

Kirkistown Primary School Newsletter

September 2019



Welcome

A very warm welcome back to Kirkistown Primary School! We hope you've had a lovely summer and are feeling well rested for a busy school year ahead. We extend a very warm Kirkistown welcome to our new children and families joining us this year. Please let us know if we can help you as you settle in.

Ahead of the new academic year, school will be requesting important contact details and medical information for every child in school. We appreciate your support in submitting this information to us in as timely a fashion as possible. A number of other important reminders are included within this newsletter and your time in familiarising yourself with those details is greatly appreciated.

Parent / Carer survey

Thank you to our families who took part in our anonymous survey in June. Your opinions are important to us and will influence the 3 year School Development Plan that we submit to the Education Authority in a number of weeks. The results of the parent survey will be published on our school website shortly in an effort to be open and transparent with our school community.

Healthy break

We have taken the decision **not** to provide a paid-for healthy break this year due to dwindling numbers. The investment in time required to facilitate this service ultimately means drawing classroom support away from pupils. While this may be a disappointment for some families, we hope you will understand why we view this as the correct decision.

Our morning snack for children is 10 minutes and we encourage families to provide a small healthy snack that can be eaten within this timeframe. A handful of grapes, a banana or a small apple would be ideal. The healthy snack is eaten just over an hour before lunch so is best being small. **Please remember that we are a nut-free school due to the dangers these can pose for children with allergies.**



Primary 1 children

Primary 1 children will finish at 12 noon this week and for the following 2 weeks. From **Monday 16 September 2019**, they will then remain in school until 2pm.

Friday Assemblies

Each Friday, we will have a celebration assembly where we celebrate the hard work, commitment and resilience of our children. One child from each class will receive a 'Star Worker' award while a second child will be awarded the 'Gold Award', a certificate that honours the good choices that our children make in following our golden rules:

We are gentle
We are honest

We are kind and helpful
We work hard

We listen
We look after property

In addition, we would warmly encourage families to send in any awards, certificates, trophies or badges that children have received outside of school to allow them to receive the recognition for the commitment that they have shown to earn these. Examples include: swimming certificates, sporting awards, acts of community spirit, Blue Peter badges, musical achievements, awards from Brownies, Cubs, Girl Guides etc. We firmly believe in celebrating the '*whole child*' and value the support families give to allow their children to flourish in these areas.

Class Assemblies

Each class will also conduct a termly 'Class Assembly' where children will present aspects of their learning to their peers and friends of the school. Our Friday assemblies will begin shortly at **9:10am** and will be open to families who wish to celebrate the success of our children with us. If you would like to join us, please make your way to the assembly hall and help yourself to one of the seats available at the back of the hall. Assemblies should last approximately 15 minutes though class assemblies might take a little longer.

Curriculum Information Sessions

Teachers will host curriculum information sessions very shortly. These sessions are an opportunity for you to meet your child's teacher and hear about the curriculum content that your child will engage with this year. As ever, it is hoped that these sessions will be informative and help you to assist your child.

Day	Times
Mon 09 Sep 2019	2:30pm - Curriculum Meeting: Mrs Harbinson's class
Wed 11 Sept 2019	2:30pm - Curriculum Meeting: Miss Taggart's class
Thu 12 Sept 2019	2:30pm - Curriculum Meeting: Mr Graham's & Mr Irwin's classes

Lunchtimes



Please note that telephone calls made during the hours of 12:00 and 1:15pm may not be able to be answered as our office staff are involved in the lunchtime supervision of children both inside and outside the building. We appreciate your patience and understanding in this matter.

Registration

Classroom registers close at 9:00am with lessons beginning promptly after. Children arriving after 9:00am will be recorded as late and must sign in at the school office before proceeding to class. While we understand that it can take a day or two to get back into the term-time routine, arriving late disrupts learning and we very much appreciate your support in helping avoid this where humanly possible.

