



## RETNS CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2016

### From the Principal's Desk



This time of year is often a time of reflection, of looking back over the year that was. In RETNS it has been another year of learning and growing as a school community. We welcomed a new group of Junior Infants and their parents into the school and I would like to thank all the senior pupils who have helped them to settle in and to make their transition to 'big school' so easy. Our recent 'partners day' gave all classes an opportunity to work with a younger or older class and get to know each other. This is part of our school wellbeing action, which helps us to ensure that children are happy in school, that bullying is not part of our school, that children feel able to 'tell' if anything is worrying them and that all children are accepted for being themselves. We hope to continue our emphasis on health and wellbeing during the remainder of the school year, with a range of activities to address the physical and emotional wellbeing of the children. Already we have two initiatives which are proving popular with the children, *Mindful Monday* and *Quote of the Week*. We will also aim to promote more physical activity and encourage children to find ways to be physically active even if they don't engage in an organised sport. To this end we hope to develop a Healthy School policy, incorporating all the many aspects of physical and mental wellbeing.

During the first term we registered the school for the Blue Flag project. This will involve the whole school, with each class taking an aspect of the programme and developing their chosen themes. More information will be provided as we get more involved in the project and we will extend an invitation to the wider school community to become involved later in the school year.

As always, the work of the school is greatly enhanced by the involvement of our parents and I would like to thank all those who have become involved in the work of the school this term. Many parents have committed to work for the further development of the school and to embark on creative funding efforts in this regard. Without the enthusiasm and hard work of the parents of RETNS, our efforts to continue the development of our school would be much curtailed.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Board of Management for their real dedication and commitment to the school, and for the invaluable work they do in keeping the school running so well. Board members have taken on roles in developing the school, in ensuring that our school is a safe place for all, developing policies and improving communication with the school community. It is a privilege to have the support of such a dedicated group of people.

I would like to thank the members of the PA committee who give up their precious time to work for the good of all the children and the benefit of the whole school community. Their commitment to the school is a tremendous support to the staff and to myself as Principal. A special thank you must go to all those parents who have spent hours in the school, and at home, helping the children to prepare for this year's Winterfest celebration.

To the pupils, I say well done on a great term's work! It is great to see the commitment and enthusiasm that the children have to all of the activities which they undertake, both inside and outside the classroom. All of the children strive to do their best and to build a school community where there is enjoyment in learning and a real school spirit.

I would like to thank our fantastic staff who, as always, have given wholeheartedly to make our school the great learning environment that it is. The discipline, achievements and happiness of the children is largely down to their dedication and their commitment to achieving the highest standards for all our children in all areas.

We have just celebrated the climax of our term's work – Winterfest, which this year took the theme *Light*. The theme was interpreted in a variety of ways by the different classes and each of the classes entertained the audience with a feast of singing, dancing, poetry and drama, full of energy, enthusiasm and fun, and on stage we saw the real depth of the children's talents. They really were the shining stars of RETNS! As part of Winterfest the hall has been decorated with an array of stars, each containing a wish for the world. These will stay on display with the hope that at least some of the children's wishes will come true.

We finished off our year's work with our Winter Solstice ceremony (see separate article) in which the children learned about the Midwinter festival, its special connection to Irish and European culture and its reminder of our reliance on light and the bounty of nature.

As we take our winter break I would like to wish all in RETNS school community a very happy and peaceful festive season and look forward to seeing you all again in 2017.

**First Class made a gorgeous wreath from the bountiful greenery in the Wildlife Garden.**



Seasons Greetings Nollaig Shona-  
Happy New Year Happy Solstice !!



## Tablets! Just what the Doctor Ordered!

In RETNS, staff and parents are focussed on providing a child-centred education and on preparing the children for their future. We aim to open the children's minds to learning, and to use relevant and meaningful teaching and learning methods with the children.

We wish to take advantage of the educational experiences that tablet technologies can offer. For instance, under the guidance of the teacher in the classroom, children can collaborate to research types of trees, photograph and document trees in the wildlife garden, return to the classroom, document their work and then present their findings to their peers via the Interactive Whiteboard.

From out-of-school events such as trips to places of historical interest and sporting events, to in-school activities such as making Gingerbread Houses, the tablet can serve as an observational tool, a documentation tool, a communicative tool and a collaborative tool.

Tablets are portable, have a long-battery life (8 hours) and switch on immediately, making them ideal for the shorter concentration of younger classes or for short ten minute sessions in older classes.

In RETNS, we hope to raise funds relatively painlessly, so as to buy a set of tablets for 'Station Teaching' in Maths and Literacy in the Junior classes, initially. We also plan to use the tablets for 'anytime, anywhere' learning in-school or outdoors for the Senior Classes engaging in Science, Geography and History.

