



## HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER CHRISTMAS 2007.

*A sincere thank you to all of the staff, students and parents for your ongoing support of the school during the long four months since September. As always it has been an eventful term with a myriad of activities taking place on a weekly basis for all Year Groups. The commitment, energy and enthusiasm of parents, staff and students to studies, co-curricular activities and extra curricular activities and to the charitable work they have undertaken since September has been outstanding. St. Gerard's is characterised by a most positive and happy atmosphere on our corridors. No doubt the new Science Corridor and Computer Room, aligned with all the new classrooms that will come on line in January 2008 will add even more to the "happiness index" of the students.*

**Building update:** In September 2007 we moved into the Physics, Chemistry and Biology Labs, the Science Store Room, Computer Room and associated classrooms. We moved into three further classrooms on the ground floor as well as seven new classrooms on the first floor with adjoining two offices.

The Senior School Extension (Phase 2) is on schedule for January 2008 and we look forward to a further eight new classrooms, Music Room, Staff Room and recreation areas for the students.

With the classrooms complete, this will allow for the final pieces to be added, such as the recreation areas and locker spaces. The Board is also investing wisely in ICT in the classrooms. I know that our classrooms will be the envy of all when they are fully completed with all specifications in the Spring.

**New Staff:** We are delighted to welcome the following teachers to the Senior School Staff – Ms. Eimear O'Regan who is teaching Physical Education, Mathematics and Learning Support, Ms. Ciara Broe who is teaching Physical Education, Mathematics, Learning Support as well as Junior School Physical Education and Ms. Tara Cusack who is teaching Geography, Mathematics and Learning Support.

**Trinity Entrance Exhibition Awards:** Simon Courtney, Caelainn Hogan, Rebecca Winckworth and Thomas Moran of the Class of 2007 were awarded Trinity Entrance Exhibitions in November. These awards reflect most positively on the academic programme here in the school.

**UCD Scholarship Award:** Many congratulations to Shane Smith of the Class of 2007 on being awarded a UCD Entrance Scholarship in October.

**Leaving Certificate Results 2007:** The Leaving Certificate Class of 2007 left the school with many legacies. One of the challenges we place in front of each year group is that they leave an individual legacy that others will remember them by. One of the legacies that this year's group have left is an outstanding Leaving Certificate result pattern with a class average of 429 points per student. On reviewing the third level and other choices of this group, one cannot but be impressed by the range of courses and career selections which the students have chosen.

While this group was clearly a strong academic group no one should underestimate the fruits that their hard work bore. The other notable strength in 6<sup>th</sup> Year last year was the wonderful support that the students received from their teachers and parents and all three worked closely together.

**English Subject Inspection:** The Department of Education and Science invited the school to participate an English Subject Inspection in November. This is our fourth Subject Inspection in two years having received inspections in History, Science and Irish to date. We await a full written report in due course.

**Transition Year:** It has been a very busy term for Transition Year pupils. Only two weeks after returning to school, they travelled to Glenmalur for the Annual Camping Trip. The weather was kind to them and it was most successful. In October all Transition Year pupils took part in the Kairos Media Days in Maynooth where they produced a short television interview. Two groups of Transition Year students attended a Sports Expo Day and a Drugs and Alcohol Awareness day in Ballywaltrim, Bray. Both events were appreciated by those present. Also during November Transition Year students took part in the Annual Community Service week. A lot is gained from this experience and the reports back have been flowing. In December the students visited to Newgrange, Croke Park and went Ice Skating. In the final week of term, the students packed and delivered hampers for the Little Bray Conference of St. Vincent de Paul which gave the students the opportunity to help the local community at this time of the year.

As mentioned earlier in this letter, Transition Year students Ben Blunnie and Daniel Cooney qualified for the Young Scientists' Exhibition. Karl Brennan, Ben Blunnie and David Mulrooney qualified for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> heats of the National Forum on Europe and will take part in the 3<sup>rd</sup> heat in January. Theo Jebb won the first round of the Rotary Youth Leadership Competition and has reached the 2 round.

**Environmental Awareness:** Well done to 2<sup>nd</sup> Year A who planted a Wild Plant Garden adjacent to the wooded area to the rear of **the** school. The aim of the project is to encourage and promote bio-diversity and to protect our national environment.

**Anúna:** Many congratulations to Eabha MacMahon on 5<sup>th</sup> Year on being invited to join the International Singing Group – Anúna. Rebecca Winckworth of the Class of 2007 has also joined Anúna. We wish all of them every success.

