

Mid-term newssheet

Behaviour Policy

RETNS behaviour policy has been completely revised and updated to take into account current practice. As the introduction to the policy states, the Board of Management believes that in order to create and maintain a happy, safe and effective learning environment for all, there must be high standards of student behaviour.

‘We strive to create a climate that encourages and reinforces good behaviour, and in which relationships of respect, trust and support grow, both amongst the children and between the children and the adults who care for them. Children are expected and helped to take personal responsibility for their own behaviour, so that they may gain maximum benefits from their time at school and mature into caring, responsible citizens.’

We urge all parents and guardians to read the new policy, talk to their children about selected parts of the policy and generally support the children to achieve the excellent standards of behaviour of which they are all capable.

Positive School

Our aim in RETNS is always to encourage pupils to become involved in the life of the school, to develop friendships and social skills and to ensure that their behaviour does not hurt others. A major part of the new anti-bullying procedures for primary schools is prevention and to this end we have an ongoing campaign to help pupils become aware of others and to build positive relationships. We teach pupils what respectful language looks like, acts like, sounds like and feels like, we acknowledge desired respectful behaviour by giving positive attention and we tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in school. We explicitly teach pupils about the proper use of internet and social media, where appropriate. We continually support the work of the student council and encourage responsibility in our senior pupils. In this way we can continue to build a positive school culture where every member of the school community feels safe and secure in school. Teachers have a range of ideas and resources to use over the coming months, the pupils’ anti-bullying committee has a part to play and all children will be invited to become more aware and to reject any hurtful or bullying behaviour. Watch out for the next phase of the campaign which will involve displaying key messages, developed by the pupils, in classrooms and around the school.



5th and 6th class worked together to interpret the silhouettes and did some follow-up drama work. All of the classes did some work in this area and produced art work, written work or drama/oral work around the theme of caring for each other.

Student Council

I attended a meeting of the student council last week and I really have to commend them highly for the way they conduct their meeting. They are courteous and respectful to each other, they listen to each other's comments and raise their hand when they want to speak. Each topic is considered carefully and all opinions are taken before they reach a decision. They really are an example of how to run a meeting efficiently.

One of the main topics for discussion at the student council meeting was their concern over the parking situation outside the school and the safety of the children. They have met with Colm, the BOM chairperson, on this issue, and have put forward many excellent suggestions as to how to help solve the problem. One of the problems identified by the students is the issue regarding dogs outside the gate. Students feel that when there are dogs outside the gate children will become engrossed with patting the dog and forget about safety – a very valid point! This is their appeal to parents/guardians on the issue:

Dear parents and guardians

My name is Sean Ritchie and I am a 6th class rep on the student council and a 6th class student. I would like to talk about children petting dogs after school. The problem is that at 2.30pm there are about 3 to 4 dogs outside with their owners as children are leaving school. Sometimes children go over to pet the dogs and I am not saying that it is a problem to pet dogs but what worries me is that when someone tries to pet the dog the child is stopping, which means people have to squeeze through that child and it just makes a fuss. Sometimes dogs can be behind cars when other cars are trying to leave the school building and if a child goes over to pet a dog behind a car the driver might not see that child and can get hit and could be injured.

In the student council we have tried to find a solution to this problem. One solution for this is that a parent with an older child could wait on the green on the other side of the road, if not you could tie your dog to the metal bar on the green, if not try to ask someone that you know to look after your dog, and if these options don't work maybe there could be more signs on display to be careful of dogs, or else a designated safe spot for where people can stand with their dogs. This would make the area safer for kids and dogs alike.

Thank you for listening to our concerns.

Sean Ritchie, on behalf of RETNS Student Council

In addition to their ongoing work in trying to find solutions to these safety issues, the student council has recently taken on a role in the playground where each day two or three student council members are on the junior yard at break time teaching yard games to first class.

Well done to all members of the student council for their ongoing great work!

Dublinia

Fourth class had a great day at Dublinia and came back with lots of knowledge to add to what they had already learned. Watch out for more information on the website soon.

Scratch Competition

Some of our pupils have shown a great interest in an exciting new competition being run by the Irish Computer Society (ICS). ICS Skills support and sponsor Scratch in Ireland in an effort to ensure that students of all ages can gain 21st century skills. Scratch is a visual programming language that makes it easy to create interactive stories, animations, games, music and art and share these creations on the web. ICS has just launched a Scratch competition which will involve students developing creative and critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills as they work collaboratively or individually on Scratch projects. Children who complete the required number of projects will receive a Scratch for Primary Schools certificate issued by ICS. Most of the work will be done at home and this might be a good mid-term project if the weather doesn't favour outdoor pursuits.

www.ics.ie/scratch has all the details for those who haven't already signed up.

Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day was marked in all of the classes by a range of activities. Now is a good time to remind children about staying safe on the internet and, for older children, about their responsibilities as internet users. www.webwise.ie has useful articles and links.

BOM web notes

Web notes from the Board of Management meetings since September have been diligently written up and approved to go on the website but unfortunately have inadvertently not found their way there. This has been pointed out and now rectified. The web notes should be appearing every month from now on. If you would like to read the backdated notes they are on the Board of Management section of the website.

Green Schools Committee

The Green Schools Committee was delighted with the response to the biodiversity survey. We were surprised to notice that many people could list ways why biodiversity is important, how to protect it, and what threatens it but struggled to define what it is.

We received some wonderful answers to the survey and the time and effort taken by all is much appreciated.

Over the coming year we hope that we will all learn more about biodiversity and when we do our next survey that we will score even higher!

Third class has taken on to collect information about Spring as part of the national Greenwave project. They will collect and record weather data and information about plants and animals in Spring. The frog, the primrose and the horse chestnut are three of the species they will focus on.

