Newsletter

October 2026

A word from Niall ...

As we prepare for our well-earned midterm break, I hope we all take the opportunity to do just that – "take a break". The demands of school life can be exhausting, and it is no coincidence the breaks are scheduled when they are. Pupils, staff and parents deserve a time to relax and recharge the batteries.

As we continue to grow and develop our school, I want to thank you for the wonderful support you give to our school community. Every contribution, whether through your time, ideas, involvement or financial support, helps us create the best possible learning environment for our children. We have also introduced the idea of a "Suggested Contribution Guide" for our annual voluntary contribution. We understand that every family's circumstances are different, and we want to recognise that in how we approach fundraising and school contributions. Rather than suggesting one fixed amount, we hope to provide a range of suggested contributions so that families can choose an amount that feels appropriate for them. For families who can contribute a little more, this additional support can make a real difference in helping us provide extra resources, experiences and opportunities for all our pupils. Of course, these contributions are entirely voluntary, and we fully appreciate that not every family will be in a position to contribute financially. Every family is an equally valued part of our school community.

Thank you, to those staff and parents/guardians that have volunteered as part of our Curriculum Enrichment Programme. Thanks Fiona for your help with the Credit Union Art Competition. Thanks Muireann and Kirsten for running the Orienteering. It has already come in handy with Trick or Treating routes. We will continue to seek Parent/Guardian involvement in our school activities. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have a skill or talent, you could pass on to our children. We also need people to help with supervision (no talent necessary).

Lastly, wishing you all a happy and safe mid-term break. No one wants to spend Halloween in the A&E department! Don't forget to eat some fruit & vegetables in between all the sweet stuff. Food Dudes starting On November 10th could be very well timed indeed! Niall

Welcome Wednesdays are back!

You are welcome to come into school on the first Wednesday of the month for 10minutes. This gives your child a chance to show you what they have been learning. **Next Welcome Wednesday: November 4th.**

Important Dates

- Mid-term break: Closing on Friday **October 23rd** @ normal time. School reopens Monday **November 2nd** @ 08:30
- PGA Meeting: in Westport Woods Hotel **November 6th @ 08:30am**
- School Closure for Staff Training: **Tuesday November 24th**
- Winter Fair: **Saturday, December 5th** from 10am in school.
- Winter Show: Thursday, **December 10th** from 11:45 in Westport Townhall Theatre
- Winter Break: Closing on Tuesday **December 22nd** @ 11:30. School reopens Wednesday **January 6th** @ 08:30

Full calendar is available on the school website & Aladdin app.

Parent/Guardian Teacher Meetings

As you may know talks are ongoing between the government and the Unions. We hope to provide you with an update about how our Parent/Guardian Teacher meetings will proceed this year. The dates and times are subject to change.

Enrolment for 2027 OPEN

You can now enrol for Junior Infants for September 2027. Do you have a child who will be starting Junior Infants next year? If so, please find the application form on our website or via this link. Please share this with family or friends who are looking for a school place.

Faces

We love sharing the wonderful learning happening in our school, but the digital world is changing rapidly. In light of fast-paced advances in AI technology, we will no longer publish photos showing pupils' faces on our website or social media. Instead, all public images will be anonymised. Thank you for your support as we keep our children safe online.

Lunch Boxes



A gentle reminder to please return the lunch boxes every day. D We have purchased 2 boxes per child so that they can be rotated daily. Thank you for your cooperation.

Charity Coffee Afternoon







The 2nd Class pupils hosted another wonderful fundraising afternoon at our Rainbow Cafe. Thank you to the bakers for all the delicious cakes and baked good. Finally thank you to everyone you came by for cup of coffee. Your generosity helped raise **€379** for the **Mayo Roscommon Hospice**.

The day Sam came to our school



We were delighted to welcome Conal Dawson and Rory Brickenden to our school. They brought the famous Sam Maguire Cup with them and answered the childen's questions. The children sang their hearts out: "We all love the Mayo Football Team, the Mayo Football team."

Holy Man Visit



Swami Rakesh Ji visited our school. He is a well-known Spiritual teacher from India. He has a deep understanding about Spirituality, Reiki, Eastern and Western philosophy, Meta Physics, tantra shastra, kundalini yoga etc.

Annual Voluntary Contribution / School Fundraising

Option 1: Annual Voluntary Contribution
Suggested contribution guide
€20 - €50 per child €40 - €75 per family of 2 €50 - €100 per family of 3

Option 2: Direct Debit
There is also an option to set up a direct debit - you pay a smaller fee, (e.g. €5) and this amount transfers from your account directly to the school account e.g. 6 months, 1 year, the duration of your child's time in our school.

