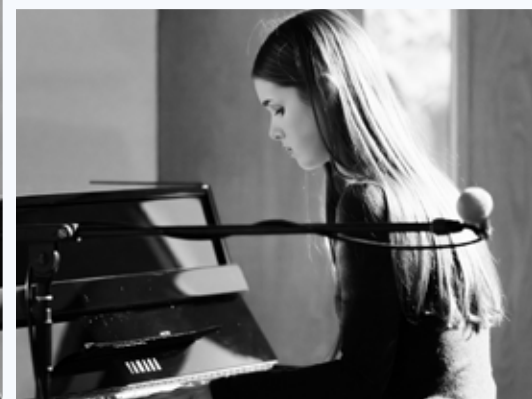


TY

St. Gerard's School
Transition Year
2025-2026



INTRODUCTION

What a year it's been. From the start of September we've been blogging, film making, blogging, camping, blogging, performing, blogging...the list goes on and you are invited to read it all below.

It has truly been a special year full of excitement and here's a chance to catch up on all that we did.

The Newsletter Team

Abigail Galligan, Alexandra Bruce Tamakloe, Alisa Kosacheva, Bibi Devereaux, Eabha Denvir, Hazel Carroll, Iseult Naidoo, Laura Keogh, Michael Kinsella, Millie Coulson, Nina Boydell, Paresia Phelan, Sean óg O'Neill, Síofra O Farrell

CAMPING

By Sean Óg O'Neill



On the 12th of September, our TY group embarked on their annual camping trip to Lough Dan, which every year fails to disappoint and is regarded as one of the most memorable experiences for all TY students. In the lead-up to the trip, we were sceptical about the weather forecast, which was not exactly ideal camping conditions.

With that, we gathered at the New Wing steps on Friday morning with all our necessary supplies. After a quick briefing from Mr. Petrie, Ms. Roy, and Ms. Fox, we boarded the bus and set off towards Lough Dan. The bus journey was roughly 35 minutes long, and

when we arrived, we didn't have far to walk to reach the campsite. Of course it began to rain the moment we stepped off the bus, but with some luck, most of us managed to find tent-pitching spots under the shelter of the trees.

Once the tents were up and we had all of our luggage safely packed away, it was time to cook up some lunch, which was shortly followed by our first hike of the two-day trip. We gathered at the campsite gate and set off on a 16-kilometre trek through the rugged Wicklow countryside. The group really seemed to enjoy the hike, and despite it being a long and gruelling four

hours in the heart of County Wicklow, the views were incredibly rewarding as we walked alongside the banks of Lough Dan.

By the time we returned to the campsite, we were exhausted and hungry, so we heated up the stoves, lit the disposable barbecues, and cooked a well-deserved dinner. As we then set up the bonfire, ready to enjoy a memorable evening roasting marshmallows and listening to some great musical talent in the TY group, some people decided to venture down to the pontoon for a dip in the icy waters of Lough Dan. By the time they returned to the campsite, everyone was well fed and the bonfire festivities were underway.

e sang along to the music until late, before settling down for the night to get some sleep in preparation for the next day's hike.

By 8:00 a.m. the next morning, most people were awake and ready to leave for the hike, which was a shorter hike along the Wicklow Way to a viewpoint overlooking Lough Dan and the surrounding countryside. Back at the campsite, we began to pack away our tents and pick up any rubbish, while Ms. Roy very generously cooked burgers for the whole camp. After a short wait for the bus to arrive, we were back at the school by 3:30 p.m. to be picked up.

As a year group, the camping trip was seen as a truly enjoyable and memorable experience, and it will continue to be one of the main highlights of the TY year.

Many thanks to our Year Head, Ms. Fox, and to our TY coordinators, Ms. Roy and Mr. Wall, for facilitating this event, as well as all the other teachers and coaches who helped out with the hikes and supervision.



DRIVER'S ED

By Éabha Denvir



On the 18th and 19th of September, some of the students in the year took part in the Driver's Education course. This course was facilitated by the Irish School of Excellence. This course was split into two parts, a classroom section and a practical section. The classroom section consisted of the ISOE student registration and doing a mock theory test. Students also took hazard perception tests. This is where students would watch a series of clips and click on their screen when you believe there was a hazard present. Finally we got to research and buy a car off Donedeal with a budget of 7,000 where we had to factor in insurance, tax and cost of tyres. We then found out how much insurance would cost for us on Redclick.