Please also note that final numbers for school dinners are required to be received by 9:30am. If your child arrives after this time, it may not be possible for them to receive a school meal. Please alert the school office in advance (eg- if your child is at an appointment) or as soon as possible if you would like your child to have a school meal but they won't be in school by 9:30am.

Collecting children at the end of their school day

Children still waiting to be collected ten minutes after the end of the day will be cared for by staff in Kids Club. While we do endeavour to be as helpful and flexible with families as we possibly can be, I am mindful that teaching staff have other school responsibilities to fulfil. Kids Club is available after school on most days at very reasonable rates. Further information can be obtained by contacting the school office.

Day	Kids Club Times
Monday – Thursday	2:00 – 5:00pm
Friday	2:00 – 3:00pm

2pm Friday finishing time

School will continue to close at 2pm on Friday. As outlined in May, this allows each individual teacher 1 hour in a small group or 1:1 setting during the school week to work with children in their class on the Special Educational Needs register.

Pets on school premises

Regrettably, pets cannot be brought onto school grounds (or into the school building) in order to ensure the safeguarding of all our children and staff. Where a class teacher wishes to a pet into school, a full risk assessment taking account of allergies will have to be conducted on each occasion.



SEPTEMBER 2019						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

Calendar dates

As last year, calendar dates will continue to feature at the back of our newsletter. As part of an overall review of our school website, we are looking to incorporate a specific page for these dates in order to assist parents with planning for upcoming events.

Policies

From September 2019, policies will begin to be uploaded onto our website in direct response to feedback from our families. This process will begin with recently amended policies including our **Positive Behaviour Policy**. Children will come home with a copy of our new 'Home-School, Agreement' and a copy of our 'Online Safety Code of Practice for Pupils'. Please take the time to discuss these with your child before signing and returning them to school.



Addressing bullying parent consultation

Parents are invited to attend a meeting in the Primary 5 and 6 classroom on **Tuesday 03 September 2019 at 3:10pm** to discuss Kirkistown Primary School's response to the **Addressing Bullying in School's Act (Northern Ireland) 2016**. As part of this meeting, Mr Graham will take parents through the school's draft policy and parents will be given the opportunity to respond. Mr Graham will also be working with pupil representative groups within school (School Council) to allow children to provide their views.

Online safety

As part of the review of our school website, we are looking to provide parents with a number of useful guides to assist them in keeping their children safe when online. A large number of young people around the United Kingdom (including children at our school) enjoy playing a variety of online games. **This month's advice leaflet is regarding the very popular online game, Fortnite. The guide is found at the back of this newsletter after the calendar dates.**



After-school clubs



After-school clubs are due to commence on the week beginning 16 September 2019. The exception to this is AQE club which will begin the week commencing 02 September 2019. More information will follow in a letter to families shortly. Last year we were able to offer a wide variety of clubs including **football, cross country, art, netball, rounders, cycling proficiency, construction, tennis, AQE** as well as piano and drum tuition within school hours.

School Development Plan

What does a School Develop Plan include?

The Northern Ireland Curriculum is operational across all year groups; all our subject co-ordinators will continue to review and adjust our programmes as it is considered necessary in light of external advice and internal and local changes to our needs and circumstances. These reviews and adjustments are detailed in Action Plans and these are used identify priorities for our School Development Plan. A summary of the priorities for Year 1 of our new School Development Plan can be found below.

Communication

- To have every child on the school register by October 31st, a published author
- To develop simple and complex inference across school
- Expansion of support for reading via partnerships and paired programme
- To review our approach to spelling

Using Maths

- Development and implementation of problem solving opportunities, resources and strategies throughout the school
- Development of practical tasks to improve confidence and understanding of measure
- Development of rapid recall of times tables knowledge throughout Key Stage 2

Using ICT

- Develop online safety awareness throughout the school community
- Develop children's knowledge of curriculum areas by involving them in the creation of videos to provide 'homework help'

SEN

- To implement SEND amendments in light of changes to SEND legislation
- To develop, deliver and monitor the effectiveness of teacher-led personalised intervention sessions for all children on the SEN register

Assessment

- To implement new analysis module within sims to allow for more detailed analysis of standardised scores
- To review and update our assessment policy

Further information regarding the School Development Plan will be sent home to parents during the Autumn term.

