



Coláiste Bhríde

Christmas Newsletter 2020

XMAS FACTOR 2020

What a way to finish out 2020! Our annual talent show was held (virtually of course) on Tuesday 22nd December. Twelve acts made it through to the final after the rigorous auditioning process in early November. There was a wide variety of talent on show from solo singers, musicians, magicians and duets to dance acts.

The show began with what could only be described as an unusual Zoom act by staff members. Student Council chairperson Ross Bailey officially opened the show and then handed the reigns over to presenters Officer Thomas Kealy and Jade Shannon who entertained the audience and kept everything moving spectacularly. The overall winner was Laci-Jane Shannon and Molly Hynes who gave a showstopping performance of 'I See Red'. They were presented with Shelly's Trophy in honour of Shelly Behan who was a former student and Student Council chairperson. Shelly passed away suddenly in 2016. Second place went to Olive Tutty while Jessica Murphy achieved 3rd place. Holly Brennan was the Judges' Choice.

A new feature this year was the 'Decorate a Door' competition, which was won by 6 Elm.

The Christmas quiz winning classes were 2 Laurel and 3 Laurel. Another brilliant moment was the naming of our best dressed student competition. The winner was Michaela Kavanagh.

The show was held in the gym and live-streamed to classrooms around the school where students watched with their base class. All proceeds raised from the day will go to Self Help Africa and Pieta House.



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Thank You!

Dear everyone,

It's Christmas! While it will be very different for us all this year it is a real tribute to everyone in our school community to have been able to be in school and to complete the first term. When we began back in August there was a palpable sense of uncertainty around whether we would be in school for a few weeks but we never thought we would make the full term.

Thank you so much and very well done!

Our classrooms have been very different from the point of view of teaching and learning but teachers and students, you have all adapted willingly and have coped amazingly.

When we considered publishing our Christmas newsletter we thought we would have very little to report. Just look what has actually happened this term! We know we are really missing sport and all the extra-curricular activities we are usually involved in and that we pride ourselves on in Coláiste Bhríde. These too will come again, we need to be patient for another little while.

We sometimes focus on what we cannot do but looking back we have achieved so much in our school community from August to December. Now let's all look forward to what we can do to celebrate Christmas! It will be changed but we can be thankful for everything we have and for those around us. Let's all make that extra effort to be kind and thoughtful this Christmas. Finally, let's stay safe by following government guidelines and doing the right thing.

Nollaig Shona daoibh go-léir agus athbhliain faoi mhaise daoibh.

Ms Dunne, Mr. Finn and Ms Gahan.

transition year news



TY Future Leaders Programme

The GAA Future Leaders Course is a cross-curricular programme comprising of a series of modules designed to encourage maturity, initiative, responsibility and leadership skills in students. The programme gives students the knowledge and skills to support all roles required in the effective staging of Gaelic Games. As part of the programme, students are challenged to organise and run both on-field and off-field events for younger students.



The first group organised a target shooting competition with hurleys and a sliotar while another group organised “Coláiste Bhríde’s Fittest Class”. Representatives from each base class battled it out in activities such as Hang Tough, Broad Jump, Squats and Burpees.

Horticulture

In November, our TY Horticulture students visited Altamont Gardens. The students were treated to a guided tour of the gardens which included a walk around the lake and down the glen to the beautiful river Slaney. After lunch the students learned about composting, were introduced to some rare plants and found out all there is to know about horticulture as a career.



TY AWARENESS DAY

To date, 4 Beech and 4 Ash have been fortunate to go to Castletown, Co. Laois for their awareness day. They were warmly welcomed (in Covid-friendly manner!) by the three facilitators. All social distancing requirements were carefully followed and both spent each day participating in different workshops, exploring their creative expression and the benefits of mindfulness. They had time to contemplate and reflect on different issues. After Christmas, it will be the turn of 4Elm and 4Oak.

TRANSITION YEAR CELEBRATION

Last year’s Transition Year students gathered safely in the gym in September to celebrate all that they achieved during last year. While it was not the usual glamorous affair and unfortunately parents were not present, it was still an incredibly special occasion.

Congratulations to joint winners of the Spirit of TY award Padraic Donoghue and Caoimhe Murphy, winner of the Eleanor Lee Future Leader award, Cian Ó Tuama, and overall Student of the Year, Isabella Ní Chonail

Mini Company

All TY students are busy with their mini companies. Due to government guidelines, students are working as sole traders. This year, students are offered a click and collect service. The wonderful selection of products was available to view on the school app. At market day, students had the opportunity to sell their product to 1st and 2nd year students.

All TY students are participating in the County Wicklow Enterprise programme. Their business reports will be submitted in January for the school final and the highest scoring companies will represent Coláiste Bhríde in the county final.