Option 3: Larger Donation - in excess of €250
Families who wish to support the school may be interested to know that donations of €250 or more in a calendar year may qualify for tax relief under the charitable donation scheme (our school is registered as a charity). Where the relevant conditions are met, and the donor authorises the school to make the claim, the school may be able to reclaim additional funding from Revenue at no extra cost to the donor e.g. a qualifying €250 donation could generate an additional €112.32 for the school, *subject to the scheme's conditions and the donor having paid sufficient tax



When you next do your shopping at TESCO, please donate your blue tokens to Westport Educate Together



In September, pupils & parents took to the streets of Westport for a bucket collection. This fundraising event raised an amazing ***€1,122.60!***

Watch our garden grow...









Our food garden & planters have really taken root. It has become a space where the pupils enjoy going to as part of their regulation breaks. They have also delighted in seeing the seeds they planted last year growing. Over the past few weeks, pupils have been getting their hands dirty harvesting potatoes and parsnips. This week we made potato and parsnips chips for everyone to try.

GIY have sent more seeds and bulbs for the coming season so we will begin sowing these over the coming weeks/months, thus starting the cycle again. Thank you to the parents & pupils who kindly tended to the garden during the summer holidays.



As part of National Tree Day, October 1st, we received a Scot's Pine sapling. This has been planted in a large pot so we can keep an eye on it.
Did you know? The Scots pine is the largest of our native conifers. Scots pine is particularly good for wildlife. Seeds of the ripe pinecones are the favourite food of the red squirrel.



Junior & Senior Infants

The Junior Room is buzzing with excitement as we kick off a wonderful new school year! We are absolutely thrilled to welcome our new Junior Infants, who are settling in beautifully and doing a fantastic job learning our daily classroom routines. Our Senior Infants have stepped into their role as excellent role models. They have jumped straight back into action and showing great focus as they continue to advance their reading skills.

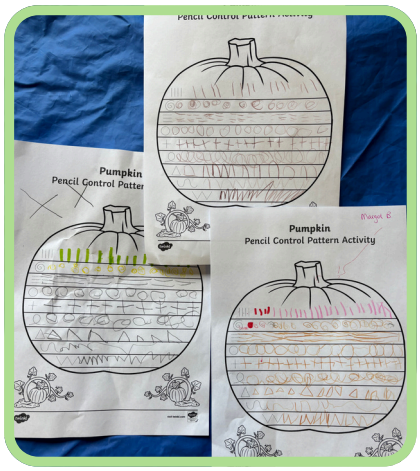




A highlight has been practicing our fine motor skills. The children have loved exploring our autumn-inspired tuff tray, using giant tweezers to scoop, sort, and collect seasonal treasures including dried sunflower heads. This hands-on challenge has quickly become a classroom favorite for building finger strength!

Junior Infants have been working hard on creating patterns, taking special care with their pencil grip. Sticking with the seasonal theme, both Junior and Senior Infants have also been creating magical potions containing all sorts of things. From dragon eggs to raindrops and even a toad or two, things are getting spooky!





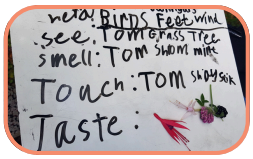


We also weren't afraid to get our hands dirty in the name of creativity! The children had brilliant fun printing and splashing bright colors to create their very own Pop Art-inspired handprints—don't they look absolutely amazing hanging on our wall?

Enjoy the mid-term break! We have so many exciting projects and milestones ahead next term.

1st to 3rd Class







What a fantastic start to the school year we've had in 1st, 2nd and 3rd Class! We've been busy exploring, creating and learning together. Our five senses nature walk took us outdoors blackberry picking, while our budding historians have been investigating the history of our school using photographs, interviews and other sources of evidence. We've also been putting our creativity to good use, designing colourful vision boards, creating artwork inspired by The Day the Crayons Quit and working together on a special display to welcome our local football heroes and their trophy!

We've been working hard on our **literacy** skills, becoming more confident writers through recount writing, sharing our experiences and using interesting vocabulary to bring our stories to life. In **Maths,** we've been busy problem-solving, exploring number patterns and developing our number skills through games, challenges and hands-on activities, including Numicon. Our **Gaeilge** lessons have been full of caint agus spraoi, with plenty of games, conversations and opportunities to practise our Irish!

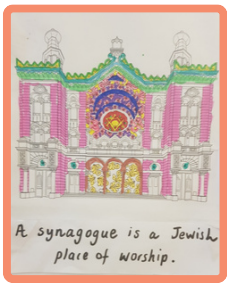
Music Generation

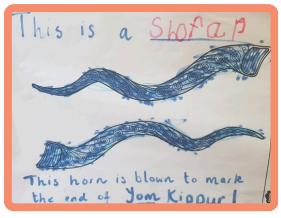
We are very lucky to have Zane from **Music Generation** bring a little rhythm to our Thursday mornings. *Ceol na nÓg* is an introductory music programme offered by Music Generation designed to give children a fun, accessible start in music.

