



“One Book, One Longford”

Further to our Arctic explorer Adrian Vernon Fish, local couple James and Suzanne Dermody brought their two lovely Siberian huskies (Freya & Nabi) into the school. The children were very excited to see the dogs and relate them to the story of “Tom Crean” which they are doing as part of the “One Book, One Longford” project. Everyone got a chance to get close to the huskies and feel their coats and pat their heads which is a huge testament to their owners who have them impeccably trained. Pupils, parents and teachers enjoyed the experience very much. Our next project is to launch our book which is a combined effort between the 5th and 6th classes in St. Michael's and St. Joseph's based on the exploration theme contained within the “One Book” project

Historic year for St. Joseph's NS

St. Joseph's National School

The History of St. Joseph's N.S. dates back to 1886 with the amalgamation of the past schools, Templemichael female, (St. Vincent's), Longford Convent School and Longford Convent infants. Throughout the years, the Mercy Sisters carried out their mission as educators with dedication and commitment in the true spirit of their founderess Catherine McAuley. Our present school building which was opened in 1957 was designed by well-known Longford architect Fred Browne and built by local company McLoughlin's.

This is an historic year for St. Joseph's school as the Mercy Sisters have transferred the trusteeship of our school to Bishop Colm O'Reilly. While welcoming Bishop Colm as our trustee, it is fitting that we pay tribute to the sterling work carried out in our school by the sisters of Mercy who were pioneers in the development of an holistic approach to education and in catering for the needs of the child. Our school lunch room in which children are served breakfast and hot lunches, was built by the Sisters.

Last June the Sisters presented our school with an illustrated prayer inspired by Catherine McAuley's Suscipe to mark their departure. We are grateful to them for our rich faith inheritance and ethos. We are happy to say that our links with the convent continue as we enjoy welcome visits from the Sisters and we are especially grateful to Sr. Angela Bracken and Sr. Mary Cassells, who contribute voluntarily to education in our school.

Activities: School life in St. Joseph's is a rich tapestry of educational and cultural activities. Our school choir is busily rehearsing their National Children's Choir Repertoire under their dedicated choir mistress Miss Dolan. We look forward to their performance with other local schools, in the Backstage Theatre and in the National Concert Hall in 2011.

Our Green School's Committee is leading the school towards our third Green Flag on the theme of Water Conservation. After schools activities include photography, sport e.g. football, tennis & basketball, computers and science. Local Charities: Our Hospice morning, which was hosted by past teacher Mrs. Mary Brennan was a great success. €1,200 was raised for our local Longford Hospice Movement.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul was the beneficiary of our carol singing events in the shopping centres, which were conducted by Mrs. Margaret Kenny; recorders Mrs. Patricia Fitzmaurice. Our pupils have also fundraised for Goal and we are grateful to the community for their generous sponsorship.

One Book, One Town: One of the highlights of our school year centred on our school community reading of the adventures of the famous explorer Tom Cream as depicted in the Ice Man by Michael Smith. The project which was co-ordinated by H.S.C.L. teacher Niall Gannon and generously supported by Longford Librarian Mary Carleton Reynolds and staff saw the school temporarily transported to Antarctica, where we encountered beautiful huskies, courtesy of James & Suzanne Dermody; viewed animal furs as we chatted famed explorer Adrian Fish.

In concluding this article, we wish to acknowledge the tragedy of the burning of our treasured Cathedral, St. Mel's. It is our nearest building of importance. From our school windows we momentarily glimpsed life's unfolding ceremonies, weddings, celebrations and funerals and enjoyed the chimes of its bell. We look forward to its restoration and revival and we pay tribute to all involved in leading and supporting the community in this great project. Guimis beannachtai na Nollag ar mhuintir Longoirt, rath De oraibh go leir agus suaimeas agus siochan an Linbh losa libh go leir.

Our school garden

St. Michael's National School

Harvesting potatoes St. Michael's School garden in July 2010 was a dream come true. Many thanks to all in the school community who helped make this dream come true: Peter Masterson and his crew; Catherine Jessup for her expertise and hard work; The many parents who gave their time working during the months of January through to June; Donal, our cartaker, for looking after the plants, especially the tomatoes; Eamon Tynan for supplying us with new plants and seedlings; And to all the boys in the school for their hard work during the year.

We say a very special thank you to Frank McKiernan, a past pupil, for building the greenhouse free of charge. Crops of onions, lettuce, beetroot, cabbage, carrots, leeks and potatoes were outstanding. However, pride of place went to the crop of tomatoes! Roll on next Spring!

New Stage - In September 2010 the school stage and the Assembly Hall were painted and given a new lease of life. We now have a beautiful stage with lights and everything needed to stage a school concert or play. The Boys of St. Michael's are looking forward to the 2010 Christmas concert and carol service.

The school hall is used by many dance groups and drama groups as a rehearsal venue. It's good to see the hall being used for the benefit of the local community.

