

Kirkistown Primary School Newsletter

February 2020



Intergenerational Project Underway

Sessions 1 & 2 have taken place at the Peninsula Healthy Living Centre. Joined by Susan, Carol and Patricia from our local Knit & Knatter group, the children have planted pea, carrot, radish, beetroot and cress seeds! The children have even returned to school with some samples to grow in the classroom! Our continued thanks are extended to Sarah and John from Peninsula Healthy Living Centre for creating this wonderful learning experience for our children and treating us all so well. Thank you also to Susan and Patricia. This project is funded through the Ards & North Down Borough Council [#myvoice](#) scheme, helping to provide our children with unique learning opportunities alongside some very special local people. You can find out more information about our work within the community via our website:

<http://www.kirkistownprimaryschool.com/the-wider-community.html>



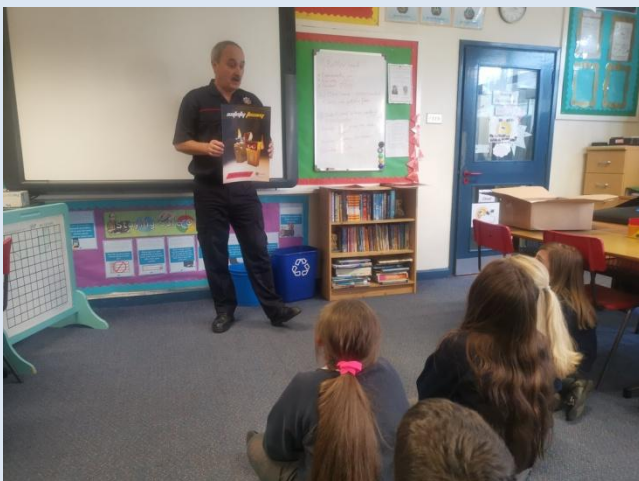
Shared Education Update

P6 & P7 have been having a brilliant time as part of their Shared Education Healthy Living Sessions. Led by the IFA and GAA, children have been taking part in a number of fast and frenzied team games that are supported by learning on a balanced diet, healthy living and the importance of sleep. Well done to all the children for their exemplary behaviour. A number of further sessions are planned for P6 and P7 before our younger children start their PDMU (Personal Development and Mutual Understanding) learning alongside their friends from St Patrick's. More photographs are available on our new website: <http://www.kirkistownprimarieschool.com/shared-education.html>



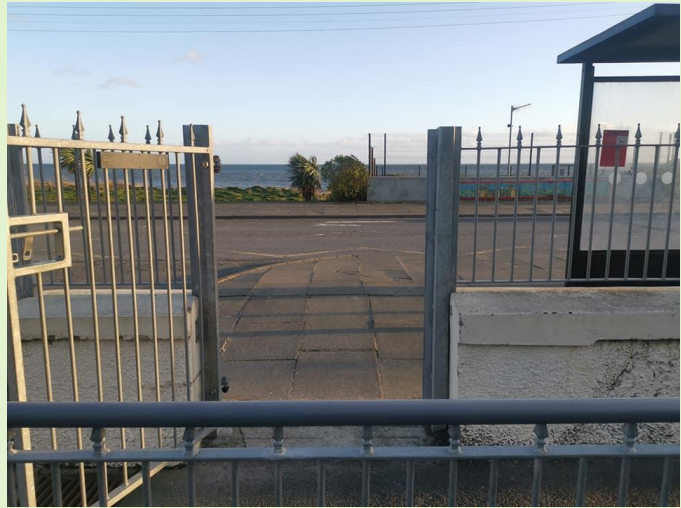
Fire Safety Visit

P5 had a fire safety visit from the outreach team at Portaferry Fire Station today. Children were learning about the dangers in homes, what to do in the event of an emergency and also had the opportunity to ask questions.



Parking at school

Please remember to keep the yellow zig zag lines free from vehicles at all times to help ensure our children are safe.



Healthy Eating

We strongly encourage families to pack a nutritional, balanced lunch for their children. While we appreciate a small sugar boost (eg- chocolate biscuit) can be very helpful, we cannot allow energy drinks loaded with caffeine and / or sugar as these are nutritionally unsuitable and can make it difficult for children to concentrate in the afternoons. Please consider the energy boost from the natural sugars found in fruit and consider water or cordial for hydration.



