**Confirmation 2019:** Congratulations to our boys and girls in 6th class who received the Sacrament of Confirmation on Thursday 28th February. Bishop Denis Nulty celebrated a beautiful mass with 6th class and their families.

**PTA News:**  Thanks to parents who sent in cakes, buns etc for the reception held after Confirmation, they were really appreciated. Thanks to members of the PTA who helped at the reception and organised the photographer. First Communion will be on May 18th and the PTA will be looking for help to provide refreshments in our school hall in Ballysax after the ceremony. Let us know if you can help. Thank you.

The PTA presented the school with funding for laptops for classroom use. Sincere gratitude is extended to all parents and friends of the school who support fund raising ventures and make this possible.

The PTA will hold a Clothes Recycling drive on May 16th. You can drop bags of clean, recycled clothes to the school hall before or after school from Friday May 10th.

**Science Blast! :** 6th Class and their teacher Ms Kavanagh have been working hard since last October, not only on their preparation for Confirmation, but on a Science Project entitled “ Are girls better than boys at Gaelic Football?” They approached this study in a number of ways including research, interviews, tests of skill, stamina and concentration. 6th class and their teacher brought the project to Science Blast at the RDS on Thursday 7th March. Over 500 primary schools took part in the exhibition over 3 days. We were very proud of the extremely positive feedback received from the judges and the class had a really enjoyable day out.

**Book Week** was held in school last week and was greatly enjoyed by pupils and staff, with a Book Character Day, quizzes, book reviews, story writing and a visit from author Martina Murphy. The PTA kicked off the week with a very successful Book Sale in the school hall.

**Seachtain na Gaeilge:** Bhí Seachtain na Gaeilge againn an Seachtain seo chaite. Irish dancing, poetry and song emanated from all directions and we had great fun in the process.

Well done to all who work hard behind the scenes to organise Book Week and Seachtain na Gaeilge in school. They are great opportunities for fun filled learning!

**School Garden:** 5th Class had some great ideas last autumn about how to develop the school garden into a space which can bring enjoyment and calm. With this in mind, we approached local landscape gardener, Finbarr Ryan, and he laid out a basis for this garden which can be developed by all classes in the school. We applied to Energia with the children’s ideas and we were delighted to get the news last week that we have been awarded €500 to put plans into action!

**Student Council :** Ms White and Ms O’Halloran have set up a Student Council which has two representatives from each class in the school. The children have had their first meeting and have very positive ideas about how students can help to improve school life.

**Morning Drop off:** School begins at 9.15am. Ideally, drop off to school should not begin before 9am as it is a Child Safety concern. The Before School Club is available to accommodate children who need to be dropped to school early.

**Trócaire :** We have a school Trócaire box which will be sent around to classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays if people would like to make a contribution on behalf of the school. The tv ad campaign by Trócaire is quite stark and we feel very lucky in Ballysax School to have so much which children in other countries do not experience. The Trócaire box will not be kept on the premises overnight at any stage.

**Board of Management News:** The Board sent congratulations to our Confirmation class and their families. They were very pleased to hear about all school activities including Book Week, Science Blast, Heritage in Schools, Energia award, Seachtain na Gaeilge and extra curricular activities.

The Board has accepted applications for enrolment to the school in September. **There are still places available, not just in infants but also in classes across the school. Please spread the word.** The Board of Management reviewed and updated the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement. It will be available to view on the school website www.http:/ /stbrigidsballysax.com/

**Internet awareness and safety:** There can never be too much said on this subject, or indeed, too many opportunities for parents and teachers to learn more on how to protect our children. The internet is a very real companion for so many children and this was really brought home to me recently when I received an email from a concerned parent, extracts of which I share with you:

*After some parental debate whether this would be suitable or not, Santa was kind enough to answer the Christmas list by bringing an iPod to the household for our child. “For Music” was the reason this was requested. One month in, no music heard, and at least 25 apps downloaded. All seemed well with photo & video editing apps and some games, but little did we know until we inspected further. There are the usuals such as****Facebook****,****Instagram****but* ***Snapchat****and* ***Tik Tok****were the most concerning for us. Easy to download, a child just claims they are over a certain age, and away they go.*

*Snapchat seems fun with friend group chats etc, but little do most parents know that messaging and photos, once posted and shared, are automatically deleted so parents can’t see what has been posted online. Bad for parents monitoring bullying or indecent behaviour!*

*With Snapchat kids assume any inappropriate messaging is gone forever. A screenshot can be taken and saved. Once on-line, forever online!*

*Tik Tok is a video sharing site, currently having devastating effects on kids worldwide, I suggest parents google some articles. I’m sure there had been hundreds, if not thousands of videos watched at this stage by our child, and who knows what kind of content?! More concerning was the “Following” 350 people, and 250 “Fans”. These have profile pictures of young kids, or cute animals to draw our kids in, but I would bet my house these were not all children that were sharing videos.*

*One very innocent video from our kid, had over 4,000 views and 200 comments. Some comments getting nasty for no particular reason, and others looking for a clearer picture of my childs face. Why? We made the decision to take this powerful tool away from our child, just too young!*

*We now realise kids DO NOT have the maturity or emotional intelligence to handle such a dangerous weapon, and that’s what it is, a weapon.*

*Adults just take these devices for granted. You may have explained the pitfalls of the internet to your kid but you cannot trust that your child is completely innocent if they can’t possibly fathom the real dangers, and what is around the corner from that next “click”. I appeal to all parents to go through their child's’ iPod, Phone, or family device, attend the internet safety courses available through the school or whatever means out there, or even watch some Youtube videos to get up to speed. Educate yourself to what we are exposing our kids to.*

The Cyber Safety company, **Children of a Digital Age,** will work with all classes on March 21st. **An information session will be held for parents on that evening at 7.30pm. I appeal to parents to make it a priority to attend.**

Thanks to all for your continued support. I wish our children and families a Happy St Patrick’s Day and weekend.

Esther Reddy, Príomhoide