What is Biodiversity?

It is the variety of living things found on Earth.

It includes you and me and all the plants and animals in the world.

Travel and Transport

The Green Committee is now completing COW and WOW surveys on the 1st Wednesday of the month. The committee will nominate green travellers from their classes and will award **spot prizes** during whole school assemblies to children who are making a great effort with green travel. This month, Mark McKeon in first class was awarded a prize for his efforts using public transport.

The process of organising and installing suitable bike parking is ongoing. Questions have arisen that need to be answered before we make any decisions. A group is meeting to discuss the next step.

Super School Garden Design:

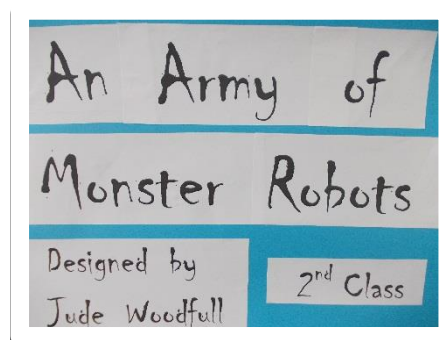
The Green Committee is looking forward to seeing your design ideas for a new school garden. We hope to collect lots of ideas that we can keep in mind for any future projects in our school grounds. Your design **does not** have to be to scale. Feel free to make it whatever shape you like. You could use the lid of a biscuit tin as a base for the project and use recycled materials or even real plants/twigs to show trees. If you find it difficult to make a 3D model you can always draw your design. Remember you can work with a brother/sister/friend over the midterm break or in the evenings.

We look forward to seeing lots of winning designs!
Thanks to Milan for your inspirational talk on garden design.

Happy Spring,
From Anne and the Green Committee

P.S. Look out for the tree diary display at the bottom of the stairs.

Jude's robot



See Jude's designs, coloured by his classmates, on www.retns.ie/kidsblog

Kids' Blog.

The students' IT committee is very excited about the launch of the Kids' Blog. This will replace the Kids' Newsletter and will be a showcase for the great creative talents of students in RETNS. The committee has put up posters and talked to the classes, so they are looking forward to getting lots of exciting articles, pictures, projects etc. to put up on the blog. Parents – if your child does something really good at home, do encourage them to contact the IT committee and get their work put up on the website.

ET fundraiser

Thursday 27th February is **One Day Together**

This is a day when all ET communities are invited to join together to raise some badly needed funds for ET. Our idea in RETNS is to have a coin snake. Families are asked to begin collecting 10c, 20c, 50c, €1 and €2 coins and bring them into school. The coins will be laid end to end to make a long snake. Pupils will be asked to guess how much money is in the snake and the closest to the correct answer will win a prize. The money will then be collected by teams of children and counted, with all money raised going to ET. On the evening of 27th there will be a Comedy Fundraiser when six of Ireland's well known comedians perform in the Laughter Lounge, Dublin. Tickets €25 each or €45 for two can be bought at www.educatetogether.ie/online-store. See www.educatetogether.ie/OneDayTogether for more details.

Pen pals in Nicaragua!

Most of you will remember Katie Doyle, a teacher from RETNS who is currently on career break. Katie has travelled extensively during her time on career break, punctuating her travels with some time teaching in South America and Central America. Since September Katie has been teaching in a small school in Nicaragua, helping to build up the school from small numbers. She is teaching 7-9 years olds and has invited our second class to become pen pals (or, more accurately, e-mail pals). They will have a lot of differences to share as Katie's school is so small compared to ours, *and* it's on the beach! The first e-mail exchange between the two classes took place this week.

Coming up!

During the week of March 3rd -7th the **Scholastic Book Fair** will be in school. We will also have a demo version of our We Are Writers book ready for that week. A range of activities is planned for the week. One of these is the **Storysack** idea.

What is a Story Sack?

A story sack is a fun, multi-sensory approach to sharing stories with children. It consists of a large bag or sack with a favourite book from the children's classroom and lots of supporting materials to stimulate language activities and make story reading a fun and memorable experience. We would

like to trial this idea during book week. A parent/guardian (either singly or in a pair) would get a copy of a class book chosen with the teacher. They then go off to find, make, etc., models of characters or objects from the story, activities or games related to the story, related non-fiction books, a finishing activity card and other props suitable for the story. They would then come in to school to read the story using the props from the sack. Any parent/guardian who would like to be involved in this activity can contact their PA class rep.

Also coming up after mid-term is **Seachtain na Gaeilge**, which will offer lots of opportunities to use our Irish language and enjoy some Irish cultural activities. More details after the break.

Skip Hop

We have invited skip-hop for a day of skipping on February 24th. Every child will have the opportunity to take part in one of the workshops that are taking place throughout the day in which they will learn a selection of moves, including individual moves, double-dutch, long rope and partner skipping. The day culminates with a demonstration of skipping skills performed by some children from each workshop. Parents are free to pop in to see the demonstration if they so wish. Cost is €2 per child, which will be deducted from the money already collected for trips, workshops, etc. Skip-hop has presented demonstrations to over 2,500 schools throughout the UK and Ireland, China and South America. Their aim is to encourage children and adults to skip for health, fun and fitness, whilst introducing traditional skipping games back into the school playground. We look forward to a fun day of skipping and hope to introduce more children to this safe, easy and inexpensive way to keep fit. Ropes will be available to buy on the day if any family should wish to do so.

I hope everyone has an enjoyable mid-term break.

Mary



The children in second class are preparing some songs for Music in the Classroom. They treated us to some of them at assembly.



Happy Valentine's Day from Senior Infants.