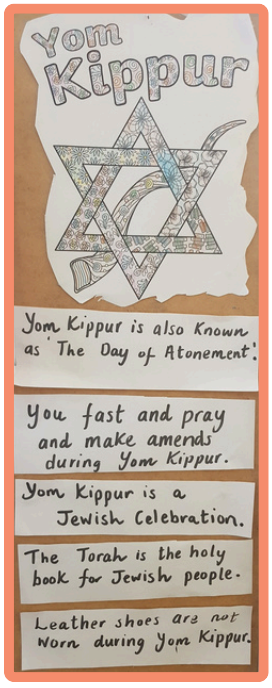
The aim of this programme is to enhance and complement the music education currently provided by teachers in schools. The children have been working on beat, tempo and rhythm using a variety of percussion instruments.

Our 3rd class pupils have also taken part in several sporting events; the Cross Country Trials in Murrisk in September and in October, the boys and girls competed in the the Mini 7s football competition as part of Cumann na mBunscoil. Your energy and enthusiasm at both events was amazing to watch. Here's to next event.

Teamwork has been a big part of our learning this term. From encouraging one another and practising our skills in PE to making music together during our ocarina lessons and percussion workshops, the children have shown great cooperation, creativity and enthusiasm. We've also enjoyed learning about different cultures and traditions, including Yom Kippur. It's been lovely to see the children sharing ideas, helping one another, taking on different roles and celebrating each other's achievements. We're very proud of the teamwork and positive attitude they've shown so far!







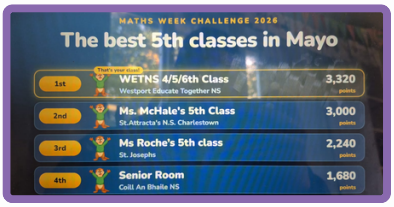
Well done to everyone for working so hard this half-term. Go enjoy a well-deserved rest, have fun, and we will see you on November 2nd!

4th to 6th Class

It has been a busy and enjoyable start to the school year in 4th, 5th and 6th Class! The children have settled in brilliantly and have been working hard across all areas of the curriculum.

In **Literacy**, we have been developing our reading, spelling, handwriting and writing skills. We have enjoyed exploring recount writing, including writing about the very exciting day the Sam Maguire Cup visited our school!

In **Maths**, we have been busy strengthening our multiplication skills and tackling division, with lots of problem-solving along the way. As part of Maths week, the class took part in an online daily Maths challenge, well done to our 5th class, who came top of the Mayo schools leaderboard.

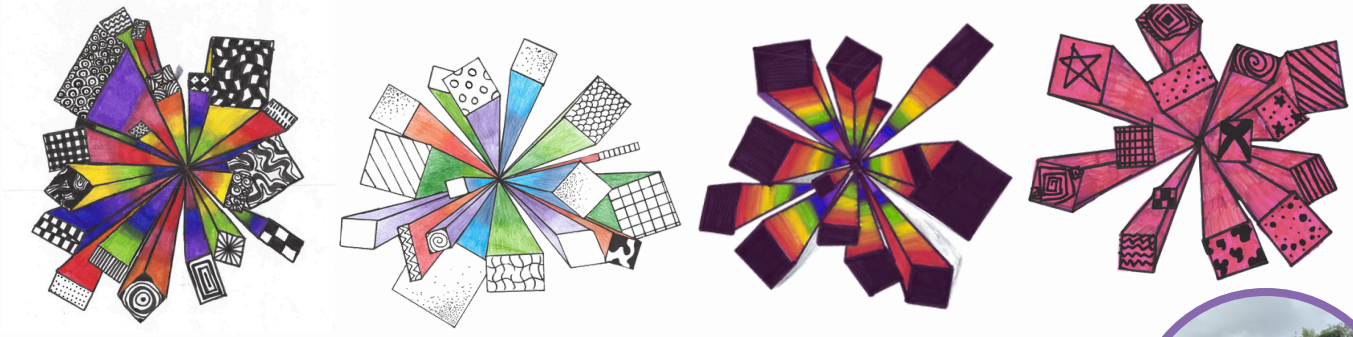


Our **Gaeilge** lessons have focused on Mé Féin, with the children learning how to speak and write about themselves as Gaeilge.

In **Science,** we have been taking part in the GLOBE Programme Ireland and investigating air quality around our school. We placed NO_2 tubes in three different locations – near a busy road, in an area with less traffic and in a remote wooded area – and sent them away for analysis. We are very excited to see what our results reveal!

Alongside all our learning, we have been focusing on **SPHE**, working together, building friendships and creating a happy and positive classroom where everyone can learn and contribute.