Nutritional Standards for School Food

Have your say on the future of nutritional standards for School Food by taking part in this online survey: <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe-children-and-young-people-strategy-directorate/update-to-nutritional-standards-for-school-food/?fbclid=IwAR35bdXXwWTeDZBetznc1aNHJvICjB03Hwagtxk1Pg3atLf tB84QBzhzH6g>

Class Assemblies

Dates for our Spring Term class assemblies have been arranged as follows:

Date	Class
Friday 06 March	P3 & P4
Friday 13 March	Reception P1 / P2
Friday 20 March	P6 & P7
Friday 27 March	P5

Our Friday assemblies begin at **9:10am** and continue to 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, with class assemblies taking a little bit longer.

Judaism Assembly

Children have been learning about Judaism in a recent whole school assembly. Led by Mr Clint, children had the opportunity to hear about and view the Torah, the Menorah, the Shofar (Ram's Horn) and the Hebrew alphabet. Some lucky volunteers had the opportunity to wear a Talit (Prayer Shawl) and Kippah (Skull Cap). We are so very grateful that our children have had the opportunity to learn about another faith in such a respectful manner. On behalf of the entire school community, I extend our thanks to Mr Clint for his time in leading such an interactive and informative presentation.

We would love to hear from others in our school community who have links with other faiths and cultures to allow our children to broaden their experiences even further. <http://www.kirkistownprimaryschool.com/other-faiths-and-cultures.html>



New School Website

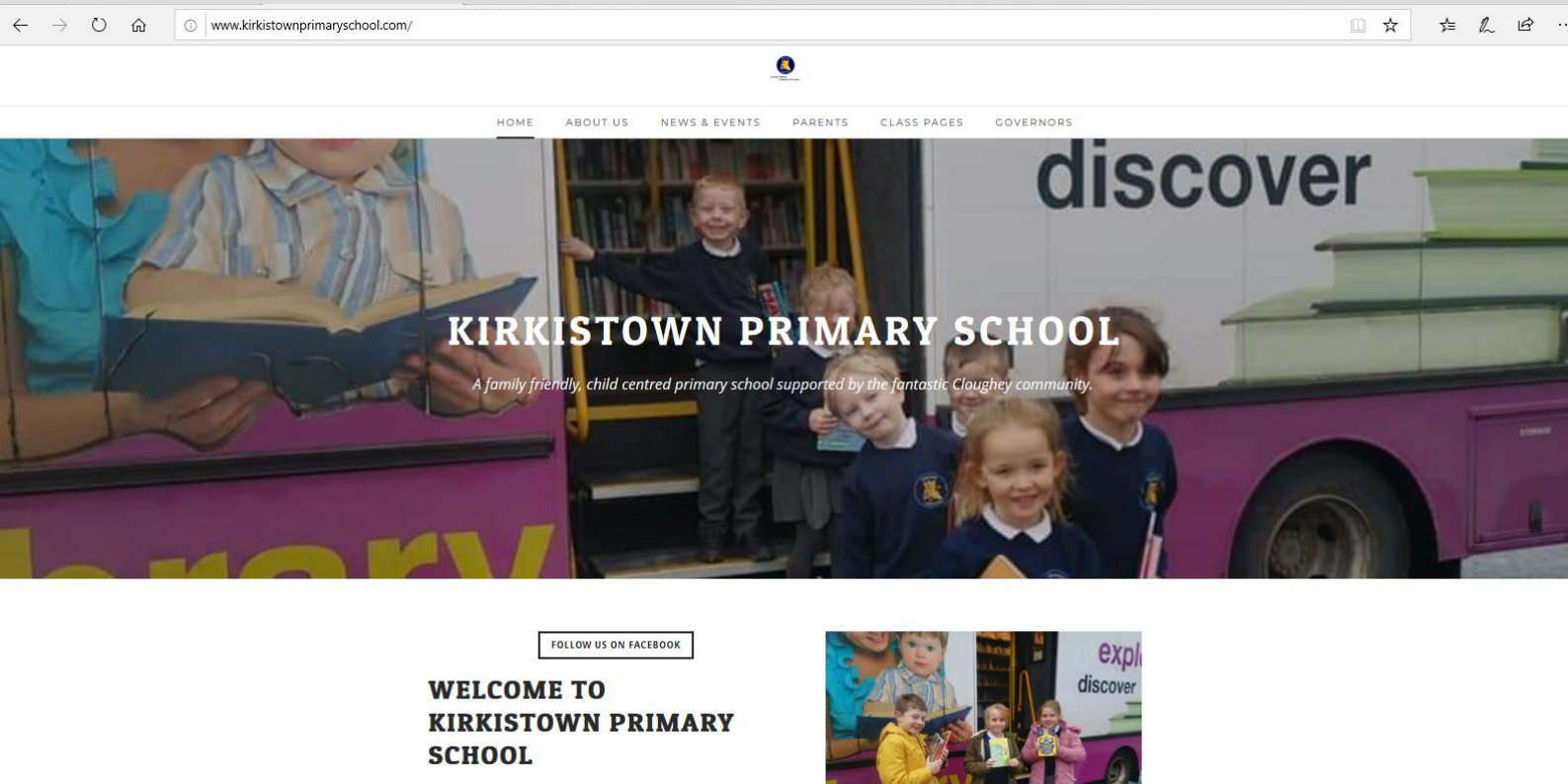
We've continued to add further tabs to our new school website over the last four weeks. Hopefully you'll find the new site to be full of useful information and helpful in keeping the local community informed of what is happening at our fantastic primary school. <http://www.kirkistownprimaryschool.com/>

