased in gradually over September. From Monday 1st October, P1 children will be staying in school until 2:00. There is also a P1 drop-off available from 8:30 in the morning to facilitate parents. Mrs Mathison's / Mrs Vennard's class can be dropped at the library and Mrs McMullan's / Miss Murray's class can be dropped at the Willow Room.

P2 and 3 classes will finish at 2:00 each day from the beginning of the term.

P4 - 7 classes will finish at 3:00 each day.

Uniform

We are immensely proud of our school and everything that wearing the Millennium uniform represents. Please ensure that your child wears the correct uniform and footwear every day. Children should be wearing black shoes / trainer type shoes with their uniform. Some classes ask children to wear sports footwear in when they are having PE – and this is fine, however, it should only be on request from the classroom teacher. Standards very quickly slip when 1 or 2 children break the uniform code.

Please ensure that all items of school uniform are clearly labelled. This helps enormously when we are confronted with lots of sweatshirts/polo-shirts and means that lost property can be quickly returned to its owner! Coats should also be labelled.

One of our assistants looks after our lost property and she will be organising a time every half term to remind parents to check the un-named items of clothing which she is unable to return to their owners. She will then organise a sale of unclaimed items and any remaining items will be given to charity. We cannot store numerous items of unclaimed uniform and clothing as we are running out of space in the school facilities.

Water

We like the children to drink plenty of water as research shows that it is important to keep the brain and body hydrated to optimise learning. Water is provided for P1-P3 children. To encourage independence, from P4 to P7 we like the children to use individual bottles of water which they must bring in from home – either in a purpose-made water bottle or in a non-drip disposable bottle (not screw top). It is important that they regularly replace the bottles or take them home to be thoroughly washed.

Please do not send juice in these bottles as it is only water that we are encouraging the consumption of.

Health issues

It is important that you keep us up to date with any conditions that your child may have. We need to ensure that our records are up to date – especially if there has been a diagnosis of a condition over the summer break. Likewise, please keep us informed if this type of difficulty comes to light during the year. This will ensure that children are appropriately seated in the classroom, etc. if that is medically required. I would ask every parent who has a child with a medical condition which could impact on their learning to have a brief chat with the class teacher. Any child who has epi-pens or epilepsy medicine stored in school needs to provide us with *in date medication* for the new academic year.

For children on the Special Needs Register Ms Browning will be issuing a form to ensure that all records held are up to date.

Many of our After School Clubs are taken by external coaches. Parents must ensure that coaches are kept fully informed of any health or special needs issues. * It is the responsibility of the parent to speak to the coaches.*

Parent-Teacher meetings

Parent-Teacher Meetings have been scheduled for the week beginning 22nd October.

This is an opportunity to speak to your child's teacher and discuss how they may have settled. Each of the meetings should last no longer than 15 minutes – due to the limited timeframe that the teachers will be trying to get meetings completed within.

There will be an online sign-up released prior to this date.

Halloween arrangements

We have been looking at the different arrangements for Hallow E'en 'festivities' in school. As we have grown, it has become more difficult to arrange supervision for the traditional disco that has been provided. To this end, there will be a change in the arrangements.

Instead of a Hallow E'en disco Parents' Council will be arranging a 'Freaky Friday' event for Friday 26th October, when we will have a day of activities in the class and the hall. The children will be able to come to school in Fancy Dress and there will be many surprises on that day!

For this reason, there will be no dinners available on that Friday and children should take a packed lunch to school. For those children who receive a free school dinner, a packed lunch will be provided on the day.

There will be more information about the plans closer to the time.

Communications changes

We have listened to some of the concerns raised regarding the variety of means of communication coming out of the school. To this end, we are trying to 'streamline' means of communication.

The office will be responsible for whole-school communication through the newsletter coming out on Wednesday afternoon. This should give you an overview of what is coming the following week.

There will still be timely messages regarding issues, as needed.

There will be a reminder for the monthly dinner payment (if this is the manner you choose) on the 19th of the preceding month. To save any more issues with milk, there will be a reminder text on the 1st December, 1st March and 1st June for ordering following term's milk. Please do not ask the office to take any orders after the published closing dates for milk or dinners as this causes issues in the online ordering system. I have given instructions for the office staff not to take any late orders.

Teachers will be responsible for communicating class information that isn't contained in the weekly newsletter so please check SeeSaw (or whatever method is used by your child's teacher) to stay up to date.

