



HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER – CHRISTMAS 2006.

May I take this opportunity to thank all of the students, staff and parents for your on-going support of the school. The term to date has been a very busy one with a myriad of activities taking place on a weekly basis. I continue to be most impressed with the commitment and the enthusiasm of the students to their studies, sport, extra-curricular activities and to the charitable works they have undertaken since September. All of this has lent itself greatly to the positive atmosphere which characterises our school. I wish you and your family an enjoyable and restful Christmas season together and we look forward to 2007 with confidence for all that it will hold.

BUILDING UPDATE:

All works pertaining to the Sports Hall, including the Weights Room, are complete and all of the floodlighting for the senior cup pitch, tennis courts, new hockey pitch and the multi-purpose pitch are fully operational. The additional Changing Rooms, Weights Room, Studio and the Tea Room have proved most popular. Work to the Main House is progressing and a re-opening date of Easter 2007 is still a very realistic one for the House. The Senior School extension – Phase 1 and Phase 2 – is progressing presently with much progress envisaged to take place during the early months of 2007.

I will be in a better position to inform you of various completion dates in the Easter Newslette, as a much clearer picture will be available then.

UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Many congratulations to Alice Brennan who received an Entrance Scholarship to U.C.D. and to Lisa de Jong and Avril Burgess who received Exhibition Awards to Trinity College. These awards reflect most positively on the academic programme within the school and on the Leaving Certificate class of 2006.

DEBATING

The 2006-2007 school year has seen a marked increase in the number of both male and female students participating in Debating and Public Speaking competitions. Particular success has been achieved in the UCD L & H Junior Debating Competition where Ben Blunnie, Miriam Bourke and Karl Brennan have progressed to the next stage. Dearbhail O'Crowley and Eabha McMahon won best speaker and best team in the Leinster Schools Depating Competition. The Concern Debates continue apace with Dearbhail O'Crowley, Brian Fitzpatrick, David Quinn, Flavia Watson, Rebecca Winckworth, Jill Roy and Jonathan Towers progressing through the knock-out rounds. In the Wicklow County Council Environmental Debating competition the team of Jerermy Fullam, Jill Roy and Jonathan Towers were up against St. Mary's College, Arklow but were narrowly defeated.

AIB PHIL SPEAKS DEBATING COMPETITION.

As a result of Dearbhail O'Crowley's success in the AIB Phil Speaks Debating Competition last March, Dearbhail won a Youth Exchange to Hong Kong last summer. This once in a lifetime opportunity offered Dearbhail the chance to experience a magical mix of cultures, traditions, customs and a way of life that tourists don't normally get to see.

RUGBY

Well done to all of the Rugby Teams on their progress to date. We look forward to the Senior Cup campaign in January when the Senior Cup Team will play St. Michael's in Donnybrook on Thursday 1st February. The Senior Cup Team have just returned from a most successful tour in England where they played and defeated Harrow School Senior Team and The Oratory School Senior team winning 17-3 and 16-13 respectively. The Junior Cup Team have been drawn against Wesley College in the opening round of the Father Godfrey Cup on Wednesday 17th January in Greystones R.F.C. The Under 13, Under 14, Transition Year and Senior 2nds are also enjoying a very successful season to date and we look forward to their League Competitions in the spring with confidence. Commitment and hard work will bring due reward. Our SCT Captain, Max Duffy, having been capped at International Under 18 level for Canada last summer has now been selected in the Canadian Under 19 squad for preliminary training for the Under 19 World Cup to be held in Belfast at Easter 2006.

HOCKEY

I am very impressed with the commitment of all the girls in the school to hockey and other sports, such as cross country and tennis and their ability to compete so well in the premier divisions of all of the hockey leagues. Senior and Junior hockey teams have received their Cup draw with the Senior Hockey team playing Our Lady's Grove and the Junior Hockey team getting a by in the first round. I strongly encourage all of the parents to support the Hockey teams as much as possible, including the Rugby supporters who are waiting for matches to begin or waiting for training. They would be most welcome to pop over to the two hockey pitches to support our teams!

SPORTS FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

All parents should be very proud of the contribution that their sons/daughters are making to sports in the school and their commitment to training on a daily basis and indeed over the holiday periods. It is a parental and school responsibility to take due care of any dietary or sports food supplement that a student takes. If a parent has a concern regarding dietary supplements, please do not hesitate to contact any of the coaching staff or the Directors of sport in the school, Mr. Victor Drummy, Mr. Tony Ward or Ms. Sarah Scott to discuss the matter. It is the school's protocol that under no circumstances should any student partake of any sports supplement. Our advice received is that a healthy, balanced diet more than accounts for the daily dietary requirements of students participating in sport.

TENNIS

Congratulations to Alexandra Pickerill on winning the Leinster Under 18 Matchplay Tournament held recently in the Westwood Tennis Centre at Leopardstown. She now goes on to represent Leinster in the National Matchplay Championships due to take place in the next few weeks.

SOCCER

The new multi-purpose facility has proved very popular with the soccer players and the numbers attending have been most encouraging, under coaches Dave Mackey and Ronan Donovan. The facility is a great addition to our excellent grounds.

