

JUNE 2016 NEWSLETTER – ATHBOY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Please read this letter and enclosures carefully. Retain for reference.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like to thank all existing parents/guardians for their ongoing co-operation and support for the pupils and staff of our school and also to welcome all our first time parents/guardians. The school continues to actively self-evaluate various aspects of school life with a view to improving the experience and outcomes for our pupils. Next year one area of major focus will be pupil attendance.

Attendance

In recent years the school has become increasingly concerned about the number of classes missed by pupils due to full day and partial day absences. Having analysed the patterns of daily absenteeism it is clear that absenteeism tends to increase as the year proceeds and also as the age of the pupils increases. The school is also very concerned about the number of pupils who sign in late or who are signed out early.

Under Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 the Board of Management of each school must prepare and submit a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to Tusla the Child and Family Agency. This will complement the school's existing Attendance Policy which lists the various ways in which events and strategies are used to encourage pupils to attend and participate in school activities.

Among the interventions next year will be an automated text message to parents/guardians where students are marked absent for first class each day. They will also receive a letter from the relevant Year Head to where their son/daughter been absent without a written excuse on five occasions. Where pupils are absent on ten occasions without furnishing a written excuse they will receive a phone call from the Year Head to arrange a meeting in order to discuss the matter.

Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure that their child is at school on every day the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him/her not to attend. The school strongly discourages parents/guardians from taking students on **holidays during term-time** and especially on days where school exams are being held. Where parents/guardians decide to take a child out of school for holidays they will be asked to provide a letter to the school stating that they are doing so and that they are aware of the implications. Only absences in relation to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give "permission" for holiday absences during term time.

Pupils who arrive late to school should normally have an excused note. **A series of unexcused lates may lead to evening detention.** Pupils who wish to leave the school during the day should normally be signed out by a parent/guardian or nominee. Pupils should normally be collected at break times only, or at break of class when this is not possible.

With the help of parents/guardians we hope to address the problems of daily and partial absences next year.

Enclosed with this letter, you will find some or all of the following forms which should be kept in a safe place for reference or returned to the school as appropriate:

End of Year Reports

Reports are enclosed for pupils of First, Second, Leaving Certificate Applied Year 1 and Fifth Year. Parents/guardians should discuss results and teachers' comments in detail with pupils. The reports also contain information with regard to conduct, assembly and uniform.

Details of Fees Payable

Once again we are very much aware that the present economic downturn continues to place extra pressure on our families. We have kept next year's expenses to a minimum (€125 per pupil limited to a maximum of two pupils per family) and have further increased the range of books available on the Book Rental system which continues to provide huge savings for parents/guardians. Fees are payable in one single payment, by cheque if possible or via the Easy Payments Plus link on our school website www.athboyce.ie. (An explanation sheet on how to register with Easy Payments has been enclosed). These funds will be used to supplement funding received from the Department of Education & Science for the benefit of students. Audited accounts will be available for inspection. An Expenses Sheet has been enclosed.

The **Personal Insurance Policy** is administered by Allianz Insurance and covers pupils for school related activities, including games. Details of the policy are available from the school office. If you do not wish to avail of this group scheme please contact the school.

Locker fees have been included in the general expenses. Lockers cannot be paid for separately. **Lockers will be assigned in order of receipt of payment.** Students are not permitted to share lockers as this can cause problems with access and damage to books.

The school's **Book Rental Scheme** is now well established and allows for huge savings for all our families. This scheme will only work if all families pay the Book Rental fee. Please refer to the Book Lists which have been enclosed with this letter in order to determine which books are not included in the scheme. Students must buy workbooks. Application forms for Free Book Grant can be downloaded from the school website and should be returned before Wednesday 27th July. (It may be necessary to prioritise applications). **Students who qualify will be exempt from Book Rental Fees (€35).** However, all parents/guardians must pay the general expenses (€90).