This amazing array of saleable products was on display in our school tent on 17th December. The market day was full of atmosphere and sales pitch!

Tuesday Activities

Transition years have a very wide selection of activities on Tuesday. During the first ten weeks of term students participated in hill walking, tennis, basketball, badminton and gym. For the second module, students could choose from line dancing, pilates, badminton, basketball or attending The Stables, a fitness centre near Gorey.

Gaisce

Transition year students are participating in the President's Award again this year.

They have to work on three activities, a personal skill, physical recreation and community involvement. In spite of the current restrictions students are actively engaged in the programme.

TY OUTDOOR PURSUITS TRIP BALTINGLASS:

On the 14th and 15th September, our TY students had an action-packed visit to Baltinglass Outdoor Education Centre. The sun shone and the students took on all the challenges with gusto. Activities included archery, zip line, rock climbing, abseiling and canoeing/kayaking. The sense of fun, competitiveness and fulfilment was obvious. We really appreciate the organisation and management at the centre. It was great for our students to have this team building opportunity!



SENIOR CYCLE INFORMATION FOR TY:

January 18th – 22nd: Socially distanced meetings will be held with all TYs in the gym to go through career guidance on subject choices for Leaving Certificate.

January 18th - 22nd: This Career Guidance presentation for Leaving Certificate subjects will also be put up on the school app. Friday, January 30th 2021: Closing date for completion of online Senior Cycle subject option forms.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Our TYs will be going out on work experience on the week of February 8th - 12th.



PERCUSSION WORKSHOP

TY music students participated in a drumming workshop led by Gorey musician, Conor Moore. Students learned and performed complex rhythms on a variety of percussion instruments.

JOHN PAUL II AWARDS

Twenty T.Y. students are taking part in the John Paul II awards this year in our school. The Pope John Paul II Award is a faith achievement award for young people between the ages of 16 and 18. It is non-competitive, inclusive and voluntary. The award enables participants to take an active part in the life of their Church, local community and society. These students have chosen to help their local communities in a variety of ways this year. So far, we have had students cleaning churches and graveyards, helping their elderly neighbours with groceries and making inspirational/spiritual cards to send to people throughout the lockdown. We wish them the best of luck in achieving their awards.

CHRISTMAS DOOR DECORATING COMPETITION

Judging on the 'Decorate a Door Competition' took place on Wednesday the 18th and again the talent and creativity of our students was incredible to see. There could only be one winner and it was Room 16, base class to 6 Elm who were lead and inspired by their amazing class teachers Ms Brookes and Ms McGettrick. The Student Council delivered their prizes during X-Mas Factor on Tuesday. Well done to 6 Elm!



There were many other notable entries that most certainly deserve a mention. Mr. Conniffe and 5 Beech for their 'Conniffe-rous tree' design, Ms Rickerby's beautiful 'Chemistree' outside room 12 and 4 Elm for their 'Rita's Reindeers' display. The Science corridor was especially 'out of this world'. Ms Finlay's door allowed you to take an 'elfie' and 1 Laurel were sure to get their love of all things tractors included with their 'grassman' door. 2 Oak had the basic problem of not having a door but that did not stop them getting involved with their lovely canteen display. 5 Elm are also to be congratulated for their enthusiasm. Not happy to simply decorate the door of room 7, the inside was decorated too. Everything from speakers, chairs, the clock to the whiteboard wiper was wrapped! The competition really helped us get into the Christmas Spirit and thank you to everyone for their enthusiasm and creativity. Hopefully this will become an annual event.

DRESS TO EXPRESS AND IMPRESS

On Friday 20th November, students and staff of Coláiste Bhríde were invited and encouraged to express their individuality by dressing up as who they are or who they hope to be. Whether it was expressing one's inner superhero, being that rockstar or becoming a doctor for the day, the event certainly added some colour to these dark, Covid filled days.

MATHS QUIZ WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of our Numeracy quiz which was held during Maths week. Chloe Roberts, 2nd year, was the junior winner while Euan Bailey from Transition Year won the senior competition. Both students were presented with a One for All voucher.



TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Students had the opportunity to participate in the “Twelve Days of Christmas” Maths quiz in the run up to Christmas. Each day, a Christmas themed Maths problem was posted. Three prizes were awarded to Eoin Tomkins, Ross Whelan and Euan Bailey who were lucky enough to be drawn from the hat. Congratulations to the other five students who also got 100%; Aisling Fleming, Annie Butler, Áine McMahon, Yasmin Dagge and Nathan Finucane. There were over one hundred entries!



