

Joey's Blues News: April 2015 Vol. 4

After a lovely two weeks off at Easter the boys returned to school eager to work hard and do their best. And indeed they have. The school has a lot to celebrate and we're going to pass on all our good news in this edition.



The banner from the parish hall says it all: The entire school community celebrated the ordination of Father James Mary. The ceremony was a very moving, solemn occasion. Father James Mary made a promise that night that he would pray for us all but he asked us to pray for him too.



The boys from Joey's are the talk of the parish of Fairview as they were invited to the Church to be present for Father James Mary's first mass. The parish committee are singing the praises of the boys as they behaved so beautifully on the day. They listened intently, were mannerly and respectful and answered all the responses. Boys from second and third were given front row seats and Father Anthony, our Parish Priest remarked that they are a credit to their families and to their school. We wholeheartedly agree and we are very, very proud.

Father James Mary has gone on a well-earned holiday and we send him our best wishes. We look forward to his return when he will bless our school and bless every member of the school

community, who would like his blessing. He'll be back in May for his regular Friday visits to our classrooms.

Confirmation

The boys from sixth class did us proud at their confirmation. Monsignor Fitzpatrick, said that he had never seen a group of boys anywhere as well prepared. There was a very special atmosphere in the church as the boys filed up with their sponsors to be confirmed. The sun came out on Monday when the boys came to school to have their photographs taken. Don't they look well in the school garden? We would like to thank Ms Quinlan for all her hard work with the boys and for helping to make the day so special for everyone. Thanks too to Margaret for assisting and keeping us all calm on the day.



Learning

DEAR: Look at the boys in room during DEAR time. 'DEAR' means that the boys Drop Everything And Read and they are doing just that in every classroom in the school.



Parent Council

We wish to offer a big 'thank you' to the five parents who have formed our new Parents' Council. The first meeting was held last month and resulted in a lively debate about school uniforms and the quality of the journals. More news on both issues will follow after the next meeting.

Green Flag for Bio Diversity

Drum roll please ... St. Joseph's has been awarded our fifth green flag. We received news this week from the inspection team that we have been successful. The award was announced to the whole school by two boys from sixth who praised Ms Walsh for all her hard work in leading us to win the flag. The boys also praised the student council for driving the whole school efforts to secure the green flag. Ms Walsh assisted by Ms Wogan and Ms O' Brien and the student council motivate us all to look around us, to respect our local environment, to appreciate the beauty of our world and to work to protect it. We send 'congratulations' to all. There will be more news in the May newsletter and on the school website of the award ceremony and the raising of the flag which will take place just before the end of May.

Questionnaires with Parents

Grateful thanks to all for the overwhelming response to our parent survey on learning in literacy and numeracy. We had 111 returns which equals an 85% response rate, another first in the history of Joey's. We are delighted but, not surprised by this very successful return rate. It is a measure of our parents' interest in and concern for the education of their boys. Some parents remarked that it was late in the life of their son, that is, 6th class, to ask parents for their opinions. We thank parents for this feedback. We commit to survey parents for their opinions each year, from this school year, to inform school planning for ongoing school improvement. For the purpose of this, our first parent-learning centred survey we decided to pay particular attention to the occasions when parents felt their son had room for improvement.

Literacy

The following are parents responses to questions asked, in relation to literacy:

- Some parents said their son is good at reading
- Few said their son was good at expressing his thoughts and ideas
- Some said their son is good at learning spellings
- Few said their son is good at writing stories
- Most said they get information from the school about how their son is doing

In relation to other ways the school might help the boys with English including oral, reading and writing some parents felt that

- The boys could do more reading at home and in school, eg. Have a 'read-a-thon'
- There could be more fun activities brought into learning English
- The boys could talk more about books
- Handwriting could be improved
- The boys should use dictionaries more

- More novels to read at home
- The boys could have a reading buddy
- More practice with writing stories/project work needed
- Comprehension could be improved
- The boys could read aloud more
- Free writing could be encouraged
- The boys could get more help with imaginative/creative writing
- In relation to Literacy the views of parents match the views of teachers.

Numeracy

The following are parents responses to questions asked, in relation to numeracy:

- Some said their son is good at Maths
- Some said their son is good at mental maths
- Few said their son is good at problem solving
- Some said their son regularly needs help with maths homework
- Most said their son uses the interactive whiteboard/ipad/computer for learning

In relation to other ways the school might help the boys with Maths some parents felt that

- There could be more fun games that involve Maths
- There could be more use of Maths learning apps
- Have Maths games on the school website
- The boys could have more practical tasks in Maths, eg. Pretend shopkeeper
- There could be more work on problem solving
- Maths homework could be explained more before the boy goes home

In relation to Numeracy the views of parents match the views of teachers.