A €10 refund has been given where books were returned on any of the designated days in June and where all outstanding fees had been paid. Book Rental Books will be distributed in September. They remain the property of the school and must be replaced if they are lost or damaged. **Where books have not been returned in satisfactory condition a separate bill has been enclosed/marked as arrears on the Expenses Sheet. Pupils who do not comply with the conditions of the Book Rental Scheme will not be allowed to avail of it next year.**

School Journal

A customised hardback School Journal has been ordered for each pupil in the school and this has been included in the general expenses. Each pupil will be expected to maintain a School Journal next year. The Journal will be signed weekly by the Class Tutor and **should also be checked and signed weekly by parents/guardians.** Pre-printed slips for excusing lateness/absence and for permission to leave the school have been included and should be completed and signed by parents/guardians in each such

instance. A page has been included after each weekly section to show details of problems with uniform, missing books/equipment, punctuality for class during the day, poor behaviour, positive achievement and leaving class. Grids have also been included for assessment results and Credits under our Credit System. A copy of the School's Code of Behaviour will also be included. This should be read and signed. Students who deface, or allow their Journal to be defaced, will have to purchase a new Journal.

Data Checking Sheet

A Data Checking Sheet showing the data currently stored on school records in relation to your son or daughter has been enclosed. Please check that all the details are up to date. If amendments or additions are necessary they should be noted on the Checking Sheet before returning to the school office.

School Uniform

The school uniform is available from the following outlets: Faulkner's Fashions, Athboy; and Ted Murtagh's, Trim. **Please contact the school if you have any concerns about the quality of uniform items. Give exact details such as item of clothing, when it was purchased, nature of problem. The school will then contact the suppliers if necessary.**

Pupils wearing trousers should wear grey socks. Girls wearing skirts should wear black tights. Pupils should also have a pair of plain navy tracksuit bottoms for PE. **Black walking shoes must be worn at all times, including to and from school. You are asked to take care to purchase the correct type of (thick sole) shoes this year. Shoes with coloured soles or logos are not acceptable.** Runners may only be worn during PE class. An optional PE Top which can be worn over the PE shirt is available (for use in PE only). **(See copy of Uniform and Appearance Policy enclosed)**

The school would welcome any **surplus items of school uniform**, which are in good condition and are no longer required, for use as replacement items. These can be left into the school office. Alternatively, you can leave them in the St. Vincent De Paul shop in Bridge Street, Athboy. A limited quantity of second hand items of uniform will be available from the school for a minimal fee. Please contact Mr. Leavy or Mr. O'Dowd if you would like to avail of these.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that pupils adhere strictly to the school policy on uniform and appearance. Only in exceptional cases should notes to excuse non-uniform items be written (use the grid in the School Journal). **Pupils who do not present for school in the complete uniform may not be allowed to class.** Please continue to monitor your son's/daughter's uniform on a daily basis. All items of uniform should carry a completed identity tag.

School Policies

Copies of all our school policies are available from the school office or on the school's website www.athboy.cs.ie This year the school has formulated Data Protection policies. Further policies will be developed in consultation with parents/guardians, pupils and staff.

Mobile Phones

Please discourage your son/daughter from bringing their mobile phone to school as they will be confiscated if they are used without authorisation anywhere in the school campus. **Students who refuse to hand over mobile phones may be left at home until the matter is dealt with satisfactorily.**

Parents/guardians should not phone pupils during the school day. All contact should be made through the school office.

Use of Internet in School

All parents/guardians are advised to read the school's Internet Acceptable User Policy which is available at www.athboyce.ie

Social Media Sites

Athboy Community School is embracing the advantages of developments in Information and Communication Technology, as in the use of text messaging, ePortal, school website, Facebook page and a school wide computer network. Unfortunately this technology also has some pitfalls. One of these is the misuse or overuse of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facetime and Ask.fm among others. These are readily accessible by pupils through computers, phones and other devices. While they have their advantages, it is important that parents and guardians monitor their use by pupils as they can negatively impact on their progress or welfare on several fronts.

On a practical basis, **pupils are spending an increasing amount of time corresponding online** or checking for messages/comments. **This can erode their study time and also their sleeping time where they are online late at night.** In many cases they may be corresponding with people who they have never met in real life.

Pupils can become victims of cyber bullying where comments are posted to them or about them and which are read by others. There is a further danger here that they will reply/retaliate in a public manner online, not realising that once a comment is posted its "digital footprint" remains in cyberspace.