FIRST YEAR MATHS QUIZ

Due to Covid restrictions the first year Maths quiz and Senior Cycle Maths quiz could not go ahead as usual in the gym. However, first year Maths teachers organised an “in class” quiz with plenty of prizes available.

NUMERACY AND LITERACY ASSESSMENT

On Tuesday, October 20th, 1st year students completed numeracy and literacy assessments. These assessments were completed to provide the school with data for SEN and student support purposes. Following on from the entrance assessment, this was step two in a three step process. Step three will be completed towards the end of 2nd year in school.

EQUESTRIAN

On Saturday, 28th November our equestrian club ran its very own competition in Butterfly Farm. With thirteen members jumping on the day there was great excitement and friendly rivalry. The feeling of getting out to show jump, in a safe environment, was very much to the fore. In the novice competition, Hughie Doyle certainly showed he was a speed merchant when he finished on 0 faults in a time of 30.32 seconds, taking 1st place. Saoirse Kenny finished in 2nd place while third place went to Stephen Sharry. 4th, 5th and 6th



places went respectively to Katie Nolan, Rachel Darcy and Sarah Sheppard.



went to Katie Nolan. Lynsey Kilbride took the 4th place rosette. While 5th place went to Rachel Darcy and 6th to Cait Kenny.

The open competition provided excellent show jumping also. Hugh O'Loughlin's time of 33.00 seconds and 0 faults could not be surpassed. Saoirse Kenny finished in 2nd place while 3rd place

The talent and equestrian skill in our club bodes well for the future and hopefully we will get back to having the usual inter-schools competitions sooner rather than later.

Thank you to Michael Byrne who provides training and who judged on the day. Sincere thanks to our parents also who are always supportive. Our main sponsor on the day was Kate's Tack Shop, Bunclody.



1ST YEAR FOOTBALL BLITZ

Our 1st year blitz kicked off in September with over one hundred of our first year students, both boys and girls, getting their first taste of football at Coláiste Bhríde. There's no doubt that the future of football in the school is in safe hands with some extremely competitive games in this first round. While we did not get to continue with this competition due to Covid restrictions, we look forward to seeing what else these 1st years have to offer when we hopefully return to the pitch after Christmas.

A big thank you to the Transition Year students who stepped up to coach these budding stars and some also refereed the games. Thanks, as always to Carnew Emmet's GAA club also for the use of their pitch.

GIRLS FOOTBALL

The senior girls have commenced training on Wednesday afternoons and look forward to getting back to winning ways. The Junior girls, U14s and 1st years will commence training after Christmas. Both players and coaches are looking forward to playing competitively again in the Leinster competition.

HURLING

Skills sessions for the senior hurlers and for our new first years have taken place in recent weeks. Despite the restrictions, our students have attended in huge numbers for these sessions and have shown huge commitment. We look forward to the new year in hope of some games.

Senior Hurlers



First Year Hurling



CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

C.S Lewis once said ‘ You can make anything by writing.’ Some of our first year and transition year English classes certainly had the opportunity to explore and develop their creative writing skills recently, when they participated in the Fighting Words Programme which was conducted virtually. The workshops encourage students to develop their writing skills and to be creative. One of the main aims of the programme is to use the practice of writing, and storytelling to strengthen teenagers to be resilient and creative. Our students worked in groups and also had the opportunity to present their stories. It was a most rewarding and positive experience for the students which highlighted the importance and the power of words and the writing process. We look forward to further sessions next term.

HOPE CHRISTMAS SHOEBOX APPEAL

Each year the school takes part in the Hope Christmas Shoebox appeal to help bring some hope to less fortunate children at this time of year. This year, due to the effects of Covid-19 restrictions, the Christmas Shoebox Appeal went online. Every €20 donated allows Team Hope’s partners in Africa and Eastern Europe to purchase items for shoeboxes locally, which will then be packaged and delivered directly into the hands of children.



This year, our school raised a fantastic €1010 in aid of the Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal. This will allow the charity to deliver in excess of 50 gift filled boxes to children in need this Christmas.

DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

This year, the TY Development Education class has been extremely busy. Having adapted to Covid 19 restrictions, students have taken part in virtual workshops with both Concern Worldwide and The National Youth Council of Ireland.

In addition to this, the class is currently participating in Concern Worldwide’s Speak, Act, Do programme in which they identify, study and take action on Global justice issues. Furthermore, the class is currently preparing

entries to Action Aids National Speech writing competition which examines the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on global solidarity, sustainability and poverty.

Last year Coláiste Bhríde was proudly awarded a Global Passport Award, from World Wise Global Schools for excellence in Development Education. This October we attended an online ceremony in which we were officially presented with our school plaque and banner.