The second part was the practical section of the course. This was my favourite part of the course. During this section of the course we learned a lot of information that really benefited us. We did a crash course in mechanics where we learned how to change a tyre and the different parts of the engine.

After this we moved onto driving where we went around and did laps in the car park and even practised reversing. As well as this we had a fun activity, we had a chance to use the drunk goggles. This was very fun and it showed us the importance of not drinking and driving and it impairs our vision. In conclusion this was a very beneficial course for TY students.

RDA (RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION)

By Hazel Carroll

From October to May sixteen students have had the privilege to volunteer with students from St. Catherine's as part of the Riding with the Disabled Programme in Balensteskin and Festina Lente.

Every week four students travel to one of the locations and prepare the arena for the first group of students arriving, this consists of moving cones, poles, and setting up games designed to make the session fun and therapeutic.

When the students arrive we assist them in mounting their horse with two volunteers on either side for safety while one person leads the horse. It is a completely immersive experience for each child and the difference before and after is immense. The natural, rhythmic movement of a horse gently moves a rider's hips in a way that mirrors the human walking pattern. This motion helps strengthen core muscles, improve balance, and enhance coordination. At the same time, the soothing rhythm and connection with the horse stimulate the release of endorphins which can reduce stress, boost mood, and promote a sense of calm.

DEVELOP ME

By Laura Keogh



On Tuesday the 23rd of September, our year took part in the Develop Me 1 course. The game was called "The Lost Dutchman's Goldmine".

The day began in the LRC when our workshop instructors, Ger and Owen, organised around half our year into two competing groups. They then explained the strategic game that was ahead of us and provided supporting information in the form of cards and vital instructions. The main objective was to get to the mine making best use of the resources within the time period given.

One of the groups decided that one of the smaller teams should stay behind and gather information at the start, while the rest of the teams went off, which we now know is the best way to complete the game. Other groups decided to use different strategies and we experienced the consequences of these different strategies.

Once we finished the game we compared and explored the different strategies and the best solutions to win the game.

Overall everyone really enjoyed the Develop Me course. It was so much fun and it was also a truly insightful experience that challenged the way we thought about teamwork, strategy and showed us how important planning and preparation is. We will definitely use the skills that we learned and implement them in our daily life.

ST VINCENT DE PAUL - LETTER DROP

By Alisa Kosacheva



On the 27th of November, around thirty of our year went to Deansgrange at 10 am. We met at the local church and got split up into groups of 4 or 5. We had a member of the charity accompany us to each estate. We then merged with more people as we were the last group. We went around to the Honey Park Estate, where we dropped a letter into every house. The letter contained a paragraph about St. Vincent de Paul charity and where the money donated would go. The letters were asking people to contribute to the SVP annual Christmas appeal, which helps families in need.

In total, all the groups delivered around 3,000 letters over 1 and a half hours. This experience was incredibly valuable to our year group as we got to experience doing a charitable act first-hand instead of donating money and forgetting about the cause.

It was nice to spend time with different people in my year, or ones I would normally have talked to less. It was fascinating to learn more about this cause and talk to the representatives of St. Vincent de Paul. We also got to see more of Dublin, parts I never really went to, such as the Deansgrange parish.

Overall, this experience was incredibly fulfilling, and we are grateful to be part of helping this wonderful charity and the community around us.

FUTURE ACADEMY

By Sean O'Neill

This year, Future Academy was new to the TY Calendar but is a great addition to have for the future. It involves the use and understanding of AI, what it can be used for and how we can benefit from it. This course took place over three days with a different group of TY students taking part each day. It was great to see so many sign up for the course, especially since it was a new addition to the year.

The Multi-Purpose room facilitated the course which was run by Matthew Atherfold, a familiar face in the school environment.

