

# St. Mary's Parish Primary School

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Dear Parents,

We have a number of exciting projects we would like to advance this year to enhance the educational experience that our pupils will have here in St Mary's Parish Primary School. Over the course of the school year we hope to develop an **outdoor social play space** for our junior pupils and also to develop a **sensory room**. Our main focus this term will be the development of a sensory room. **What is a sensory room and what will it be used for?**

Sensory rooms are designed to both calm and stimulate the senses in children with special needs. Sensory rooms have three main purposes:

- to provide relaxation and enjoyment by eliminating distraction,
- to increase creative sensory input, and
- to facilitate communication and mobility for children with a wide range of disabilities.

Sensory issues are common in children with special needs. Sensory issues include sensitivity to smells, touch, texture, taste, light and sound. For example, some children with sensory issues find different types of clothing bothersome. Sounds bother other children, even sounds most of us struggle to hear. The exact cause of sensory problems is not known. However, it relates to poor processing of the information received through the senses. Many children with autism have sensory issues. There is also a specific disorder, Sensory Processing Disorder.

Schools set up sensory rooms for children with special needs, including autism or sensory processing disorder, to take breaks. The room is designed to remove distractions and uses "special lighting, fiber optics and bubbles to stimulate different parts of the brain" and help children focus. We want to create a safe space where students with special needs can go to calm their bodies and then get back to the business of learning. Sensory rooms aren't just designed for users with autism; sensory products can help with a variety of sensory and development needs, including learning disabilities. **Sensory rooms can be used by all pupils from time to time as a calm space where "mindfulness activities" can take place.**

**Fundraising:** The approximate cost of developing the sensory room is €10,000. We ask your support for a **sponsored run** which will take place here in the school grounds on **Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November** weather permitting. On that day we will attempt as a school to run around Ireland, a distance of approx. 3,500km. Each class will run for a period that day with the overall total run by all the children tallied. The target for each child will be between 3 and 5km depending on their class group. **Parents, grandparents, buggies are all welcome to come and do a few laps and their scores will be logged along with the students.** We will send home sponsorship cards this week with each pupil and we ask you over the next few weeks to try and raise as much as you can from friends, neighbours/visitors. We ask you to return the sponsorship money by the **10<sup>th</sup> November**.

**You may belong to a company who would like to offer some sponsorship towards this project. Alternatively you can suggest a company which we could approach. All donations received from businesses will be acknowledged publicly on our school website and at the official opening.**

Regards  
Philip Ward