



## JUNIOR SCHOOL CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2006

### A WORD FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

Can you believe that Christmas is here again!

Two hundred and fifteen pupils arrived back in September - bright and eager, brimming with enthusiasm and ready to set sail on the new school year. September is a particularly important time for our new pupils – and it is always a source of joy to see how quickly they settle into our Junior School community and what gifts and talents they bring. You will enjoy reading one of our new Standard 6 pupil's account of starting in St. Gerard's later on in this newsletter. In September, we also welcomed two new members of staff – Ms. Emma Flanagan in Junior Infants and Tracy Tobin as classroom assistant – they are welcome additions to our staff team.

During September and October, we had our Parent-Information Evenings. The aim of these meetings is to provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to discuss the year ahead, to identify priorities for each year group and of course to provide an opportunity for parents and staff to meet. Thank you for your attendance at these meetings and I do hope that the DVD "The What, Why and How of Children's Learning in Primary School" which was distributed at the meeting has been useful and informative.

As well as the normal day to day activities of lessons, games, art, music, the term also had many memorable moments. Highlights included St. Gerard's Day where once again we were lucky with the weather and hiked up Sugarloaf in the Autumn sunshine. Mass that evening was a moving occasion and the children greatly enjoyed their céile and games afterwards.

Other highlights of the term included the Standard 6 rugby and hockey trip to Cheadle Hulme in Manchester, where - although victory went to Cheadle – a great time was had by all. "The Magic of Christmas" was also a high point of the term when our pupils performed in the National Concert Hall and in the Royal in Bray. Well done to all.

However, for myself, and I think for many of us, the true high point of the term was the opening of our fabulous new Junior School library with its treasure trove of novels, poetry books, picture books, reference books, books as gaeilge, cookery books etc. etc. Imagine - 3,000 books for the children to enjoy! We are indeed indebted to the team of parents, led by Eleanor Noonan, who covered, catalogued and shelved the books and, indeed, continue to shelve the books each week. Our library is truly a place of enjoyment, fun and learning and is a gift not just for our current pupils but also for future generations of St. Gerard's pupils. We look forward to opening our Junior School computer room early in the new term – with ten fabulous new, networked computers for the junior classes and lots of exciting educational software.

Our term ended as usual with our Christmas plays. Well done to the Junior Infants and Senior Infants and to Standards 1, 2 and 3 on super performances. The plays always begin our Christmas festivities in earnest. A special thank you to Ms. Eithne Carney and Ms. Jackie Olohan for their hard work and dedication in preparing the children. And of course to the team of parents who designed the superb back-drop, created amazing costumes and made-up the children so expertly.

Finally, on the last day of term we all enjoyed the Carol Service, which sent us home with the true spirit of Christmas in our hearts.

And so now it is time to relax and to enjoy the Christmas season. It is also time to take a moment to give thanks for all that we have shared together in our first term. As Christmas is a time for children, we give thanks especially for the joy, which they bring into our lives. I am reminded on a daily basis - in the midst of missing hockey sticks, reports to be written, rows in the playground, meetings to attend, time-tables to be organised – how fortunate we are to work with children: for children see to the heart of things and their honesty, kindness, and joy remind us all of the true meaning of Christmas.

A sincere thank you to all of the wonderful Junior School staff who make our school such a caring, warm and inclusive learning environment. A special word of thanks to Helen who looks after our every need and thanks to you our parents for your constant support and encouragement of all we do. Finally a big thank you to all the boys and girls in the Junior School - you are a joy! May you all enjoy the peace and happiness of the Christ child this Christmas.

***Deirdre Farrell - Principal – Junior School***