To raise the funds, we are asking for donations of smart devices, less than 8 years old, with the charger, so that we can sell the devices through a reputable dealer. Please wipe data from the phone/iOS device etc, although the dealer can assist here if needs be. Devices can be dropped at the school office before 27<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

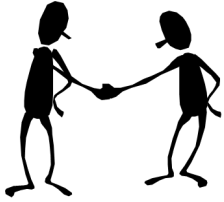
It might be an idea to spread the word to your relations/friends/companies over the festive season, as many people may update their devices at this time?

*Petrina Brophy*

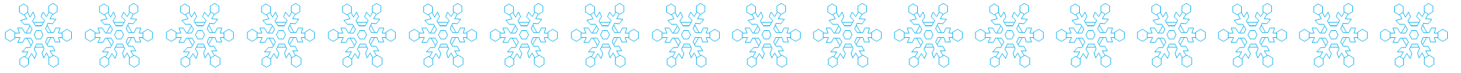


# SEASONAL ART FROM AROUND RETNS





# RETNS Parents' Association



## RETNS PARENTS ASSOCIATION

The PA represents all the parents in the school. It is made up of committee members from all classes. We have monthly committee meetings where all parents are welcome to attend.

Our recent AGM was held in October and we welcome the new committee members and give a big thank you to our outgoing members. Thanks also to Anita for her talk on the evening.

Thanks to everyone who helped on the Back to school Halloween and Winterfest coffee mornings. Also to everyone who worked on the raffle at Winterfest, selling tickets and collecting and counting monies.

Zena and her team are working towards the next term of Extra Curricular activities after her successful Autumn term. Notice will be given in January of the Spring term dates

We hope you enjoy your break and look forward to seeing you in the New Year

Patricia Sheehy  
Parents Association Committee



## Winterfest 2016

Winterfest 2016 was based around the theme of Light and fairy lights and Diwali lamps twinkled in the foyer to welcome families to a star-studded hall where they were treated to a feast of dance, drama and music against the backdrop of a stunning cityscape. The 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> class choir opened the show with beautiful renditions of "Óro sé do Bheatha Bhaile" and "Lightning", from their National Children's Choir repertoire. The show continued with a very enjoyable talent show from the all singing and all dancing stars of 3<sup>rd</sup> class. They were followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> class who brought us the story of Hanukkah. Their fantastic costumes and great acting brought the story to life for their audience. The "Moon Medley" from 4<sup>th</sup> class was both very informative with lots of lunar-themed facts and very entertaining with some lovely singing. 1<sup>st</sup> class came next with the tale of "Puff" -a dragon who couldn't find his inner fire!! A variety of fantastically costumed creatures led us through his misadventures „until Puff proved himself through helping others! 6<sup>th</sup> Class started off with their version of the Mannequin Challenge and acted out, with great gusto, the story of an epic struggle between dark and light. 5<sup>th</sup> class continued the multi-cultural theme started by 2<sup>nd</sup>, by bringing us the Story of "Rama and Sita". This dramatic tale of treachery and intrigue ended with the triumph of good over evil. The Infants ramped up the cuteness factor with their twinkling performance and were joined on stage ,by the whole school for the finale. The audience were treated to "Deck the Halls" and " Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer" before the show concluded. Well done to the brilliant MCs who kept the show going!!!







Happy and excited faces from around the school on the day of the Winterfest!!



## Winter



## Solstice



This time of year sees festivals of light and other special days celebrated in many parts of the world. 3rd and 4th Class recently had a most interesting talk on Buddhism and Bodhi Day, given by Ian Kilroy. The teachers were most impressed by the children's insightful questions. Learn Together themes were also intertwined with Winterfest through the stories of Hanukkah and Diwali- both hugely symbolic stories of light overcoming darkness. 6th class have been doing a variety of projects on Winter Festivals and their recent presentations to the class were enhanced by a range of festive goodies! Look out for their presentations on display next term. 2nd and 6th class have been learning about the Christian Nativity story and the Christmas star. **By Mary G.**

5000 years ago, before the Pyramids of Egypt were built, the people in county Meath built Newgrange. For our Winter Solstice celebration, everyone in RETNS wrote what they are thankful for and what they hope for in 2017. Our caretaker Denis lit a fire in the wildlife garden and our principal, Mary Carron burned the wishes in the hope that they would go into the universe and come true! There was a Holly and Ivy ceremony and everyone who knew it sang "The Holly and the Ivy". Then everyone sang "Auld Lang Syne" and "Deck the halls". Afterwards, Holly from 6<sup>th</sup> class placed a holly wreath beside the candle. 1st class had foraged for greenery in our beautiful school grounds. This greenery was used to assemble the wreath. It was a lovely ceremony and the atmosphere was great. **By Mia and Amy 5th class (Secretaries to the Student Council)**