LOURDES

Every year four students from Colaiste Bhride are selected to represent the school and travel to Lourdes as volunteers. Our successful applicants for the May 2020 trip were Stephen Sharry, Bróna O'Keeffe, Roisin Kennedy and Daniel Hedderman. They were thrilled to have succeeded. Forty applicants were interviewed for the position of Lourdes volunteers.

Enthusiastically they worked together to raise money for their trip through a variety of innovative fundraising activities. In a very short span of time they managed to raise €4272. Due to the pandemic they had to stop fundraising and unfortunately were unable to travel to Lourdes.

Like many inspirational people this year, these remarkable, dedicated and thoughtful students decided to turn a disappointing situation into something constructive and positive. They opted to use the money they raised to support various, worthwhile causes. The charities they donated to are South Wicklow Hospice, Enable Ireland, Carnew Community Care, Wexford Hospice Home Care, Irish Cancer Society and the Aoife and Aine Kennedy Memorial Fund.

These charities were delighted to receive the donations, particularly in what has been a particularly difficult year for everyone. They all expressed their sincere gratitude to our students and the supporting communities whom made it all possible. Enable Ireland sent a wonderful email expressing its appreciation for the donation, "your support is so vital to all the children and adults with disabilities who use our Enable Ireland services across the country and we are always so grateful to receive support". (Enable Ireland) This sentiment of gratitude was equally echoed by the other charities that our Lourdes students donated. They were all delighted to receive the generous donations.

In a year of uncertainty and many challenges our students hoped to make a difference in the lives of others. It was acknowledged by all involved that although in these challenging times we're apart in many ways, by working together we can bring about positive change.

Our students hope to make a trip to Lourdes in the future. We feel sure they will make this happen.



SENIOR PREFECTS

Senior prefects provide an important liaison between students, teachers and school management. Their position demonstrates leadership, teamwork and responsibility.

In this very unusual year, this year's senior prefects have been providing valuable support to the second year students. We are hopeful that they will be able to accommodate some sporting tournaments for them before the end of the academic year.

Thanks to all the senior prefects and we look forward to seeing what they have planned next!

MEITHEAL LEADERS

Meitheal is a leadership programme that has been operating in Coláiste Bhríde for many years. Senior students are trained to become mentors for incoming students. It is a programme based on respect between senior and junior students and it enables senior students to influence the happiness and wellbeing of 1st years. The students who are chosen to become Meitheal leaders undergo a residential training programme during the summer prior to their return to school.

This year our eighteen Meitheal leaders are continuing this tradition and are making a positive contribution to the development of our school community. Although covid restrictions have hampered activities, our Meitheal leaders are in weekly contact with first years. They visit base classes weekly to check in with first years and offer them advice and encouragement. We hope that activities can resume in the new year so that our first years can experience the full extent of this amazing care programme offered in the school.

FIRST YEAR CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION



Congratulations

to the winners of the first year Christmas Card Competition, Grace Togher 1 Pine, Suvi Lynam 1 Elm, Mariam Mohamed 1 Oak and Ali Nolan 1 Ash.

Well done to the 5 Laurel class who organised this as part of their General Education Task. This will be examined in February 2021.

The competition winners were presented with their prizes at an exhibition last week in the main social area. They also entertained their guests with music and provided refreshments which they had made in their Hotel & Catering Class.

The group would like to thank their sponsors, Candy's Cost Cutters Carnew and Get Fresh Catering as well as all the teachers and staff who helped and supported them.

This year's annual Open Evening took place virtually. Our students presented information on various aspects of our school including subject options, extra-curricular activities and student supports.

You will find the Youtube video of this at the following link:

<https://youtu.be/d0xzGZZS71o>

Music News



The Music Department like other departments faced many challenges on our return to school. Band and choir rehearsals are no longer permitted and practical work within the classroom is allowed only under certain conditions. However, for every problem faced, a solution was at hand.

Perspex protectors were designed and made by Mr. Holly covers were placed on the students' tables allowing them to play safely for the set time.

TY music students participated in a drumming workshop led by Gorey musician, Conor Moore. Students learned and performed complex rhythms on a variety of percussion instruments. TYs also formed their own band and will perform at their graduation in May.

While band and choir could not rehearse together this term, students practised at home. A virtual performance of 'Let It Snow' was compiled using multi-track recording techniques: Sheet Music was shared via MTeams; a backing track performed by Ms. Glynn, Mr. Gogarty, Mr. Callanan and Mr. McHugh was recorded and shared with students; choir and band members recorded their tracks individually and all these recordings were expertly put together by Mr. McHugh to produce a beautiful recording available to view on our school app and the school YouTube channel.