To stay up to date with school life, I warmly recommend subscribing to our school **YouTube page**:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCk2P4BsM0Ti7umhkr8Cw1pA>

And following us on **Facebook**:

<https://www.facebook.com/KirkistownPrimarySchool/>

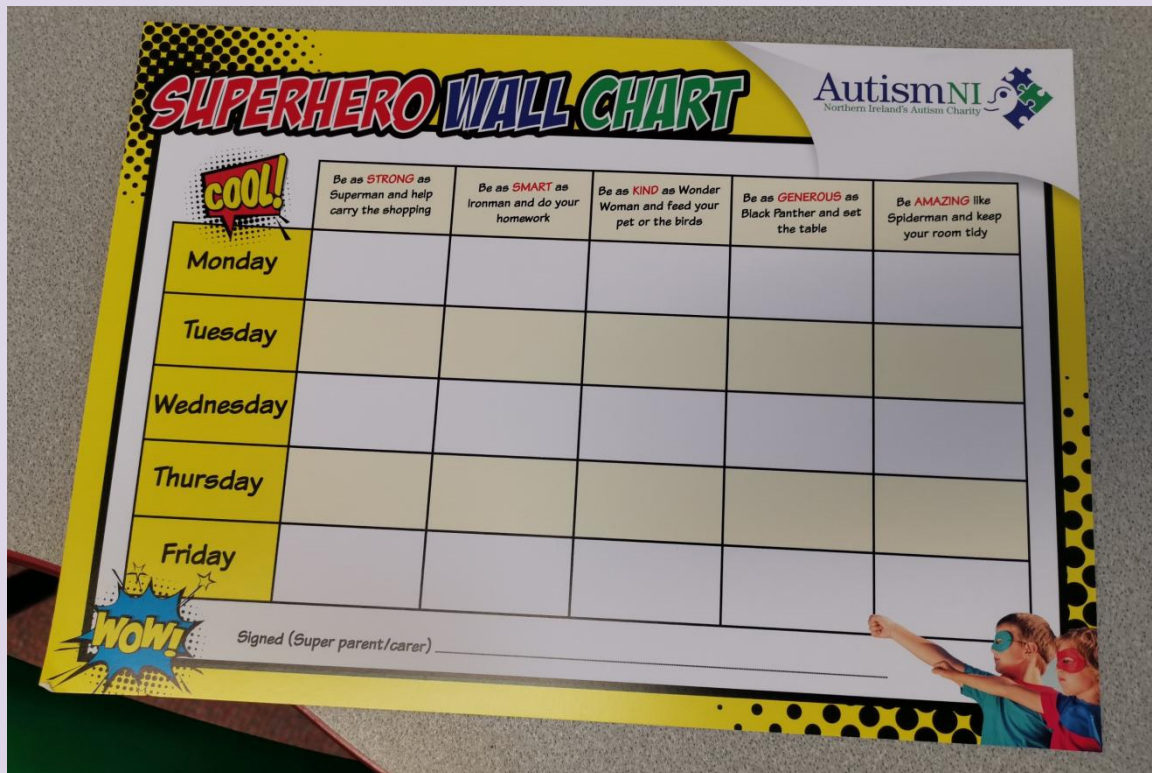


AQE

Congratulations to our P7 children who received their AQE results last week. After months of preparation in class, additional after-school sessions led by Mr Irwin and lots of studying at home, each of our AQE candidates received excellent scores that should give them the pick of local grammar schools. Tremendously well done to each and everyone of you.