He first went through how we can use AI tools to create websites and apps. We also discussed prompt engineering, identifying AI generated images and online media. As well as this, we pitched our idea to the group before we went around to the classrooms. We split into groups and browsed ideas for a website/app. Once we had our ideas we set up our site on an AI tool. We then



voted on each groups presentation which was great way to discover all the amazing things that AI has to offer. We also met a guest speaker who came in as part of the course to give a talk on Mindset in business and in life.

It was all round a really enjoyable experience and a big thanks goes out to Matthew for facilitating this inspirational course and we hope to see him continue to carry out this course in the coming years.

FOCUS IRELAND

By Alexandra Bruce Tamakloe



On the 10th of October, over 60 people in the year took part in a sleep out in aid of the charity Focus Ireland. This charity's purpose is to highlight, or shine a light, on the issue of homelessness in Ireland. Each participant set up their own fundraising page in which people could donate and sponsor them. The year set a target of €5,000 to try to reach together, by sending links to friends and families.

At around 7pm, the year came together outside Bray Dart Station with posters and Focus Ireland clothing, such as hats and T-shirts. We talked to several people about what we were doing and why we were doing the sleepout. We also met homeless people who told us their experience with homelessness in Ireland and how they haven't had much support from the community, and how grateful they were that we were doing the sleepout to raise much needed awareness to the community.

Due to safety reasons, the year group could not sleep out on the streets, so at around 12 am, we all split up into smaller groups and went to people's houses, and slept on the floors, in garages, and in tents outside.

In total the year raised over €14,000, which was €9,000 more than our initial target, with friends and family supporting the cause donating, as well as people that we talked to on the streets while on the sleepout.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

By Ines Farriols Marco

Four months living in Ireland and thousand new experiences!

The International students and I have already spent almost four months living a totally different life from our previous one. First of all, we are listening, talking, writing, and communicating in the English language a totally different language than the one we are used to. There are 20 international students and we all arrived with a different level of English, but we have all been improving day by day, overcoming our fears by talking and socializing with everyone (even on a bad day), since it makes us improve our English.

We are learning like an Irish student, doing the same as them, but with extra help! Ms Donovan is with us for all the problems we have and for organising activities. This week we had a Christmas lunch with all the international students, where we had an amazing celebration and we gave our secret santas! We had a trip to Dublin for Christmas and had already been to important sites around Wicklow, like Powerscourt and Avondale.

This is an amazing experience, especially because it's TY year, as we have a lot of activities every week, and we focus more on enjoying the activities and understanding them than studying. It is a difficult and at the same time incredible experience, I highly recommend it!



INTERNATIONAL INTERVIEWS

By Alisa Kosacheva

How are you liking the school so far?

Madeleine: "I like the people a lot, everyone is really nice and answered any questions I had."

Did you like St. Gerard's Day?

Inés: "Yes, I liked it. The quiz was fun, but I didn't like the walk."

What is your favourite part of being in Ireland so far?

Madeleine: "I like meeting new people, and making new friends with my year and other people. Tennis with Luis is very fun. The weather is bad here, it's very cold and it is always raining."

What was your favourite part of the school?

Inés: "My favourite part is the building, it is very pretty. I liked going camping, that was really fun. I like the teachers, Mr. Wall is my favourite."

This year we have many International students from all over the world, such as China, Turkey, Spain, Germany and Mexico. We caught up with Madeleine and Inés to find out how they are getting on and how they are finding school life in St Gerard's.



SELF DEFENCE

By Laura Keogh

On Monday, the 17th of November, our year began the Self Defence course. Monday was all about the theory of self defence. It was a bit unnerving as he talked about many different scenarios that could result in you needing to defend yourself that happen in everyday life.

The next day half of us had the practical part of the course. It was fun but also informative. We started off by practicing some basic striking moves. We then went through a few kicks and strikes and how to take people down.

After that the instructor went through the laws of self defence and it was eye opening to everyone to find out that if you kill somebody in self defence you can go to jail for manslaughter unless you can prove it is self defence which can be hard to do. Then we also went through a few scenarios and we had to give answers on what was best to do in that situation. It definitely made everyone realise that you have to be aware of your surroundings at all times even in your comfort zone.