Homework

When asked how the school could improve its approach to homework

- Some parents felt that there should be more homework
- Some parents felt that there should be less homework
- Most parents felt that there should be homework clubs available for all classes in the school

All staff is to debate and decide if we can manage to provide homework clubs for all classes. If it is decided by staff, it will begin next September.

Other strategies for improving learning

In relation to any other strategies to improve boys learning, some parents felt that

- The boys confidence could be improved
- All boys have to have an equal voice in a class
- The school expectations for the boys must be high

- Sometimes there is too much learning and the child is overwhelmed, better to learn small amount well
- The boys could do more project based work
- There could be more fun in learning
- Questionnaires could be sent out at the beginning of the year

Summary of Literacy and Numeracy: Parents Priorities for improvement

In general the parents' comments almost match the thoughts of teachers. Most parents identified oral language development and writing as having room for improvement in literacy. Teachers have agreed with parents that paired reading will be prioritised. We have agreed with the secondary school, to pilot a six week trial. Boys from Transition Year will be trained to work alongside our boys in an attempt to improve fluency. The planned pilot agreed by Mr Gerry Cullen, Principal of St. Joseph's C.B.S. secondary school Mr Michael Timmons, the Transition Year Form Teacher. It is planned that the pilot would run from mid-September to mid-term in October in the school year 2015-2016. Problem solving was viewed by parents as having room for improvement in numeracy. The development of the individual boy's self-confidence will be addressed under the staff review of SPHE our first and next priority for improvement, to include the new Stay Safe and the new 'Friends First', an anti-anxiety programme to be used in 5th class, next year.

Questionnaires with Pupils

Summary of Feedback received from Pupils by Questionnaire:

Every boy in the school answered a pupil questionnaire in relation to Literacy and Numeracy. They took this process very seriously as they know that we are serious about making their opinions count. In relation to literacy this is what the boys said...

Literacy

- A few boys said that there are good books to read in our school
- A few boys said that they are good at talking about things
- Some boys said that they find spellings easy to learn
- A few boys said that they are good at writing stories
- Some boys said that they are 'a good reader'

When asked what they liked most about English

- Some boys said learning
- Some boys said telling news
- Some boys said golden time
- Some boys said 'comprehension box'
- Some boys said writing and styles of writing – persuasive writing
- Most boys said games
- Most boys said reading

In response to what they find hard during English

- Some boys said talking
- Some boys said reading/pronouncing words they don't know
- Some boys said writing neatly/joined writing
- Some boys said spellings
- Some boys said 'reasons to write'/'away with words'
- Some boys said writing poems
- Some boys said writing stories
- Some boys said nouns/ adjectives/present tense/past tense/future tense
- Some boys said report writing
- Most boys said answering questions about a story
- Most boys said writing stories

The biggest surprise for the staff, in the pupil responses was the fact that only a few boys said there are good books to read in our school. It has been agreed that we will audit the books which are currently available in class libraries to make sure there are good books available in each room which the boys will enjoy. Teachers felt that the feedback detailing what the boys enjoyed most, including games and project work, is a useful aid for planning lessons which would catch the interest of the boys.

Numeracy

- A few boys said that they are good at doing sums in their head
- Some boys said that they are good at tables
- A few boys said that they are good at solving problems in Maths
- Some boys said that they are good at Maths
- Most said that they play Maths games on the computer, or ipad, or interactive whiteboard in school

When asked what they like most in Maths

- Some boys said learning new things
- Some boys said 'helping people'
- Some boys said Friday four
- Most boys said games

In response to what they find hard in Maths

- Some boys said 'new sums'
- Some boys said they get confused when there are different ways to do a problem
- Some boys said fractions/decimals/percentages
- Some boys said shapes
- Some boys said equations/algebra
- Most boys said long division/long multiplication
- Most boys said problems

The staff is pleased to note that boys enjoyed the Friday Four and opportunities to help each other learn. The staff also notes that only a few boys felt they are good at mental maths and problem solving. This will help us plan for future learning.

The staff felt that the feedback from the pupil and parent questionnaire is very valuable in assisting staff planning for school improvement. We also felt that we had learned a lot from this process and thanks parents and pupils for their valuable contribution.

Art in Joey's!



