

Christmas Activities

We are trying to make Christmas as normal a time as possible for our pupils. Obviously due to the restrictions, things will be different but hopefully it will still be a fun and exciting time for all.

Elf Day Friday 4th December



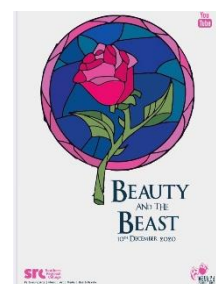
We plan to have a fun 'Elf Day' in school on Friday 4th December. Children may come to school in an elf hat, costume, jumper, jingly shoes, pointy ears or just red/green clothing. We will all be dressing up to raise money for people affected by dementia. We would ask that pupils bring in a donation on Elf Day and we will pass this on to the Alzheimer's society.

Guess the name of the Elf

We have an Elf in school and he is visiting a classroom each day. The children can guess the name of the Elf for £1 and the winner will be announced on Friday and will get to take the Elf home.

Christmas Pantomime

On Thursday 10th December, the Southern Regional College are holding an online Christmas production of Beauty and the Beast. We will all have the chance to watch it in school. Some classes may even feature!



Christmas Jumper Day Friday 11th December

Pupils can come to school in their Christmas jumpers instead of school uniform. This is also the day that the kitchen will be serving Christmas dinner to those pupils who normally take dinners.



Christmas Holidays

School will close on Friday 18th December and reopen on Tuesday 5th January unless we get further information from the Department of Education.

Staggered finishing times for Friday 18th Dec

Departures	Nursery 10.20, 10.25 & 10.30	P1/2 11.40pm	P2/3 11.45pm	P4/5 11.50pm	P5/6 11.55pm	P6/7 12.00
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Anyone (P1-7) with older siblings can be collected at the pick-up time for the oldest child of the family.

Christmas Cards & Presents

We are not exchanging Secret Santa presents this year for obvious reasons. If you wish to exchange presents between friends we would ask that this is done outside school.

Last year we donated filled shoe boxes for the Christmas Appeal instead. This year we are encouraging the children to think of families closer to home, who may be in need this Christmas. We are going to organise a collection for a local foodbank, linked to the Vineyard Church in Dungannon. They have a weekly foodbank and are also donating hampers to those in need this Christmas, following referrals from social workers and various other organisations. They have launched the 'Outward Focused Christmas' appeal (you can look this up on Facebook or their website for more information). This appeal supports many struggling households and last year 597 food and gift hampers were distributed to people genuinely in need. They have asked us to donate tins of tuna or tins of beans for their hampers this year as there is a lack of protein based food. If



you would like to donate one of these items, please send it in with your child by **Thursday 10th December**. They have also asked that if we have any families in our own school community who think they would benefit from this service or if you know someone else who would, please send me an email and I will pass the details on. I think its lovely for our children to know they are helping local people in need. We know some children like to give their teacher or classroom assistant a gift at Christmas, this is very much appreciated and not expected at all. The staff would be very happy this year if you donated to the food bank or the Alzheimer's charity that we are supporting this month instead.

Cards- Each year P7 run a Christmas card collection and delivery service. This year it will be slightly different. Children may bring cards in by **Friday** each week, these will be kept over the weekend in their class box and distributed the following **Monday**. Please ensure all cards have first name, surname and class on them.

Christmas Performances

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, we are unable to have a whole school nativity play, performance or community carol service this year. Instead, each class bubble will be producing their own simple class Christmas performance. The children are all working hard, learning lines and practising their singing. They will be so proud to share their performances with you via our website, week beginning 14th December.

Shared Education

I am pleased to inform you that we are going to be involved in Year 4 of the CASE Shared Education Project with St. Patrick's PS, Annaghmore and our nursery will be partnering with Apple Blossom playgroup again. A letter was sent to P1-7 parents earlier this week (available to read on the school website) with details of our Shared Education programme for this year and nursery parents will get more details of their programme soon. Please read this letter carefully. Only reply by email if you **do not** consent to your child participating in the SE programme this year.