Diary dates

Red font denotes new dates added since last newsletter

Term dates for the 2019-2020 academic year can be accessed via a document at the bottom of the following page: <https://www.kirkistownprimaryschool.com/parents-430717.html>

Date	Details
Tue 03 Sept	Addressing Bullying Parent Consultation: 3:10pm in the P5 and P6 classroom
Mon 09 Sept	Reception, P1 and P2 Curriculum Meeting: 2:30pm in Mrs Harbinson's classroom
Wed 11 Sept	P3 and P4 Curriculum Meeting: 2:30pm in Miss Taggart's classroom
Thu 12 Sept	P5, P6 and P7 Curriculum Meeting: 2:30pm in Mr Graham's classroom
Fri 27 Sept	MacMillan Coffee Morning: 9:30-10:30am in the school Assembly Hall (Donations welcome)
Thu 10 Oct	World Mental Health Day
Fri 11 Oct	P3 and P4 Class Assembly
Fri 18 Oct	Reception, P1 and P2 Class Assembly Flu vaccinations
Mon 21- Thu 24 Oct	School Finishes at 12:45pm. Parent Interviews (by appointment) start at 1:15pm
Thu 24 Oct	Free non-uniform day for the winning house this half term
Fri 25 Oct	School Finishes at 1pm for half term. Whole School Non-Uniform Day (£1 donation for school fund)

Date	Details
Mon 04 Nov	School Reopens
Fri 08 Nov	P5 and P6 Class Assembly
Sat 09 Nov	AQE Paper 1
Mon 11 Nov	‘Friendship Week’
Fri 22 Nov	P7 Class Assembly
Sat 23 Nov	AQE Paper 2
Sat 30 Nov	AQE Paper 3
Tue 17 Dec	Nativity Performance: 1pm Carol Service: 2pm (Both in the Assembly Hall)
Wed 18 Dec	Evening Nativity Performance: 6:30pm Evening Carol Service: 7:00pm (Both in the Assembly Hall) Children to be in school for 6pm.
Thu 19 Dec	Free non-uniform day for the winning house this half term
Fri 20 Dec	School Finishes for Christmas
Mon 06 Jan	School Reopens

Mr R Graham
Principal



There's a very good chance you've heard of Fortnite, but what exactly is it? And why is it so popular amongst young people? Fortnite is an online multiplayer "battle royale" game developed by Epic Games, and is playable on Playstation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PC and mobiles. It gained popularity in late 2017 and has since become the biggest game in the world, thanks to its rapid and engaging gameplay. As with most games, Fortnite itself is a highly enjoyable and safe experience, but it pays to be vigilant, as the safety is not water tight.



What parents need to know about FORTNITE BATTLE ROYALE



BATTLE ROYALE

Battle Royale games have become very popular over the last couple of years, and most tend to follow a very similar setup. Taking Fortnite as an example, 100 players drop into a map, loot buildings for weapons and armour and attempt to beat all the other players to be crowned victor at the end. If you've ever seen the Hunger Games movies, you'll have an idea of what this entails. Each game can take up to 20 minutes (assuming you last to the end) and can be restarted relatively quickly once 100 free players have been found.



IS FORTNITE ADDICTIVE?

Fortnite is at the forefront of gaming addiction discussions because it is so popular with young people. But whether it actually contributes to gaming addiction is up for debate. WHO (World Health Organisation) have classified gaming as a legitimate addiction, but this is not solely a concern with Fortnite. Signs of addiction can include irritability when not playing, lying about the amount of time played and a preoccupation with thoughts of the next gaming session. Realistically, it must be down to parents and carers to recognise these symptoms and act accordingly if they think they are developing.



FREE TO PLAY... OR IS IT?