**Royal Academy of Music Orchestra:** Many congratulations to Hayley O'Sullivan of 2<sup>nd</sup> Year on being awarded a place in the Royal Academy of Music Orchestra and we wish Hayley every success in her musical endeavours in the future.

**Social Awareness Programme:** The Social Awareness Programme this term included a presentation from Alcoholics Anonymous to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year students. The session started with a film showing the stories of young people who had become alcoholics, which was relevant and very emotive. The team of three speakers all members of AA imparted their stories to the students. The students were surprised by the speaker's honesty and forthrightness in discussing their very personal stories. At the end of the presentation, there was a question and answer session. This topic had a major impact on the students which made many review their attitude to alcohol.

The second presentation this term was from the ISPCC. The speaker was a past pupil and gave us an insight to the needs of the children served by the ISPCC. Rhona McGinn is a qualified Psychologist and works in the Childfocus service.

**6<sup>th</sup> Year Social Awareness Programme:** Sixteen to twenty students in our current 6<sup>th</sup> Year will travel to Uganda in July and August of 2008 to work with the Rock of Joy Foundation. The students themselves will forfeit their "sun holidays" and use the money that would otherwise have been "misspent" on such a venture towards covering their costs.

Directed by Aoife Ní Cuilleainain of 6<sup>th</sup> Year the group have, with the musical support of the wonderful vocalists in the school, produced a Christmas CD which has been well supported to date. This is the first CD that the students in the school have produced and certainly set standards for those to follow in the future.

***St. Gerard's Day Sugarloaf Sponsored Race for UNICEF:*** Once again, this Race was an outstanding success. Everyone of the students in both the Senior and Junior School participated in the run. Through the Sponsorship cards, €32,000 was raised for UNICEF – wonderful increase from €19,000 raised the previous year.

***Christmas Bazaar:*** As always in St. Gerard's is the Christmas Bazaar which was held on Thursday evening December 6<sup>th</sup>. The 5<sup>th</sup> Year students responded wonderfully to the challenge of organising this great event. Under the direction of Ms. Joan Dobbyn this year's Bazaar has exceeded all previous ones with a greater number of stands as well as raising in excess of €28,000 for local and national charities. Thanks to the Auctioneers, Mr. Mícheál McMullan, Mr. Victor Drummy and

Mr. Corry MacMahon for a most entertaining auction while at the same time raising in excess of €10,000.

I take this opportunity to thank all of the parents who provided items in particular for the auction and also for all of the other stalls throughout the school. Without the support of the students, staff and parents this event would not be the success that it is. The amount raised in three hours was an outstanding achievement. All of these monies will be well used. Well done to all.

**St. Vincent de Paul:** Once again we are delighted that our Transition Year Students will work with the St. Peter's Parish Conference of St. Vincent de Paul in fund raising, sponsoring, packing and delivering in excess of 200 hampers. The school are delighted to be associated with St. Vincent de Paul Hamper Appeal again and the enthusiasm of the students will ensure success of the project moving forward.

**St. Gerard's Ball:** The Ritz Carlton Hotel in Enniskerry hosted to the St. Gerard's Ball in November. Almost €70,000 was raised during the evening. The night was a resounding success due to the excellent food, entertainment and company. A special word of sincere thanks to the main organising committee of Fiona Farrar, Rosemary Roy, Pamela Madigan, Cathy Pearce, Carol Mulcahy, Helen O'Brien and Alison Stanley. (Check the names with Fiona again – GL)

**St. Gerard's Music Festival:** Twenty seven high class acts gave amazing performances in a wonderful atmosphere and set a new standard for the future at this year's Music Festival. Many congratulations to all who performed on the night and the following were the Prize Winners: Instrumental Section – Tom Cullen, Vocal Section – Eabha MacMahon and Lucie Shelly and in the Band Section, the winning band members were Jodie Crosbie, Tom Cullen and Hilary Repko.

**Díospoireachtaí Gael Linn:** Many congratulations to the Senior Irish Debating Team of Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Rebecca Fitzgerald, Dearbhail O'Crowley who have successfully progressed to the qualifying sections of the Gael Linn debates.

**Irish Science Olympiad:** Many congratulations to Issy Spencer-Higgins and Ben Blunnie in Transition Year who have been invited to attend for trials for the Irish Science Olympiad Team in DCU.