We're planning to hold an outdoor concert called 'Summer Serenade' on Thursday 13th May at 7pm. It will feature band pieces, songs from our folk group led by Mr. Callanan, our traditional group led by Ms. Murphy and solo performances from our Leaving Cert musicians. We will continue to rehearse apart and we will be ready to enjoy performing together for our whole school community in the very near future.

GO RAIBH MAITH AGAT INITIATIVE

Coláiste Bhríde was delighted to take part in the #GRMA initiative organised by the National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) on Friday, December 14th. This event asked schools across the country to come up with a time to pause as a school community and reflect on the enormous work that went into opening our schools in September. It asked us to think of the efforts of all members of our school community from Bus Drivers to Management,

from Teachers to Students. We were then asked to show a video developed by the NAPD which showed well known figures from Irish society voicing their appreciation for all the work that has taken place in schools. At 3.50 on December 11th, we all went home for the weekend after giving a large round of applause to all these heroes that we work with on a daily basis.

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL DURING CORONAVIRUS

September 7th 2020 the day we returned. Going back has obviously caused so much commotion and stress to everyone, but the teachers and staff have made it possible to come back. I felt a bit confused at the start on how this would work out, but after a few weeks I've settled in. There are many rules placed to ensure that everyone is safe. I've enjoyed lockdown but it still didn't feel the same as going into school. The smells of disinfectant wipes fill the air as we're tempted to take off the masks we wear. This is the new normal for us now, until we battle out the virus.

Returning to school following the Coronavirus outbreak was a new and different experience for myself and every student in Ireland and across the globe. I was personally sceptical of the government's plan to reopen schools, but I was somewhat reassured by the video that was created by students and teachers of Coláiste Bhríde which outlined the plan for a safe and manageable return to school for staff and students alike. It was a hard experience for us for many reasons including the fact that we were muzzled like attack dogs, in the interest of 'flattening the curve' (Simon Harris' words not mine). It was, and still is, a tricky experience, but for the most part, we have become used to it. Young people have become more resilient, so adults can no longer accuse us of being 'snowflakes' or referring to us as the 'Celtic Tiger crybabies'.

When we came back to school, it was all very overwhelming, with the reality of what our flawed world had become. At first it was all very daunting, not knowing how to breathe in the clammy mask, the burns hand sanitizer would leave on the backs of my hands, the strange silence that the classrooms were engulfed in. Those classrooms which one had been bustling were now wiped clean of their energy and were just a desperate imitation of what those rooms had once been. But as the months progressed, the classrooms began to slowly return to their former atmospheres, the masks became slightly more bearable and it finally began to feel like school again.

In September when I returned to school, I enjoyed being with my friends again. I struggled with wearing the masks and it was hard to remember to social distance with each other. I didn't like having to sit apart from each other in all the classes and I missed sitting beside my friends. After a while, I got used to wearing the masks and began to realise whenever I wasn't social distancing. The school helped avoid the spread of coronavirus by giving each year group a certain area to eat their lunch. I also like the way they open the pop up tuck shop every now and then.

GOING BACK TO SCHOOL DURING CORONAVIRUS

Since school has started back in September. Life on school grounds has changed a lot. We came back thinking we wouldn't be in school for any more than a month and there would be more restrictions put in place. This is not the case as everyone in the school community has worked extremely hard to keep us in school and a normal way of living. Everyone has to wear a mask indoors and sanitise for our own safety everyone has taken the circumstances seriously and abided by the rules. Life in this battle is strange for everyone but there is always light at the end of the tunnel.

New normal

Mask wearing, no sharing,
disinfectant wipes
Windows open, freezing cold,
many many strifes
Social distancing,
some sanitising too,
Going back to school
wasn't fun to do.
This is our new normal,
no matter how much we plea
This is our new normal in the
name of safety

On the return to school I've had to face a number of challenges ranging from; wearing a mask all day, having to adjust to the one-way system inside and outside, having a new timetable with new breaks and having to get back into a routine. I overcame these challenges by allowing myself time to get used to it all. The school I left in March was not the same one I came back to in September.

The school has made many positive changes for it to become safe. We now follow a strict one-way system inside and out and have seating plans. Staggered breaks for each year group really helps, and wearing masks and sanitising your chair and desk before sitting down are all part of our school routine. I have experienced many thoughts and feelings since September. I was scared at first and a bit worried, but since returning I have now adapted to our new school life and it's like normal again.

Well a new normal!

Coming back to school this year has definitely been strange. There has been so many changes since we left last year. Firstly, the biggest change I have noticed has got to be the masks. Wearing them in class and while indoors is quite tough but once I got through the first two weeks it almost became normal to me. I have also found, being in segregated areas and away from other year groups has been very strange. Overall I think the school has done a great job in these strange times by spacing us out in classrooms, introducing mask breaks and keeping us all safe.