ST. GERARD'S INAUGURAL SHOW JUMPING COMPETITION.

St. Gerard's hosted our first Show Jumping Competition in Boswell Equestrian Centre on Saturday September 23rd last. The event was the first in the Hoofprints League for this year. Forty-five teams of four riders per team participated from schools around the country. Twelve teams including two from St. Gerard's went forward to the jump-off. The team of Miriam Bourke, Jessica Crosse, Emily Murphy and David Bourke gained 1st place with the team of Kim Mulcahy, Hayley Mulcahy, Alice Murphy and Julie Collins gaining 2nd place.

SHOW JUMPING

Congratulations to David Bourke of 5th Year who won the Under 18 Boys National Pentathlon Championship in September. David is on a shortlist to compete in the European Pentathlon championships next summer. Congratulations also on his selection for the Irish team of four who represented the Irish Pony Club on their exchange visit to Washington in the United States this December. At the recent Kilrossary Lodge Inter Schools League, St. Gerard's came 6th overall out of thirty teams.

GOLF TEAM

It has been a very busy term for the St. Gerard's Golf Team. David MacMahon, David Quinn and Mark Tyrrell participated in the Irish Strokeplay Championship and narrowly missed out by five strokes. In the Irish Matchplay Championship a respectable 5th place was achieved out of 32 schools participating. Michael Magee, Adam Bowtell, David MacMahon and Mark Tyrrell played in the Golfworks Inter Matchplay championships and were successful in two of the matches but unfortunately lost to Pres Bray.

SAILING

The All-Ireland Inter Schools Sailing Championships of 2006 were held at Sutton Sailing Club during the early part of October. The team of Ian Byrne, Richard and Ian Meeke, Ronan McGovern and Oisín O'Neill performed well. In a fleet of seventy-two boats all the pupils finished in the top twenty in weather conditions that proved difficult and challenging.

MODEL EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

Congratulations to Etaoin Donovan who represented Ireland in the Model European Parliament session 2006 in Slovenia. She was on the committee of Constitutional and Home Affairs with the question of "Immigrant integration in western societies". Committee meetings were held throughout the week in preparation for the final Resolution for the General Assembly in the Slovenian Parliament building. It was a wonderful experience for Etaoin and offered her the chance to enjoy many new experiences.

PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The excellent rapport set up last year with the Parents' Association continues again this year with the new committee under the chairman, Mr. David O'Reilly. The various sub-committees enhance the educational programme of the school and we look forward to their contribution over the next year.

IN - HOUSE COMMITTEE

Once again a sincere word of gratitude to the In-House Committee under the inspiring Maureen Beirne for the organisation of their social occasions for parents since September and the Christmas Bazaar. In March 2007, the In House Committee will be teaming up with Cherrylane Fine Arts of Co. Wicklow to create an Art Exhibition celebrating visual art, with any funds raised to go to charity. The Exhibition will include works by the parents of some of our pupils and an Art Competition for the students. The Exhibition will also include works by well known Irish artists such as Graham Knuttel, James Brohan, Paul Kelly, Francis Matthews, Elizabeth Cope and Darina Roche-King to name but a few.

ST. GERARD'S DAY

Thankfully this year we were blessed with good weather and the majority of the students in the Senior and Junior Schools competed in the Sugarloaf Race. A special word of congratulations to all of the students who completed the race as well as those who contributed by sponsoring the race where in excess of **€20,000** was raised by the students for the UNICEF Build a School for Africa Fund. That evening our School Mass was based on the theme of Justice and was celebrated by Father Ben Mulligan, P.P. Fr. Ben asked us to be open to the plight of the oppressed and to make efforts on their behalf.

UNICEF.

To date in excess of €87,000 has been raised by the school through the sponsored Sugarloaf Race, the St. Gerard's Ball and individual contributions from parents and staff. This money will go directly to the UNICEF Build a School For Africa Project and will have a direct effect on the lives of many children and teenagers in Rwanda. I sincerely thank you all for your support throughout this campaign. The benefits of your contributions will go a long way towards improving the lives of those less fortunate.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR.

Once again one of the highlights of the school year was our Christmas Bazaar held on Thursday evening 7th December. There was a tremendous atmosphere throughout the school from the Café in the Dining Hall to the buskers in the Atrium and to the wonderful auction hosted by Victor Drummy and Corry McMahon. A special word of gratitude to all of the staff who gave so generously of their time and to the students of the school and in particular the students in 5th Year whose hard work bore great fruit on the evening. Once again a big thank you to all of the parents for your on-going support, attendance and generous contributions. In excess of €18,000 was raised on the night – up from €13,500 last year - and all of these monies will be distributed to local charities. Well done to all.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL HAMPERS

This year the school is delighted to assist with the St. Peter's Parish, Bray Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in fund-raising, sponsoring, packing and delivering 220 hampers. The Transition Year students took part in the packing and delivering of these hampers on Thursday, Friday and Saturday 14th, 15th and 16th December.