AutismNI Superhero Week

On the week commencing Monday 03 February 2020, we will participate in the AutismNI Superhero week. During the week, children will be encouraged to be as **strong** as Superman, be as **smart** as Ironman, be as **kind** as Wonder Woman be as **generous** as Black Panther and be as **amazing** as Spiderman. Children are being encouraged to be helpful around the home in return for a small sponsorship per family. On Friday, children are welcome to come to school in a superhero costume if they wish. Older children will be given the opportunity to make a small superhero mask during the week.



The image shows a 'SUPERHERO WALL CHART' from AutismNI. It features a grid for tracking superhero-themed activities over a five-day period (Monday to Friday). The chart is decorated with comic book style elements like 'COOL!' and 'Wow!' speech bubbles. At the bottom, there is a line for a signature from a parent or carer. The AutismNI logo is in the top right corner.

	Be as STRONG as Superman and help carry the shopping	Be as SMART as Ironman and do your homework	Be as KIND as Wonder Woman and feed your pet or the birds	Be as GENEROUS as Black Panther and set the table	Be AMAZING like Spiderman and keep your room tidy
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					

Signed (Super parent/carer) _____

Christmas Donations Totals Confirmed

Thank you kindly to the wider school community for your kind donations of **£333.50** to the Simon Community & Cancer Fund For Children **£57.10** over the Christmas period.



Looking Further Ahead...

Parent Interviews

Our next round of parent meetings will take place on the week commencing Monday 10 February 2020.

Cloughey Cross Country Cup

Plans are underway to host our Shared Education Cross Country Races at Calhame pitch once more this year with a date of **Thursday 26 March 2020** confirmed. The inaugural event last year was a great success with almost every eligible child from each school taking part.

As last year, school would be very grateful for volunteers willing to help set up / dismantle the course, marshal or be a finish line official. Please contact Mr Graham if you would be willing to assist.



Swimming Lessons

Swimming lessons will begin on Monday 20 April 2020 for children in **P4-P7** continuing weekly on Mondays thereafter. Lessons and transport must be **paid for up front via our SchoolMoney** online payments system.

As last year, we will avail of the excellent new facilities at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing & Leisure Complex where children can learn to swim in the knowledge that they can stand up immediately, placing their feet on the pool floor, if they feel uncomfortable. Children will enjoy a swimming session and an additional sports hall session during their weekly visit.

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: <http://www.kirkistownprimaryschool.com/term-dates--holidays.html>

Date	Details
Mon 03 Feb	AutismNI Superhero Week-
Thu 06 Feb	P6 & P7 to visit St Patrick's, Ballygalget to participate in Football Coaching led by IFA coaches
Mon 10 Feb – Thu 13 Feb	Parent Interviews 1:15pm onwards School Closes at 12:45pm
Fri 14 Feb	School Finishes at 1pm for Half Term Non-Uniform day with £1 donation to school fund
Mon 24 Feb	School reopens
Thu 27 Feb	P6 & P7 to be joined by children from St Patrick's, Ballygalget to participate in Football Coaching led by IFA coaches
Thu 05 Mar	World Book Day
Fri 06 Mar	P3 and P4 Class Assembly
Fri 13 Mar	Reception / P1 and P2 Class Assembly
Fri 20 Mar	P6 & P7 Class Assembly
Fri 27 Mar	P5 Class Assembly P6 & P7 Children to attend Hive Hackers Award Ceremony in Belfast (Time TBC)
Fri 03 Apr	School Closes for Easter
Mon 20 Apr	School Reopens First Day of Swimming for P4-P7
Tue 21 Apr	Susan Falkingham Quiz- Selected children to attend
Wed 22 Apr	Visit from Swaziland Choir Kirkistown School Choir to perform at Trinity Presbyterian Church (7:30pm) with Swaziland Choir.
Mon 27 Apr	P4 – P7 Swimming
Thu 30 Apr	Crown Ministries Puppet show assembly



There's a very good chance you've heard of Minecraft. The block building phenomenon is, arguably, the most beloved video game of all time which has managed to maintain its popularity since its first release back in 2011. Nine years later, it still has a huge userbase of 112 million people playing the game every month. Accessible to those 7+, Minecraft can be a gateway into a world of learning and exploration which encourages players to use their imagination to build three-dimensional worlds with virtual building blocks. While Minecraft is considered relatively safe generally speaking, there are some safety precautions parents may want to consider before allowing their children loose on the game.