While Fortnite is technically free to play (in that you can download and play it without paying) it does come with the caveat that spending money on things like skins and emotes in-game is heavily pushed to players. The currency used in-game is called 'V-Bucks' and can be bought with real money through the game's online store. It's worth remembering that these purchases are absolutely not necessary, are cosmetic only and that V-Bucks can be earned in-game with enough play time.



SEASONAL UPDATES

Every 10 weeks or so Fortnite is updated with a new season. This essentially adds new things like skins and emotes to the game, while also sometimes changing up the game map in interesting ways. These seasons are free to everybody and don't require additional money to play, though battle passes for each season can be bought with V-Bucks. A battle pass will typically allow a player to earn experience faster and gain fun in-game items by completing a host of daily challenges.



CROSSPLAY IS AVAILABLE

One of the wonderful things about Fortnite is that it can be played cross-platform. This means that no matter what platform a person plays on (PC, PlayStation 4, Xbox One etc) they can play with friends who own the game on a different platform. To do this, an Epic Games account must first be created online (which is free) and then linked with your platform account. Doing this removes the age-old boundary of not being able to play together because you don't have the same console and opens up a whole new world of playing online with friends.



IS FORTNITE VIOLENT?

Fortnite has been rated by the ESRB (Entertainment Software Ratings Board) as teen, as it contains cartoony violence and the weapons and acts depicted in the game are some way removed from their real life inspirations. Characters don't draw blood when shot and instead of dying, they are simply beamed up off the map. Naturally, players younger than the recommended age limit will want to play the game and that should be at the discretion of parents and carers.



Top Tips For Parents



BUYING V-BUCKS

As mentioned, Fortnite does contain in-game purchases and microtransactions in the form of V-Bucks which can be bought with real money. If you do decide to let your young one spend money in the game, be sure to delete your card information afterwards as it can be very easy to purchase more items at the press of a few buttons. It's important to set a limit on any purchases (as mentioned they are absolutely not necessary to play the game) and a suggestion would be capping the spending at around £50 - this is the normal retail price of a game.



GAMING WITH STRANGERS

Fortnite Battle Royale is an online game, and as such, there is a chance that young children could come into contact with strangers who are randomly placed into their groups in a game. It's difficult to predict what another person might say or do in a game, so it's a good idea for friends playing together, to be grouped together. The only real countermeasure to interacting with strangers offered by Fortnite is to turn off all mic communications, which can be done in the game's settings. Using outside chat apps, like Skype or Discord while playing, is a great way to make sure you know who you're talking to and that nobody else is listening in.



LIMIT TIME, BUT BE FLEXIBLE

A game of Fortnite can last up to 20 minutes, so be flexible when it's time to put it away. The approach of 'one more game' as opposed to '10 more minutes' will stop any complaints that a match is still ongoing. Better still, play with your child and take it in turns; that way you're helping control the time played and can keep an eye on what they're experiencing.



TALK TO OTHER PARENTS / CARERS

If you're concerned about play time or spending money in the game, talk to other parents and carers of your child's friends. If you approach as a collective, it will be easier to know when their friends are online and you don't have to worry about who they're playing with. It can also help curb expectations on spending money on battle passes and skins if you stick together.



CAN DEVELOP SOME IMPORTANT SKILLS

It's often overlooked just how good gaming can be for young people. Fortnite encourages team play, quick and complex problem solving and communication; that's not to mention the lightning fast reflexes gamers can develop. While taking breaks to do other activities is of course important, there are benefits to screen time which might not be immediately obvious.



PLAY THE GAME YOURSELF

There's no substitute for sitting down and playing the game yourself to learn all about it. Fortnite is available for free on almost anything you can imagine, even your smartphone, so there's never been a better time to get involved and see what all the fuss is about. You never know, you might even be able to impress your children when you show them your impressive Victory Royale tally!

Meet our expert

Mark Foster has worked in the gaming industry for 5 years as a writer, editor and presenter. He is the current gaming editor of two of the biggest gaming news sites in the world, UNILAD Gaming and GAMINGbible. Starting gaming from a young age with his siblings, he has a passion for understanding how games and tech work, but more importantly, how to make them safe and fun.