St. Mel's Cathedral - St. Mel's Cathedral is a constant reminder of our Christian Faith. Our school has close ties with this magnificent building. Many of our past pupils have served at Mass in St. Mel's and some of our past pupils were ordained priests there. We are proud that Fr Turlough Baxter, Fr Pdraig Kelliher and Fr Patrick Murphy, to mention a few, are past pupils of St. Michael's School.

It was with great sadness we witnessed the great fire which destroyed the Cathedral after Midnight Mass in December 2009. Since then we have witnessed the large cranes arrive on site and a new roof appear on St. Mel's Cathedral. Our pupils are greatly interested in the rebuilding of the Cathedral and we look forward to entering our Cathedral once again.

SPORT
Sport has always been a very important part of the school day in St. Michael's School. At each break time games are played on the tarmac and in the school field.

Gaelic Football: St. Michael's BNS fields a Gaelic Football team in the League and Championship competitions each year. Last year, 2009/2010, we won the Div 2 League and then entered the Div 1 Championship. We finished 4th in the competition which was a good result for us. The outright winners were Colmcille N.S. and we congratulate them on their success.

Soccer: St. Michael's School has produced very talented soccer players over the years, some have represented Ireland at Junior International level. Many of our past pupils have played for Longford Town FC and our past pupils have acted as Chairmen and President of Longford Town FC. The names Devlin, Flaherty etc have served Longford Town over many generations and are all past pupils of St. Michael's School. It's true to say that at least 5 games of soccer take place at break time each day in our school and these games are played with the same intensity as any League of Ireland game



Pupils of St. Michael's NS, along with Principal and Head Gardener pictured with produce from their school garden.



Shane Nelson reading part of 'One Book, One Longford'.

Swimming: Since the opening of the new Swimming Pool in the Mall, swimming in our school has changed for the better. Each class in the school is timetabled to receive swimming lessons throughout the school year. We are fortunate that we can walk to the pool, partake in our swimming lessons and walk back to school. The new swimming pool is a wonderful facility and we are fortunate in St. Michael's to be located so close to it.

Tennis: Last year 2009/2010 was our first venture into the wonderful world of tennis. Coach Noel Strangé Jnr spends two days per week giving tennis lessons to all classes in the school. The children really enjoy tennis and it helps to improve their “hand to eye” coordination and their balance.

Basketball: Basketball is played by a small group of pupils in our school. This sport is gaining popularity in the school and I feel we will soon be able to enter a team in local competitions.

Bigger and brighter in Stonepark

Stonepark National School

A few weeks ago there was much excitement in Stonepark N.S. as workmen installed a new classroom and hall using enormous cranes to lift the prefabs into place. The children watched eagerly from classroom windows as engineers and workmen negotiated the huge room into place, starting first with our 6th class room and finishing with our adjoining drama room.

The long anxious wait was over and the 6th class pupils of Stonepark finally moved into the new spacious room. It took no time at all for the students to move all our materials and equipment. We hope we'll have many happy hours of learning in our new room.

The Perfect Pushkin Project - Last May, the 5th class pupils of Stonepark N.S. achieved great success when they took part in the annual Pushkin Project in St. Christopher's school.

The Pushkin project allows different schools around the country to complete a project with a similar theme. It gives pupils the chance to interact with each other. This year the theme was 'Go With the Flow'.

We brainstormed the theme and decided to use the volcanic eruption in Iceland as a starting point. We started work straight away on building a paper mache volcano that would erupt at our presentation. It was a blast!



Children from Stonepark NS display their award winning Pushkin project entitled “Go with the Flow”

Not only did we complete the project but each student got their poem published in a special Pushkin book. It was a very special day for every student and teacher who took part.

All Round Champs - Stonepark had many competition winners this year. We had several art winners throughout the school. Congratulations to Cian Clancy who won the overall prize in the Aisling Children's Art Competition. Cian is in first class.

Moving from art to poetry and well done to Aiman Azam, Diarmaid Ó Nualáin and Raymond Raleigh who recently got their poems published in the Eurochild book. Well done to all competition winners.

Stars in the making - Fourth class students wrote and performed an amazing play for the Aisling Children's Arts Festival with the help of Chris Thompson and Doug Fox-Roberts called “The 123 Project”. The “123 Project” involved two classes from two different schools. They had to write and perfect their play without meeting the other school, except for the day before the grand performance when the two schools (Stonepark and St. Josephs) met and rehearsed.

The children all worked together to put on a truly brilliant performance. When the lights went out the crowd cheered and clapped. All their hard work paid off.

Green Flag Returns - The students of Stonepark are aiming to receive their second Green Flag this year. We received our first flag two years ago by keeping our school clean and litter free. We had a fantastic Green Schools' Day Fashion show. We are looking forward to more fun this year and a new green flag.