What parents need to know about MINECRAFT



OPEN TO HACKING

Hackers can be a real problem in any online game, including Minecraft. Some individuals can access other people's games to disrupt their play time, or even worse, access private details about players such as their names, email addresses, dates of birth and so on. It would be incredibly rare and unfortunate to encounter a player like this, but it does happen and must be taken as a serious risk.

CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Most players aged 7 and over will be able to play the game comfortably and, whilst creating an account does ask you to input your date of birth for confirmation, there's no way to check if the information is correct nor to check someone's real identity. This could mean that children younger than 7 could access the game. However, what is more concerning is that adults pretending to be children could theoretically be using false information to access the game and be interacting with your child.

'SCARY' CHARACTERS FOR YOUNGER GAMERS

For the most part, Minecraft is not a scary game. Despite this, there are certain characters in the game that younger children in particular may find frightening. Creepers, zombies and various other 'baddies' can be commonplace in some parts of the game and young minds may find it difficult to disassociate them from real life once they switch off the game.

RISK OF GRIEFING

Griefing is when someone purposely upsets another player during the game. This can be done by ruining somebody's creation or generally doing something to spoil someone's gameplay and can essentially amount to a form of cyberbullying. In open servers, or even private ones among friends, it can be difficult to keep track of who's saying what, and an innocent comment in one person's eyes could be seen as bullying by somebody else. Stealing supplies, destroying things that take hours to build and harassing innocent players can all be commonplace if care isn't taken.

ADDICTIVE NATURE

Minecraft can be an incredibly exciting game but it can also be very addictive. Too much time on the game could impact on your child's behaviour, causing them to become irritable or angry when being asked to stop playing. This might suggest it might be time to enforce some time away from the game. Addictive behaviour can be compounded at a young age and encouraging gaming in moderation is always recommended.



Safety Tips For Parents



BLOCK STRANGERS AND UNWANTED CONTACT

Despite the fact that private messages can no longer be sent in the game, strangers may still attempt to interact with your child. From the pause menu, players can block chat and friend requests from others in the game. This causes any profanities, email addresses and phone numbers to become automatically blocked, meaning it's harder for people you don't know to potentially contact your child.



LEARN FROM YOUTUBERS / TWITCH STREAMERS

There are a lot of Minecraft focused YouTubers and Twitch Streamers that offer a huge variety of fun, engaging content. Many of them focus on making videos specifically for younger audiences, which don't include bad language or anything scary. If you're unsure about the game, check out some of the biggest streamers and more importantly, ask who your children like. This will help you to understand what the game is about and also make sure that your children are watching age-appropriate content online.



PLAY IN CREATIVE OR PEACEFUL MODES

Playing the game on Creative or Peaceful mode ensures that the experience is strictly safe. Peaceful mode allows children to explore with friends without having the survival element of normal Minecraft, while Creative mode allows imaginations to run wild with unlimited resources, encouraging creation of vast, personalised worlds. There really are no limits as to what can be accomplished and getting involved yourself can make it a great way to bond with your child and give you a long-term project to complete with them.



MONITOR GAME TIME

Being able to play on a wide variety of platforms can be beneficial however it can also make it more difficult to put the game down. Play time should be monitored and it's always a good idea to talk to your child if you feel they are spending too much time on the game or showing signs of addictive behaviour.



CREATE A PRIVATE SERVER

The best way to avoid unwanted strangers or griefers in a server is to simply create your own. Private servers do exactly what they say on the tin by offering a safe, secure place for children to play and create with their friends, free from outside interference. They (and you) control who is allowed in the server and what kind of things they can do in it, making it the closest thing Minecraft offers to parental controls.



LEARN TO PLAY YOURSELF

Minecraft is an incredibly easy game to pick up and play. Furthermore, it doesn't require an expensive console or computer, with versions available for smartphones and tablets. Learning to play yourself and playing alongside your child is the best way to understand the game and will help to put your mind at ease in respect of what your child is viewing and who they may be interacting with.



CREATE SERVER WHITELISTS

Usersnames you know to be safe, like your child's friends or relatives, can have their accounts whitelisted as safe. Essentially, this means that server moderators can create a community made up of people they know to be friendly and children will only be playing alongside people both they and you know, reducing any risk of contact with strangers or experiencing griefing.



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.