**Young Scientists' Exhibition:** Two Transition Year students – Ben Blunnie and Daniel Cooley are currently finalising work on their Young Scientist Project. This project is entitled "A study of sound penetration levels in different styles of housing". It is one of five hundred projects which have been passed by the screening judges (who had to select from over sixteen hundred submitted projects). We wish Ben and Daniel every success in their endeavours.

***Debating and Public Speaking:*** During the first term the students have participated in a number of debating and public speaking competitions. A number of both senior and junior cycle students participated in the L&H, Denny and AIB Phil Speaks Workshops which were both informative and enjoyable. Teams participated in the Wicklow County Council Debate, the BPW public speaking competition and the Mental Health public speaking competition.

Particular success was achieved in the Denny debates where Dearbhail O’Crowley and Ben Blunnie progressed to the second round as a team with Dearbhail achieving the award of best speaker on the night. Karl Brennan also got through to the second round as an individual speaker. In the junior competition Niall McLoughlin and Kevin Olohan progressed as a team and Pauric Behan went through as an individual speaker. Unfortunately, Pauric was narrowly beaten in the second round. The other second rounds are yet to take place.

There have been many other achievements. In the Blackrock Mace competition Dearbhail O’Crowley was awarded best speaker and our team of Ben Blunnie, Karl Brennan, and David Mulrooney progressed to the final in the National Forum on Europe, Public Speaking Competition.

This year a number of in-house public speaking competitions are to be held. To date the 1<sup>st</sup> Year competition has taken place. The standard was excellent and three speeches stood out, Cara Edwards, Jack O’Higgins and Laura Gallagher who won the competition. Well done to the whole year as every student participated. They show great promise for the future.

Best of luck to those who have progressed and also we look forward to more competitions in the coming terms such as the MUN, the Bray Lions, the UCD WGA and the AIB Phil speaks.

***Motivational Lecture Series:*** The Motivational Lecture Series was launched for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Years in December. We were most fortunate to have Ms. Caroline Casey of the Ashling Foundation speak to the students. Caroline is a very unique lady with a wonderful story to tell and her story had an immediate impact on her enthralled audience.

Ms. Jennifer Halford is co-ordinating a number of further lectures for the Spring and Summer terms.

***School Texting Service:*** The texting service continues to receive most positive feedback from the parent body of both the Senior and Junior School. This was clearly highlighted on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December due to extreme weather conditions the school had to cancel all bar one of its sporting fixtures in Rugby and in Hockey. Should you wish your mobile number to be used for this service and you have not already supplied it, please contact Trisha Wyse in the School Office.

**Chess:** Congratulations to our young Chess Grand-Masters (Ronan McCarthy, Hugh Headley and James Tebbitt) on coming in 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Co. Wicklow Chess Championships. It was a “knight” to be proud of. Ronan McCarthy won the “Brilliance” Award for winning a match with the least number of moves.

**Show Jumping:** The Annual St. Gerard’s Show Jumping Competition was held in Boswell Equestrian on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September. Forty five teams participated and the competition was won by Newbridge College with St. Gerard’s coming in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Thanks again to Heather Gilmor and Rosemary Crosse for superb organisation of this event.

## **SPORT**

**Junior Cup Rugby:** Our Junior Cup Team lost 8-7 to Newbridge College in December in the final qualifying game for this year’s Junior Cup. They have been drawn against The High School in the Father Godfrey Cup and this match takes place on Wednesday January 16<sup>th</sup> in Donnybrook – kickoff 2.30 p.m.

**Senior Cup Rugby:** Well done to all our Rugby teams on their progress to date. We look forward to the Senior Cup Campaign in January when the SCT will play De La Salle Churchtown in the Vinnie Murray Trophy on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January – kickoff at 2.30 p.m. in Kiltarnan in order to qualify for a place in the main Senior Cup Draw against Blackrock College. The Senior Cup Team have just returned from a successful tour in England where they played the Oratory School and London Irish.

The Under 13’s, Under 14’s, Transition Year and the Senior 2nds are also working and playing to their potential and we look forward to their League competitions in the Spring with confidence. Commitment and hard work will bring due reward.

**Golf:** Twenty-three school students (17 boys and 6 girls) are availing of golf lessons which are being held in the Glen of the Downs Golf Club and Greystones Driving Range. We hope to run an Open Competition for pupils with a G.U.I. handicap in the coming months. We will then run another Open Competition for those pupils without a G.U.I. handicap.