Firstly, well done to the 2020 Leaving Cert students who excelled in their Leaving Cert examinations. The 2020 class will be renowned for their endurance and cooperation in what was a very difficult year. Heartiest congratulations to them all.

Under the current restrictions, a lot of changes had to be made to the guidance programme. The Super Generation Study Skills gave a very impressive seminar to 6th year students through Zoom on effective study techniques for their busy year ahead. In November CAO information night for parents took place to empower parents to help their child to make the right decisions pertaining to their CAO application. Students have visited colleges virtually! Due to the current environment, college websites and virtual tours are the only way for students to learn about such institutions.

Ray Langan from “Raising the Game” met with all 3rd and 5th Years and gave them an inspirational seminar on how to raise their game! Ray spoke about maximising time, responsible behaviour and on how to get the most out of life. Ray also gave an evening seminar to parents.

All 3rd years have received information on subject and programme selection. A lot of thinking and investigating needs to be done in order to make the right decision.

TY'S AND PSYCHOMETRIC TESTING:

All TY's have undertaken the 'MyFutureCareerChoice' cognitive ability test and career inventory test. Together with work experience, personal research and psychometric testing, TY students are well equipped to make pertinent choices for Leaving Cert 2023.



French Exchange



The French exchange has gone online this year, with students from numerous French classes in Coláiste Bhríde corresponding with students in Lycée Victor Hugo in Chateau Gontier. The virtual exchanges between Coláiste Bhríde and our French partner school allow for frequent and authentic cultural and linguistic exchange possibilities for our students.

Since September, virtual exchanges have been taking place using various

formats, including traditional letter writing along with audio recordings, video recordings and live online interaction using the etwinning platform. The most recent project has incorporated virtual tours of the Irish and the French schools. The objective is to enable students who cannot visit the partner schools this year due to travel restrictions to still benefit from a live tour of the school that their correspondent attends.

ANNUAL TRACTOR RUN



The Annual Coláiste Bhríde Tractor Run for ISPC/Childline took place on Wednesday 9th December. At 11.30am sixteen tractors, led by Mr Gleeson, left from Carnew heading for the Togher, Coolboy and Shillelagh before returning back to the school. This annual event raised over €1000 for the ISPC/Childline in appreciation for the support offered to a number of students in our school community and beyond. We must say a big thank you to Ross Bailey our student council chairperson and Aine Doyle, who put in a huge effort in organising this year's event. Also a big thank you also to Melissa in the office and to Gavin Nolan for their assistance too.



CAO

It is a particularly busy time for our 6th years as they prepare to fill out their CAO forms. Again, heartiest congratulations to the Leaving Cert class of 2020, I hope they are making the most of their time in college and elsewhere. This time next year, I will be saying it to you 6th years!!!!

CLOTHES SWAP



A second year Home Economics class ran a clothes swap event in conjunction with Oxfam Ireland's Second Hand September campaign. The aim was to promote sustainable shopping. We asked people to take a thirty day pledge to stop buying fast fashion and instead buy second hand! Students brought in preloved clothing and took home clothing in return. Any clothing not selected was donated to charity and given a second life!

student council update

It has been a fast but busy term for our hardworking Student Council. Our first order of business in September was to elect our new Chairperson. After a very close vote, Ross Bailey was elected to the position of Chairperson. Ross has been a member of the Student Council since 2nd year and has proved himself to be an enthusiastic and dependable member. Sophie Doyle was elected to the position of Vice-Chairperson. We also held elections for second year students and eight new members were elected. They have settled in very well and are bringing lots of fresh ideas to the group.



Unlike many other extracurricular activities, Student Council is fortunate that many of our planned activities could still go ahead. In these uncertain times, it is even more important than ever that the student voice is heard. There are twenty five members on this year's council from 2nd to 6th year. 1st year students will join the council after the February midterm break. Each base class is assigned a council member who pops into morning assembly on a regular basis to pass on information and to take feedback from students.

Our first online meeting took place in early October. It was at this meeting that we set our objectives for the year. As always, student wellbeing is at the core of all we do. We came up with the idea of a homework free night to allow students to focus on other activities. 'Meaningful Monday' took place on October 19th. We hope to have a number of similar days throughout the year.

An annual highlight in our calendar is our Comhairle na nÓg where we meet students from other schools and discuss issues affecting young people in county Wicklow. This year's event was online. We were delighted to be asked by the organisers to speak on East Coast FM the following day to discuss our experiences of Comhairle.