Unlike previous years, the shared lessons will take place virtually and through C2k approved interactive conferencing platforms such as Google Classroom and Google Meet rather than face-to-face contact at each other's schools. Your child's class teacher will deliver all activities and all interaction, via virtual means. The schools will receive financing to run the programmes. Each child involved is required to have 30 hours shared teaching and learning with children from the other school to qualify for the funding.

PTA

The AGM we had planned for Thursday 3rd December via Zoom will **NOT** be taking place. After discussions with various members of the PTA and staff, we think it is best to postpone this meeting until hopefully we can meet face to face and have a number of parents in attendance. We would need to hold an AGM to elect new committee members. If you are interested in joining please email myself jmcmillan521@c2kni.net and I will keep your name and email on record.

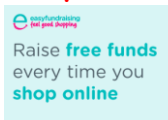
We would still like to fundraise to continue to replace all our whiteboards with interactive panels. We would also love to fundraise for an outdoor classroom. So if you have any fundraising ideas that we could do during this unusual year, please get in touch.

We can continue with the fundraising already set up by the PTA.

Cash for Clobber

We have a clothing bank to the left of the main school. Please continue to use this to put in bags of clothing/textiles that you no longer need. The PTA then receives a cheque following collections.

Easy Fundraising- CHRISTMAS SHOPPING



Please consider raising funds for the school via the PTA's Easy Fundraising online service.

Shopping doesn't cost you a penny more, but as you make purchases online, shops make a donation to the PTA. All you do is register (it's good to select the "Donation Reminder" option) and start shopping. Please give it a go and encourage your friends and family to do so

too - it is free money to benefit the children of Orchard County Primary School and Nursery! Please register by clicking the link below: <https://www.easypundraising.org.uk/causes/orchardcountyprimaryschoolpta/>

Once you have joined, the next time you shop online, start at [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easypundraising.org.uk) and log in. If you shop with your phone or tablet you can download the [easy fundraising app](#).

Nursery & P1 Admission

Due to COVID 19 restrictions, we are unable to have an open night this year. Applications for nursery and P1 for September 2021 will again be online through the EA website from **7th January to 29th January 2021**, (there is a link to this from the home page of our school website). We will also have a video uploaded for any new prospective parents to look at on our website homepage and this will showcase our school and the many activities that go on within.

If you know of any parents in the local area interested in sending their child to Orchard County, please direct them to our website, they will be able to browse through the class pages and see all the activities and achievements. We also have some places available for P2-P7 children this year.

Please get them to email jmcmillan521@c2kni.net if they require any further information.

Free School Meals- Please remember if you are entitled to a free school meal apply through the Education Authority.

www.eani.org.uk/financial-help/free-school-meals-uniform-grants

Parents can apply if your son or daughter is in full-time education and if you are in receipt of one of the following benefits: - Income Support; Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance; Income Related Employment and Support Allowance; Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit; Child Tax Credit or Working Tax Credit with an annual taxable income of £16,190 or less; Universal credit and have net household earnings not exceeding £14,000 per year. If eligible, your child does not have to take FSM everyday.

Finally, I want to thank you all for your support to the staff during term 1. It has been a difficult term but we have managed to continue to have happy children who are learning and socially interacting with each other. We have faced challenges and some days have been difficult but I want to thank you for following PHA guidance and for self-isolating when required.

I want to also thank all the school staff for the way they have adapted to the many routines and new teaching methods since last March. Those staff who had to isolate recently at home did a tremendous job and continued teaching the children and having daily contact with them throughout this period of isolation.

It's not easy but we have all had to make the best of the situation we find ourselves in. Our priority at Orchard County is to continue to make school a happy and safe environment for our whole school community.

I would like to wish you all a very safe and happy family Christmas and as we look forward to 2021, things can hopefully only get better.

J McMillan
Principal