Following that, we continued on with striking and making up our own combinations which was so much fun. But the part that everyone found hilarious was when we started the floor combat. We were told to try to pin each other down so all of us were rolling around on the floor trying to kick and drag each other down.



We ended the day by focusing on weapon defence. The main focus was on knives as they are the most common weapons that are used. We got in groups and practiced defending ourselves from one attacker and then multiple in a crowded space.

This course was very eye opening and interesting for everybody. We all had a lot of fun throughout the whole day and learned so much.

SIGN LANGUAGE

By Éabha Denvir

Over two days, our entire year group had the opportunity to take part in an interactive Irish Sign Language workshop with a visiting instructor.

We began by learning how to sign our names and where we are from, with everyone taking turns to present to the group. This was a great way to build confidence and get comfortable using sign language.

We then learned how to sign our age, including how to say whether we were sixteen or seventeen. To make the lesson more fun, the instructor rewarded students with sweets when they correctly demonstrated different signs, such as ages, places like Wicklow or Bray, and various actions. It was a very enjoyable way to learn.

After a short break, we played a game similar to Chinese whispers, but using sign language. We had to pass a signed sentence along with the group and see if it stayed accurate by the end. Which made it even more entertaining and fun to do with the group. At the end of the workshop, we had the chance to ask the instructor questions about her work and learn more about sign language and the resources available. It was really interesting to hear more about how sign language is used in everyday life.

Overall, the workshop was a fun and educational experience for everyone in the year group, and it gave us a new appreciation for communication through sign language.



DCG WALKING TOUR

By Iseult Naidoo

On the 26th of September, the TY DCG class went up to Dublin for the day on a trip organised by Mr Shelly. We went on a walking tour around the city.

We first visited Merrion Square which is a beautiful area surrounded by historic Georgian Townhouses, one of the last true Georgian squares left in Dublin. Oscar Wilde, the author, grew up in Merrion Square and we got the chance to walk by his childhood home. Merrion Park is situated in the centre of the plaza and is home to Oscar Wilde's statue, the National Memorial to the members of the Defence Forces, and the Rutland Fountain.

We took a short stroll towards the Mansion House, the residence of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, but we were interrupted by Barack Obama being escorted through the streets of Dublin. Dermot, our guide for the day, explained the importance the Mansion House had in the early days of the Irish Government, hosting the very first Dáil of the Irish Republic.

Afterwards, we continued on to the Free Mason's building on Molesworth Street. This is a worldwide fraternal organization for men that promotes brotherhood, charity, and self-improvement. It is covered in secrecy. We also visited the headquarters of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for its rare art deco design. Its murals depicted idealised labourers in an eerie "Socialist Realist" style, a prominent topic from the 1920's.

Ultimately, it was a really interesting and thought provoking tour which gave us an in depth insight into our capital city. Huge thanks to our teacher for organising the fantastic day out.

Ultimately, it was a really interesting and thought provoking tour which gave us an in depth insight into our capital city. Huge thanks to our teacher for organising the fantastic day out.

SVP HAMPER PACKING

By Nina Boydell

Leading up to Christmas the whole year, and a number of fifth years, volunteered to pack and deliver Christmas hampers for St. Vincent de Paul.

To start the day we were given a talk about the charity by the Youth Coordinator of St Vincent de Paul. It was an insightful talk that was very eye opening to the struggles that many families face, especially around Christmas and with the cost of living crisis.

Then it was time for action. Firstly, we were sorted into groups and began by gathering all the supplies needed for each hamper. This included anything from mince pies to pasta to shampoo. It was an amazing collective effort as there were around 450 hampers to prepare and deliver. It was interesting to see the different strategies groups had to sort each item and make sure every bag had the right amount of supplies. As the deadline to deliver drew closer the hall descended into a bit of chaos; we were all trying to make sure each person would receive everything they needed. There were so many different jobs such as collecting items, taking inventory, packing the bags and even people jumping on and flattening the boxes and packaging.

Eventually we were told to bring all the hampers into the changing rooms where they would wait to be collected by volunteering parents, students and teachers and delivered to each person in need. My friend and I volunteered to drop some hampers, and, like many others, we were also given a bag of toys to give families with children. We were so happy to know that these children would be getting Christmas presents this year because of our work. The hampers were delivered to houses in lots of different areas and it was great to be part of something that makes a tangible difference.