One of our big projects this year is the roll out of ISIC student cards. This project was unfortunately postponed last year. We have worked closely with the company and are delighted with the co-branded card that has been designed. The card will allow students to access discounts in many stores and hopefully save them a lot of money. Cards will be issued before the Christmas holidays.

Our X-Mas factor show preparations are in full swing. Our auditions took place in November and as always, the talent in our school is amazing. Our presenters, Jade Shannon and Thomas Kealy will lead our virtual show which will stream live on YouTube on December 22nd. Money raised from X-Mas factor will go to Self Help Africa and Pieta House.

Secret Santa again proved to be a big success. Students were able to purchase small gifts which were delivered to their chosen person on December 18th. All money raised went to Pieta House. Another new Christmas initiative was our door decorating competition. Base classes competed to have the most decorative door and the Student Council will select the winning class on December 16th.

A first year treasure hunt took place on December 18th. We were conscious that the first years have not been able to go on their school tour and take part in lots of activities so we wanted to arrange something to help bring some festive cheer.

The Student Council also very much enjoys lending a hand to other initiatives in the school. This term alone we have helped out with the Team Hope Shoebox collection and also helped promote the SVP food collection in school. We were also delighted to be asked to help Ms Finlay promote our school diversity and inclusivity day in November.

We are also planning initiatives which will take place after Christmas. We have some ideas about a kindness challenge for January so watch this space. We will also have some ISSU Student Council training on January 13th which we are very much looking forward to.

It has been a busy but rewarding first term. We would like to take the opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and safe and prosperous New Year.

literacy

news

Our school was awarded the Wellread ward in 2018 which recognises schools who strive to promote reading for pleasure. Unlike other extra-curricular activities, we have been able to continue many of our literacy initiatives during the pandemic. During the first lockdown in early 2020, our literacy team worked hard on ways to promote reading to our students while they were home. We had regular updates on our school app and informed students how they could join their local library from the safety of their home. We promoted blogs and audio books and sent links to free books. JK Rowling's new book was an example of a book we promoted.

Upon our return to school in August 2020, our literacy committee met remotely and were excited that many of our initiatives could still take place. Our literacy notice-board, located outside our library, is updated each week with a 'Word of the Week' and 'Quote of the Week'. Words and quotes are supplied by the English department and are linked to the work being covered in our classrooms. Students are then invited to put the 'Word of the Week' into a sentence/ paragraph which is submitted by email. A weekly winner is selected and a prize is awarded by that student's English teacher. Other initiatives in place include our continued participation in the creative writing workshops 'Fighting Words' which are taking place online this year for our 1st and Transition Year students.

Reading for pleasure is promoted visually across our school. Each subject department has a keyword notice-board which is updated regularly to help students become familiar with key vocabulary in that particular subject. Covid-19 has had a big effect on all aspects of school life but if there are any positives to take from this situation, we believe that it has lead many

students back to reading. Reading in the classroom is still a massive part of all subjects although activities now have to be completed on an individual basis. We have a monthly Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) whereby all members of our school community take 30 minutes and stop what they are doing to read a book for pleasure. We have one 30 minute session a month and in October we have a DEAR week with five consecutive days of DEAR.

A major adjustment for us has been that our beautiful school library has been turned into a classroom and is no longer the welcoming, open space that our students have come to love. Our students have the app 'BorrowBox' which English teachers have found to be a great way for students to experience the borrowing experience safely.

We are currently in the process of applying to the 'Writers visiting schools' initiatives and have signed up to once again take part in the 'Great Reads Award Reading Activity'. We have also recently applied for a grant for €2500 worth of resources for our library. The grant is named after the famed children's author Robert Dunbar and we will find out in January if our application has been successful.

We also have many plans for initiatives for after Christmas. We will have our annual spelling bee 'Let's Spellebrate' and also 'World Book Day' which is always a great day. Our lovely reading wall had to be taken down during preparations to make our school a safe space to open and we are planning an even bigger and brighter display in a new location in January. Watch this space!

■ daughters of charity

A special mass was held to mark the departure of the last three Daughters of Charity; Sr. Josephine Flynn, Sr. Helen Byrne and Sr. Mairead Hayden from Carnew after 37 years of dedicated service to the people of Carnew.

Denis Brennan was the chief celebrant at the Mass which was held under strict Covid -19 restrictions. Sr. Mairead who is approaching her 92nd birthday, celebrated her 70 years as a Daughter of Charity at the Mass, the event having being postponed earlier in the year due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

During their time in Carnew the Sisters played a pivotal role in the establishment, development and management of Carnew Community Care which provides sheltered housing and day care services for a large number of older people in the area.