In **Art** the pupils tried their hand at Perspective drawing. This technique focuses on creating the illusion of 3D depth and distance on a flat piece of paper, typically using one-point linear perspective. Here is a sample of the children's creations.



We have also been very active with our extracurricular activities. Pupils have represented the school at Cross Country and Mini 7's, while some of our older pupils had the opportunity to attend Open Days at Sacred Heart School, Rice College and Sancta Maria College, giving them an exciting glimpse of what lies ahead as they prepare for the next stage of their education.



We will be finishing our first half term by sharing some of our learning at our Senior room Dress-Up Day assembly on Friday October 23rd, ending in true Mayo style with a performance of "The Mayo Football Team"! It has been a fantastic start to the year, and I am very proud of all the hard work, enthusiasm and creativity the children have shown so far. I am looking forward to another busy and exciting term ahead!

WETNS PGA

Update October 2026

What is the PGA?

The Parent and Guardian Association (PGA) brings parents and guardians together to:

- Work in partnership with the principal and teachers
- Support school events and activities
- Encourage parent/guardian involvement in the school
- Represent WETNS parents in wider parent community groups

What do we do?

- Share ideas and updates
- Help enhance school life for students, parents and the wider community
- Support school events and fundraising throughout the year
- Work in subgroups on specific activities:
  - 📱 Smartphone
  - 💰 Fundraising
  - 📣 Communications
  - 🌱 School Garden

Why do we need a PGA?

The more involved parents and guardians are with the school, the better the educational outcomes for all children. The PGA encourages this and allows parents and guardians with particular skills or interests to contribute. It also enables us to fundraise to support the school for essentials and extras.

When and where do we meet?

- **When:** Usually the first Friday of each month at 8:30am
- **Where:** Woods Hotel lobby
- **Who can attend?** All parents and guardians - no commitment required!

The meetings are a great way to connect, share feedback and contribute to our school community.

Everyone is welcome! Bring your ideas, get involved and help make a difference. All parents and guardians are automatically members.





To make the winter fair a success we hope every family will support one or more of the following activities:

Collect raffle prizes for the event, sell raffle tickets and help promote the event in advance.

Help on the day on one of our stalls for a short time or host a stall yourself.

Talk to Niall or join the PGA WhatsApp group.

Our next meeting on November 6th will also be the Annual General Meeting. We hope to see many of you there and can share a social tea/coffee after.

PGA - Smart Phone Subcommittee



Since 2025, a small sub-group from the PGA has met to discuss issues around smartphones, and digital devices, and how parents can work together. The group currently consists of Breda, Daniel , Megan and myself (Tom). We are very open to new members.

Among the group's actions have been to organise Emett Major of Parent Power to speak at the school and a survey of parents to gauge support for a voluntary smartphone agreement. This agreement would involve parent's committing to not purchasing a smartphone for their child, while they are in national school. Every family is unique, and there are some parents that have chosen or will choose to provide their child with a smartphone. While we don't want to exclude any families, our aim is to have a significant majority to sign the agreement.

Since the PGA started looking at this, in 2024, quite a few items, in a wider context, have changed. In particular:
·The Department of Education has encouraged Parent & Guardian Associations to implement voluntary smartphone agreements

- Other local schools and areas have rolled out voluntary agreements including the Quay School, all Achill and Erris national schools
- Australia has implemented a social media ban for under 16s, with other countries committing to similar
- The Irish government and EU have committed to introducing legislation regarding children and young people using smartphones and social media.

While we are waiting for legislation to be introduced, we see a voluntary agreement as a positive interim measure, within our school community.

Another significant development is the establishment of a local Smartphone Free Childhood group, currently known as SmartStart Westport. The group is made up of representatives of 10+ schools around Westport. The group only convened in September, but has already met three times. Although in its early days, the group is looking to:
·Survey parents, on a Westport-wide voluntary smartphone agreement

- Coordinate a consistent approach across other youth groups; e.g. Athletics Club, GAA, Scouts, etc.
- Organise speakers and parent support initiatives around smartphones and digital devices
- Establish prominent signs at schools which have voluntary smartphone agreements

The PGA has discussed these issues extensively and currently thinks that delaying personal ownership of smartphones, until after national school, is the best solution for most families. However, for parents who do choose to provide their child with a phone, there are some tips on how to manage them:
·Consider a dumb phone or balance phone

- Turn on parental controls. As for help from other parents if needed
- Start with strict parental controls, then relax them gradually, if required.
- Restrict access to social media apps and sites. (All major social media services have a minimum age of 13, in their terms of service).
- Review settings and usage reports every few months
- Set clear boundaries; e.g. no phones in bedrooms, at the dinner table, etc.
- Discuss with your child what they are using their phone for, who they are communicating with
- Write down the agreed rules, so they are clear to everyone