



21<sup>st</sup> December, 2021

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

As we near the end of this term I want to thank all of our pupils and parents for their co-operation and support for the school re-opening plan and associated routines that have been in place since September. These routines have enabled us to remain open every day during first term. Thanks also to our Board of Management who have been very supportive and have invested in extra equipment and services to support this plan. A special thank you to all our teaching, ancillary and administrative staff who have adapted and participated fully in the implementation of the re-opening plan. The plan enables us to keep the school open and create a safer environment for the pupils during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Covid-19 Vaccines for children:** The school has been asked by the Department of Education to bring the following information from the HSE to the attention of all parents/guardians.

#### **COVID-19 vaccine information for parents of children aged 5-11**

The HSE has published detailed information and guidance for parents about COVID-19 vaccines for children aged 5-11. This aims to help parents and guardians of 5-11 year old children make an informed decision when it's time for their child to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine.

Registration for the vaccine will open shortly, with priority being placed on children who are more at risk from COVID-19 or children who have a high-risk person in the family. Parents and guardians can read this information on <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/get-the-vaccine/covid-19-vaccination-for-children/> or they can download these information booklets from HSE.ie.

[Important information for parents and guardians about the COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5-11 \(Comirnaty, Pfizer/BioNTech\) \(PDF, size 1.11 MB, 16 pages\)](#)

[Important information for parents and guardians about the COVID-19 vaccine for children aged 5-11 \(Irish\) \(PDF, 1.7 MB, 16 pages\)](#)

**National Fitness Day:** As part of National Fitness Day the sixth-class pupils organised a series of events to encourage the children in St. Ita's N.S. to get active! The school completed a combined ultra marathon distance of 55 km through running activities in the yard and each class took part in dancing workshops led by Sixth Class. Well done to all of the pupils.

**Digital Portfolios:** I am delighted to inform you that St. Ita's N.S. has been selected to participate in a pilot Digital Portfolios Initiative in association with the Professional Development Service for Teachers. This initiative will focus on the manner in which assessment can be effectively supported in the classroom through the use of digital portfolios. A number of teachers are involved with this project in St. Ita's N.S.

**Art Competitions:** During this term pupils took part in a number of art competitions. Well done to all of the pupils who participated.

**Science Week:** As part of science week each class throughout the school participated in several STEM projects:

- In conjunction with Galway Education Centre and the Marine Institute, Sixth Class took part in the “Explorers Aquarium in the Classroom” project. As part of this initiative, the class were given an aquarium and several sea creatures for 3 weeks to observe and analyse. They also completed slideshows about the seashore and had the opportunity to dissect squid and ask questions of well-known expert Noirín Burke.
- Fifth & Sixth Class pupils enjoyed applying their scientific skills when undertaking the project “Bricks 4 Kids”. This interactive experience entailed the children creating dinosaurs out of LEGO, motors and circuits while also problem solving to change the strength and direction of the dinosaurs’ movements.
- Each class in the school enjoyed creating and coding while using “Beebots” and “Lego We Do”. These STEM based activities were both educational and child centred and well received by all involved.
- Several classes took part in “Battle of the Bots” which was made possible by the Galway Education Centre. Tutorials and equipment were provided and each class created robots that could draw through the use of circuits and motors.
- Within each classroom the children also carried out experiments as part of Science Week. Later in the year the Sixth-Class pupils will record several science videos which will be circulated throughout the school. These videos will explore several scientific ideas and processes. Well done to all classes.
- Senior Infants/1<sup>st</sup> Class took part in a webinar called “Kid’s Corner Facts about cows, milk and grass”. This interactive session involved an introduction by Broadcaster Jonathan McCrea, a short film and a live panel discussion with the scientists in the film.
- A large number of classes also participated in an interactive webinar with “Mark – the Science Guy” covering a range of topics associated with science in the environment.

**Cyber Safety Workshops:** Helen Butler facilitated workshops on Cyber Safety for pupils in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> classes on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November. A webinar on this topic was held for parents at 7.30 p.m. on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November.

**Parent Association:** A new Parent Association Committee was formed during a meeting held in November.

**Supporting the Safe Provision of Schooling:** Martin Whyte, Divisional Inspector, Department of Education, visited the school on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September as part of an Inspectorate visit to support the provision of a safe learning and working environment. The Inspector met with the Principal, the Lead Worker Representative and a selection of teachers as well as visiting a number of classrooms. His report has been published on the school website.

**Visit from Minister of Education Norma Foley T.D.:** On Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> November we had a short and informal visit from the Minister of Education Norma Foley T.D. who happened to be passing through Loughrea. Norma visited a number of classrooms and spoke with pupils and staff and she was very impressed by the positive learning environment throughout the school.

**Christmas Artwork:** Well done to all of the pupils whose beautiful artwork is displayed in classrooms and corridors throughout the school. Thank you to all of the school staff who collaborated in displaying the artwork, in decorating the school and in creating the wonderful festive atmosphere inside and outside the school. A video of the pupils’ artwork is on our school website [www.stitaloughrea.com](http://www.stitaloughrea.com)

**Christmas Holidays:** The school will close on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> and will re-open on Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022. Please take note of the following times that each class will go home tomorrow:

11.30 J.I.1 (Ms.Cleary), S.I.2 (Ms. Geraghty) & 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (Ms. O'Brien)  
11.40 J.I.3 (Ms. F.Mitchell), S.I.1 (Mr. Whelan), S.I.3 & 1<sup>st</sup> Class (Ms.Walsh) & 4<sup>th</sup> Class (Ms.Mitchell)  
11.50 J.I.2 (Ms. McDonagh), 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (Ms.Mahony) & 5<sup>th</sup> Class (Ms. Cormican)  
12.00 4<sup>th</sup> Class (Ms. Ruane), 2<sup>nd</sup> Class (Mrs. Glynn) & 6<sup>th</sup> Class (Ms. Mannion)

*On behalf of all of the Staff of St. Ita's N.S. I want to wish you all a Safe, Happy and Peaceful Christmas and a Safe and Prosperous New Year.*

Yours sincerely,

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Mr. P. Coyle, Principal.