From the very beginning back in 1983 the Sisters had connections with the school. In fact, their house on the Gorey Road, Cluain Mhuire, was originally built by the late John Murphy who was employed as a Metalwork teacher in the school. One of the original Sisters was Sr. Mairín Breathnach from Galway who taught Home Economics and Religious Education in the school for a number of years as did Sr. Christina O'Mahony from Cork at a later date.

It was Sr. Mairead Hayden who came to Carnew in 2000 who really developed a close working relationship and friendship with the Religious Education department in the school. Through her community work she visited the school to celebrate important events in the Christian calendar such as Lent, Easter and Advent and to give students some spiritual guidance in the run up to exams. She came to know many of the female students who attended Coláiste Bhríde through the Carnew Branch of The Catholic Girl Guides of Ireland (CGI) which she set up in 2001. The guides developed a great respect and fondness for Sr. Mairead and many of them still remain firm friends with her to this day.



Sr. Mairead made a point of visiting the school before the start of the State Examinations in June in order to offer encouragement to the students and offer prayers on their behalf.

A few weeks ago the news broke that the Daughters of Charity had reluctantly made the decision to withdraw permanently from Carnew due to the lack of vocations and the ageing profile of the Sisters. They have left a great legacy in Carnew and will be sadly missed by many.

In a final connection with the school the departing Sisters were each presented with a beautifully hand turned pen, made from timber sourced in Bethlehem. The pens were crafted by Kevin Lee who was principal of the school for almost 20 years.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.

Since this article was written, Sr. Mairéad sadly passed away.

school covid update

Looking back on 2020 or school life as we knew it was thrown into turmoil on the 13th of March. The lockdown and homeschooling will never be forgotten by students, teachers, parents and families alike . So it was absolutely wonderful to see classrooms reopening in August, to see students with their uniforms on getting back into our school. The building became a lively vibrant place again.

There's no denying that it was a mammoth task getting the school ready for reopening in August. Numerous challenges were presented and overcome, management, teachers, school admin staff, SNA's, caretakers, bus drivers, canteen staff, parents and cleaning staff all pulled together to get our school open and to get some much needed normality back into the lives of our young people. The changes have been monumental, two separate timetables, staggered breaks, one-way systems, PPE, no sports, no games or matches, no competitions, no trips abroad, separated seating in all classes, no canteen as we knew it, and of course face coverings are just some of the many changes that were forced on us all. They were essential changes to allow us to reduce contact with others and increase our distance from one another. These changes have not been easy to adjust to, many of them restrict our interactions and our usual ways of doing things have all been changed but the big bonus is that our school is open and working really well. The virus has been kept at bay. This is down to incredible corporation and teamwork from everyone, all of us adhering to the many changes that were implemented. Everyone working together to ensure that the risks are reduced to the lowest possible level. The support from parents and students alike is much appreciated. The student body has really complied with all of the requests and they have been so helpful and cooperative with all the new rules and requirements. This massive effort has ensured that all of our classes have been operating, our programmes have all gone ahead, and here we are at Christmas at the end of a very successful term. We really want to say a big thank you to you all, to the whole team, we may not have made it onto the pitches but we've had a very good four months and it is great to have reached this point in our school year.

We are not fully there yet, so a big push is needed to keep this fantastic work going for a few more months. We cannot let our guard down or become complacent. The virus is still there, it has not changed it's ferocity nor has it changed its ability to cause harm and ill-health to people in our families and our community. So we just need to continue with all of the advice and practices that we have established. Prevention is the only thing that we have within our control. Our behaviour and our practices need to be as strong as ever over Christmas and New Year until we reach the other "end of that tunnel". The vaccines will deliver that much needed immunity and our lives both in school and out of school can revert to "normal".

Or sincere thanks to everyone who has been on board with all of the changes that were implemented to keep COVID at bay, the changes have made our school a safer place. There has been a wonderful sense of team work through out the last four months, this has made a massive difference to everyone and has made our school work for the good of all the students. We just need to keep in mind the wise words from Seamus Heaney "If we winter this one, out we can summer anywhere". In the meantime a very Happy Christmas to you all, stay safe and well and we look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

***Go raibh mile maith agaibh go leir.
M Mc Gettrick (COVID Compliance)***

Carol Service

Our carol service took place on Monday 21st December. Readings, prayers, carols and music were pre-recorded to ensure that the annual celebration took place in a safe manner. The service was then streamed to classes in the afternoon. The message of Christmas was particularly poignant this year as the school community reflected on the hope that this season brings.



Ms Dunne spoke in her address about the sense of appreciation that we all now feel for the things we had taken for granted up until now: hugging family members, spending time together, shopping trips and meeting up for festivities. The focus was very much however, on the hope that the future brings and that we will return to these experiences again.