Christmas Fair

Following the success of the Christmas Fair held in school last year, Parents' Council would like to run the same event again. It will be held on Friday 14th December from 1:30 – 4:00 with each of the classes having some crafts to sell.

Car parking

Firstly, thank you for the continued smooth operation of the car park in the mornings. I know that being able to point out spaces has helped matters and your patience is welcomed. I also appreciate that nearly everyone is adhering to the drop-off

arrangements. The impact to the flow of the traffic cannot be underestimated and it is important that everyone continues to adhere to the general rule.

Soon, we hope to be able to address some of the concerns regarding the flow of traffic out of the school gates.

Afternoon arrangements and classes

At the end of the school day all our P1- P4 children are carefully handed over to parents/carers at the classroom/corridor doors. To ensure the safety of the children, I would urge parents to ensure that children **do not run on** in front of them out into the car park and that they **do not play in the car park**, an area which has such potential to be so dangerous. We would ask that you, particularly, **take younger children by the hand at all times** as you prepare to leave the school in what can be a busy period of the day. In all areas of the car park, cars are reversing all the time and we do not want the scenario where an unsupervised child or, indeed, anyone is knocked down.

P5 to P7 children can also be collected at the classroom doors. For those parents who would like their child to walk out to the car park to meet them, this will be facilitated by the Key Stage 2 staff. However, if parents are not there to collect the children they will be brought back to the new main reception area in front of Tessa / Ger's office. **It is not school policy to have children waiting unaccompanied in the school grounds for parents who have been delayed.** It is for the children's own safety and your peace of mind that they will be taken inside.

I know that many parents and carers, who have collected younger children at 2:00 may choose to wait for older siblings. **Can I ask that you please closely supervise younger siblings?** On many occasions I have been shocked to see younger children hanging off the railings outside the library. I dread the consequences of a slip from this height.

Access arrangements

The pupil entrance door will be open at **8.30am, 1.55pm and 2.55pm** to allow access to the classrooms. The doors will then be locked and should not be opened by anyone except school staff. If you arrive at these doors and they are locked please then use the **main visitor doors** (the large reception area) to gain access. This is very important. (I am aware that there have been some occasions when the door may not have unlocked at 8:30, but hopefully, this has been addressed in accordance with the school clock system).

Also, **under no circumstances** are the snibs / latches on the doors to be used to allow others to gain access. This has the potential to compromise the safety of all the children on site. We have a responsibility to ensure the safety of your children and the simple things will help us all in this vital area.

Punctuality

Please remember to make every effort to have your child in school *ready to learn for 9am*. If there is a change in the person collecting your child, please put it in writing or inform the class teacher via the office.

2:00 collection and Open Door Policy

Millennium is proud of the close working relationship we enjoy with our families. The vast majority of our families understand that staff are also happy to have a **quick**

conversation before school starts for simple updating, information giving or clarification type conversations.

All our teachers from P1 - 3 teach in the afternoon between 2:00 and 3:00. This is intended to release other teachers in the school for duties. On most days, these teachers are unable to engage in lengthy conversations as they have a commitment to other children and teachers in the school. If a longer conversation is necessary or the issue to be discussed is of a more serious nature, then we prefer that an appointment is made *after school* so that both the parent and the teacher have the time to have a proper conversation about the matter.

We are all aware that it can be frustrating if you are unable to speak to the teacher at this time, but I can assure you that they have commitments throughout the school within the teaching timetable – and beyond.

Curriculum Meetings

I would also like to thank the teachers for giving up their evenings for the range of curriculum meetings that have happened over the past couple of weeks. These meetings are designed to give all parents an overview of the curriculum the children will encounter during the year. With industrial action affecting many schools, I was delighted with the response of the staff to organising these important meetings.

Our school is built on goodwill across all relationships and I know that many of the staff go 'above and beyond' what is normally expected of them. I also trust them to do what they feel is best for the children in their class and across the school.

If you feel you have a concern that needs to be addressed, you should speak to the teacher **privately**; have a discussion through the Key Stage Leaders; consult with the Senior Leadership team of SENCo and Vice-Principal as well as through myself, ultimately, as Principal.