A more recent development has seen the use of social media sites to post comments on staff members which are totally inappropriate and hurtful to those mentioned. Your attention is brought to Rule 15 in the school's code of Behaviour which states that:

"Circulating, publishing or distributing (including on the internet) material associated with school activities including but not limited to material in relation to staff and students where such circulation undermines, humiliates or causes damage to another person is considered a serious breach of school discipline and may result in disciplinary action. **As part of such disciplinary action the Board of Management reserves the right to suspend or expel a student or students where it considers the actions to warrant such sanctions.**"

There is also a danger that pupils may inadvertently share too much information about themselves, including pictures which may seem innocuous at the time of posting but which may reflect badly against them in a different context later in life.

Parents/guardians are advised to monitor the use by pupils of internet and social media sites by sharing their passwords or becoming one of their online "friends". This will help to minimise the potential dangers of this new technology and, in particular, the negative impact it can have on their educational progress and overall welfare.

Morning Assemblies

Morning Assembly will be held on a Year Group basis in the Gym between 8.45 and 8.55 a.m. This will allow for the dissemination of information relevant to the year group(s), the collection of notes from pupils, inspection of school uniform and presentation of awards. It will also allow time for reflection

guided by Mr. Tynan (School Chaplain) and the Year Heads. Pupils will be given the days for their assemblies when they return to school.

Pastoral Care

This year we once again ran our **Friends for Life** programme which is a school based resilience building programme and hope to repeat this also next year. It aims to help your child manage worry and day to day stresses in their lives.

Extra Curricular Activities

Thanks to the generosity of staff we will be able to run a wide range of extra-curricular activities which allow students to develop skills and to experience a broad education in a positive manner.

Homework

Homework should be monitored closely by parents/guardians so as to ensure that it is completed fully and on time. This will avoid homework not being completed or being completed hurriedly or copied before class begins.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and the enclosed documentation. I hope that the information included will serve to clarify any questions you might have in relation to your son's/daughter's enrolment in the school. Please feel free to contact me if you need any further clarifications at the above telephone number or e-mail address. I look forward to working with you all during the forthcoming and subsequent years.

_____ Anthony Leavy (Principal).

Dates for Return to School

Year Group	Return to School on
First Year	Monday 29 th August
Second Year	Tuesday 30 th August
Third Year	Tuesday 30 th August
Transition Year	Tuesday 30 th August
Fifth Year	Wednesday 31 st August
Sixth Year	Tuesday 30 th August
Leaving Cert Applied Year 1	Wednesday 31 st August
Leaving Cert Applied Year 2	Tuesday 30 th August

Calendar for 2016/17 School Year – Athboy Community School

(Details of further Parent Teacher Meetings and events will follow as they become available)

Term 1

(Staff Day on Friday 26th August)

Monday 29th August to Friday 28th October

Photo Day for First, Third and Sixth Years Thursday 6th October

Meeting for parents/guardians of First Years Thursday 20th October

Mid-term break from Monday 31st October to Friday 4th November

Monday 7th November to Thursday 22nd December

Parent Teacher Meeting for Sixth Years Tuesday 29th November

Parent Teacher Meeting for Third Years Wednesday 14th December

Summative Assessment 1 from 16th to 18th November

Christmas Break from Friday 23rd December to Friday 6th January inclusive

Term 2

Monday 9th January to Friday 17th February

Mock Examinations week beginning Monday 6th February

Summative Assessment 2 from 15th to 17th February

Mid-term break from Monday 20th to Friday 24th February

Monday 27th February to Friday 7th April

Parent Teacher Meeting for First Years Thursday 2nd March

Easter Holidays from Monday 10th April to Friday 21st April inclusive.

Term 3

Monday 24th April to Friday 2nd June

Bank Holiday Monday 1st May

Annual Awards Presentation Tuesday 23rd May

Leaving Certificate Graduation Ceremony Wednesday 24th May at 8.00 p.m.

Tour Day Friday 5th May

Summative Assessment 3 Week from 31st May to 2nd June

Wednesday 7th June State Examinations begin.