Congratulations to Michael Magee on his promotion to the Leinster Under 18 Golf Squad. The Junior Golf Team (Alan Joyce, Nicholas O’Loughlin and Christopher Clarke) narrowly missed out on qualifying for the All Ireland Finals. It has also been a very busy time for the Senior golf Team. The panel of Michael Magee, Adam Bowtell, Joshua Glynn, Alan Joyce, Rian O’Loughlin, Nicholas O’Loughlin and Christopher Clarke, participated in the Irish Strokeplay, Irish Matchplay Championships and the Golfworks Inter Schools Matchplay Championship.

**Tennis:** Congratulations to Alan Gleeson on winning the Irish Under 16 National Matchplay championships held on Westwood, Leopardstown recently.

**Hockey:** Well done to all the hockey teams who completed their first League matches. The standard of hockey has progressed largely due to the level of commitment the girls and coaches have to their teams. Well done to the Senior Girls who narrowly missed out qualification from their section. They had a fantastic result against Wesley College, drawing 0-0, in a highly competitive game. They showed real determination and belief. The Senior girls have just returned from their trip to Limerick. They played two very good schools, Crescent Comprehensive and Laurel Hill College. Although the results didn't go our way, the girls learned a lot and it was a great team bonding exercise in the run up the Cup Campaign. Well done too to the Junior girls who beat Loreto Dalkey 2-0 in their League Campaign. The Senior, Junior and new Minor cup Teams have all received their draws with the Seniors drawing Sutton Park away and the Juniors and Minors receiving byes in the first round.

**Cross Country:** It has been a very successful start to the Cross Country season for St. Gerard's. In the Kit Kat Leinster Schools League the Minors performed excellently to finish 1<sup>st</sup> in Round 1 with the Juniors also finishing well in 5<sup>th</sup> and the Inters in 4<sup>th</sup> position. The outstanding performances on the day were from Claire Foley and Emer O'Reilly. On Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November St. Gerard's hosted a very successful Wicklow Cross Country Meet. There was huge participation from the St. Gerard's athletes. Both the Under 13 Girls and Boys teams put in outstanding performances to finish in 1<sup>st</sup> place, the Under 15 Boys and Girls teams scored well to finish in 2<sup>nd</sup> place and the two Under 17 teams finished in 3<sup>rd</sup> place.

**All Ireland Sailing Championships:** Congratulations to the school Sailing Team on winning the All Ireland Sailing Regatta Championships held in Sutton Sailing Club in late September. The team of Ronan McGovern, 6<sup>th</sup> Year, Iain Byrne, 3<sup>rd</sup> Year and Oisín O'Neill, 2<sup>nd</sup> Year deserve great credit for this outstanding achievement.

**World Cyber Games FIFA 2007:** Well done to Michael Traynor of 6<sup>th</sup> Year on becoming the Irish Champion and qualifying for the World Cyber Games in Seattle in the USA in October.

**Parents' Association:** Congratulations to the newly elected members of the Parents' Association who took up office in October. A special word of thanks is due to the Parents of the Association, and in particular those who spent two years on the Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. David O'Reilly. The Parents' Association goes from strength to strength annually and through a web of subcommittees are doing excellent work to support the parent body in the school and the Senior and Junior School. We look forward to working with the new Committee under the chairmanship of Mrs. Pamela O'Farrell and Secretary, Mrs. Fiona Farrar.

## Dates for your Diary:

Friday December 21 <sup>st</sup>	Carol Service	11 a.m.
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Eve Mass	6 p.m.
Monday January 7 <sup>th</sup> .	Term commences	8.45 a.m.
Mon January 7 <sup>th</sup> /Fri 11 <sup>th</sup>	Science Week	
Thursday 10 <sup>th</sup> January	1 <sup>st</sup> Year visit to Young Scientist Exhibition	
Tuesday 15 <sup>th</sup> January	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Parent Teacher Meeting.	1.45 – 3.45 p.m.
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> January	JCT v High School	2.30 in Donnybrook.
Monday 21 <sup>st</sup> January	SCT v De La Salle	2.30 in Kiltarnan
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January	5 <sup>th</sup> Year Parent Teacher Meeting.	4.15 – 6.45 p.m.
Monday 4 <sup>th</sup> February	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Parent Teacher Meeting.	1.45 – 3.45 p.m.
Wednesday 6 <sup>th</sup> February.	Mock Exams commence.	

I wish you and your family a happy and peaceful Christmas season and together we look forward with confidence to the New Year and all that it will hold.

Siocháin Sé go raibh inár,

**Le meas,  
Tom Geraghty.**