Allergies

We now have several children in school with a **nut allergy**. I cannot emphasise enough that the school is a 'nut free zone' and that we need all parents to check that they do not send into school any items which contain nuts. Please check items such as 'cereal bars' that might not be obvious in their ingredients. Other classes may make you aware of certain allergies so please be mindful if there is a request to avoid certain foods.

Resources

Tissues, Baby Wipes, Kitchen Roll, Hand Soap in a Dispenser (must not be antibacterial due to our septic tank and reed bed)

Our class teachers really appreciate donations of the above items at the beginning of each term. Man-sized tissues will be particularly appreciated as they will catch droplets better should children be sneezing.

We were fortunate, through careful budgeting and a donation from Parents' Council, to be able to maintain the level of funding for resources in the classrooms even though, on average, funding for such materials had been cut by £6 per child.

81% of families made donations through the Annual Voluntary Contribution – from which we have been able to supplement resources in the school. As well as that, £1016.78 was raised through the Just Giving site – to help purchase outdoor equipment and tables.

Charity

Last year, the school raised money for a variety of causes:

We raised £1435.54 to support Leukaemia and Lymphoma(NI)

We raised £227.53 for Marie Curie

Nursery collected £47 for Children in Need and a fund-raising disco raised £228.30

Parents' Council handed over a cheque for £500 to the National Autistic Society

£633.03 was raised through raffle sales for the Gaelic coaching and

in May we raised £319.72 for the Integrated Education Fund.

Parent Volunteers

We like to keep a bank of vetted parents to help with school trips etc. If you can assist in this way, please speak to Tessa or Geraldine.

To help children settle in school, we have introduced a policy of parent helpers assisting in the partner classroom.

Social Media Feed / School website

You can keep up to date with current activities in the school through our social media feeds:

Facebook: millenniumips

Twitter: @millenniumips

Website: www.millenniumips.org (Where you can also find out more detailed information regarding policies and procedures in school)

Child Protection

We take child protection very seriously and will always act in the best interests of the child.

The Child Protection Team for 2018-19 is:

Barry Corrigan – Designated Teacher

Finn Magee and Brendan Donnelly – Deputy Designated Teachers

Neil McGrath – Governor with responsibility for Child Protection

Reading Books and Library Books

We would encourage all parents to look after reading books and our lovely new library books. We do expect lost or damaged items to be replaced/paid for. We would request that reading books, particularly, are sent back into school as

requested by the class teacher. Children are grouped for reading and it is very frustrating when one out of a set of books is at home and therefore is not available to the child who should be using it next.

Parents' Council

Our Parents' Council are an invaluable asset to the school who give up their time freely to organise many events during the year to enrich the lives of the children – whether it is organising Hallow E'en activities or the final end-of-year Family Barbecue (and many events in between).

Currently, there is a Christmas shopping trip being arranged to Kildare Shopping Village.

If you feel that you might like to get involved and help in some of the arrangements, the committee would be delighted to hear from you. Please leave your name at the Office and a member of the committee will be in touch.

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for the overall running and management of the school. We are currently seeking members of the community who might be interested in taking up a position within the Board.

If you are aware of someone in the community who might be willing to take on such a responsibility, please let the office know and ask them to get in contact.

And finally...

I am very conscious that the first Parent Information Note of the year can be very extensive and contain a lot of information. However, I like to feel confident that I am covering as much as possible. A copy will be available on the school website for you to download and print, as needed.

The school continues to grow and serve an ever-widening community of families and people. We are consistently told about the special atmosphere many people feel when they come into the school – something that is unquantifiable. Indeed, it was also referred to in the latest external Inclusion Quality Mark inspection report from June when it was noted:

'the Inclusive ethos of the school is so embedded in the day to day practice that attitudes, values and a drive to provide an outstanding learning environment remain. I witnessed at first hand the outstanding relationships formed between teaching, support staff and pupils. The behaviour of all the pupils I met during my visit was exemplary. The school is immaculately maintained with communal areas including pupils' work, displays, sources of information and working walls.'

And

'The school is a wonderfully welcoming environment with a clear focus on providing an engaging and motivational learning experience for all pupils. It was a real pleasure to return and see the changes and progress made over the year... I am completely confident that the staff have the expertise, drive and capacity to succeed in the targets agreed for 2018-19 and I would recommend, without reservation that the school retains its Centre of Excellence accreditation...'

Such praise does not come about by accident, but through the sustained effort of all of us working together.

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