ST. GERARD'S BALL

The St. Gerard's Ball was a wonderful social event, reawakening an old tradition of the school. The evening proved to be a great success and was enjoyed by all. In excess of €43,500 was raised throughout the evening for UNICEF. Many thanks to the main organising committee of Fiona Farrar, Rosemary Roy, Nicky Kruseman, Pamela Madigan, Kathy Pearce and Maureen Beirne.

SOCIAL AWARENESS PROGRAMME.

The year started with a visit from Team Theatre Group to the Transition Years and a performance of a play called "Last Call" on the issue of suicide and suicide prevention. A representative from the Jack & Jill Foundation which assists families with terminally ill children spoke to the students to raise their awareness of the needs of such families. As a result of this talk, the school is taking part in a mobile phone and ink cartridge recycling system that will help in the raising of funds for this organisation. Speakers from UNICEF addressed all the students in the Senior School and gave a very moving account of the work with the Build a School for Africa project. 4th & 5th Year students were addressed by the St. Vincent de Paul local Conference which focussed their minds on the needs of others in their own community. Pastor Stephen and Hannah Repko (past pupil) addressed 4th and 5th Year students regarding their work with the Rock of Joy Foundation in Uganda through a memorable visual presentation.

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TEXTING SERVICE

The Texting Service has received a very positive response from parents of the Senior and Junior School. Should you wish your mobile phone number to be used for this service, please contact Tricia in the School Office if you have not already done so.

SCHOOL WEBSITE.

I trust that you have now had the opportunity to visit our new website and to view the quality of the material held therein. The website is now our prospectus. It contains much information including all sports results, school notices, events, newsletters, photographs, etc. to keep you up to date with all that is happening in the school. If you have not visited the website yet, please do so as we would welcome any comments you may have towards improving it, send your comments to office@stgerards.ie

MUSIC FESTIVAL

Many congratulations to the winners in the Music Festival: In the Instrumental Section: 1st Place went to Milo Delaney. In the Vocalists Section: 1st places went to Rebecca Winckworth and Andrew Hozier Byrne. In the Rock section: 1st place went to the band - All These Things: (Jake Bitove, James Tebbitt, Andrew Keyes & Hugo Sherry). A sincere word of gratitude to all of the students who went forward for auditions and those who performed on the evening but were not listed among the prize winners. We are fortunate to have so much musical talent in the school and we look forward to the summer concert next May.

CAROL SERVICE

The Carol Service will take place on Friday 22nd December in the Sports Hall. You are all most welcome to attend at 11 a.m. and we are looking forward to seeing you there.

DIOSPOIREACHTAI – GAEL LINN

Many congratulations to the Senior Irish Debating Team of Connie O'Brien, Lindsay McGinn and Rebecca Winckworth on their success in the first round of the Gael Linn Inter Schools Debating competition in beating Mount Anville and Alexandra College.

PRISM MATHEMATICS COMPETITION

Congratulations to Jamie Judd of 6th Year who came 1st in Ireland in the PRISM Maths Competition. Jamie was the only person to score a perfect 20 out of 20 from 6,000 competitors. This is an outstanding achievement.

IRISH SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION SENIOR SCIENCE QUIZ.

The ISTA Senior Science Quiz was held recently in DCU with our two Senior Teams entered achieving 1st and 3rd place respectively. Congratulations to Team A who won 1st place (Edwin Jebb, Jamie Judd and Shane Smith) and Team B who won 3rd place (Cailbhe Doherty, Tom Moran and David Quinn)

EUREKA JUNIOR SCIENCE QUIZ

Congratulations to Ben Blunnie, Karl Brennan and Conor Lyons who came 2nd in the Eureka Junior Science Quiz which was held in Belvedere College in November. They were defeated by Belvedere by one point.

SENIOR ART TOUR TO FLORENCE

A group of over forty students travelled to Florence in October as part of the Leaving Certificate Art Programme with Ms. Katie Magee, Ms. Cathy McKean and Mr. Rory O'Connor. Their action-packed tour received very positive reports from all of the students.

We look forward to the 5th and 4th Year Tour to Copenhagen, 1st and 2nd Year Tour to Barcelona and the proposed 5th Year pilgrimage to Medjagorie in the Spring.

CHOIR

In the summer Newsletter, it was remiss of me not to include the achievements of the Senior School Choir in winning the AIMS Choral Festival 2006. Under the stewardship of Ms. Diane Owens, the choir has grown in reputation and excellence throughout the academic year and last May came joint first in the AIMS New Ross Choral Festival from 22 other schools, many of whom have a long and distinguished choral record.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday December 22 nd .	Carol Service	11 a.m.
Monday January 8 th .	School re-opens.	8.50 a.m.
Thursday 18 th January.	3 rd Year Parent Teacher Meeting	2 - 4 p.m.
Tuesday 23 rd January.	5 th Year Parent Teacher Meeting	4.15 – 6.45 p.m.
Tuesday January 17 th .	Junior Cup match v Wesley College	Greystones RFC 2.30p.m.
Thursday 1 st February	Senior Cup Match v St. Michael's School	Donnybrook 2.30 p.m.

Beannachtaí na Nollag agus na hAthbhliana.
Le gach dea – ghuí.

Tom Geraghty.
HEADMASTER.