It was an extremely well organised day and I can say we all were so happy to help the other families and people in need, and make a real difference to the lives of people this Christmas. Thanks to Ms O' Connell, Ms Smyth and Mr Dent for all the work they put in.





SUSTAINABILITY TALK BY ROB RANKIN

By Michael Kinsella

As part of Sustainability Day, the TY year group attended a highly informative and engaging talk from Rob Rankin, founder and owner of Vagabond Tours, a family run Irish tourism company specialising in small group trips around Ireland's best landmarks. Rob started the business 23 years ago, inspired by his travels across Africa, and has grown it into a successful and independent company with a strong focus on responsible tourism.

Rob opened the session by quizzing us on our knowledge of sustainability and how it connects to business. One key point was how promoting a business as sustainable can actually increase profits because modern consumers are more conscious of their carbon footprint and prefer companies that care about the environment.

He also explained the steps Vagabond Tours has taken to reduce its impact. The company is a B-Corp, meaning it meets high standards of environmental and social responsibility, and is considered a positive place to work. Rob showed us that sustainability doesn't have to be difficult or complicated. Simple actions like switching to LED bulbs to reduce electricity use can make a real difference.

Overall, Rob's talk encouraged us to think more seriously about how we treat the environment and reminded us that improving sustainability, whether in a business or in everyday life, is both achievable and worthwhile.

BRENT POPE-ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

By Paresia Phelan

Brent Pope came in and spoke about his inspiring life story, sharing the experiences, struggles, and challenges that shaped who he is today, and, ultimately, led him to address the elephant in the room. He spoke openly and honestly about difficult topics that are often ignored, encouraging everyone to confront these issues, rather than avoid them. His talk was extremely eye-opening, as it challenged the way people think and helped create a deeper understanding of the importance of self-awareness, resilience, and open communication.

Brent Pope's talk, the "elephant in the room" refers to the tough topics he encouraged people to face openly-

such as personal struggles, mental health, mistakes, or challenges that affect our lives but are often left unspoken. His message was about having the courage to acknowledge these issues, talk about them honestly, and take steps toward understanding and growth instead of pretending they don't exist.

Brent Pope is a very inspiring person, and his powerful message motivated the audience to reflect on their own lives and attitudes.

Overall, his presentation left a strong and lasting impression on everyone in the room.

DCG WALKING TOUR

By Isuelt Naidoo



On Monday the 24th of November, a small group of students got the opportunity to go to the Butler's Chocolate Factory, the only one in the world. These were a group of Home Ec. students, and a few other students who applied for the additional spaces on the trip.

First we went into a small cinema style room, and learnt about the history of the cocoa bean, through a mini movie, about the Aztecs and how the Spanish colonised South America, bringing the cocoa bean back to Europe. We then learnt how Butler's was started by a woman as a small kitchen run business.

The final part of the tour consisted of sampling hot chocolate and chocolate orange bites. Then we got to decorate our own chocolate Santa figure with melted chocolate to take home with us. While we decorated, they showed us how they make their chocolate moulds, using a spinning machine that spreads the chocolate around evenly on the mould while also allowing the chocolate to set.

After the presentation we got a guided tour of the factory, walking through glass tunnel walkways above the chocolate factory, to see all the people at work. The main work was all done by machinery, even putting the chocolates in the boxes!

The bus home was filled with the smell of chocolate and chatter, as people were excited to try the chocolate and share the day with family and their friends.





CHRISTMAS SHOE BOX APPEAL

By Iseult Naidoo

This year, we organised a Christmas Shoebox Appeal for children in need through the Hope Foundation. Team Hope shoeboxes go to vulnerable children aged 2 - 14 in poverty-stricken areas of Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Each box had to contain each of the 4 Ws, Write, Wear, Wash and Wow. This ensures all children receive essentials as well as a memorable gift. Our TY YSI (Young Social Innovators) group created posters and gave classroom and intercom announcements, helping raise awareness and encourage donations.

Over the weeks leading to Christmas, students brought in shoeboxes wrapped with festive themed paper filled with toys, sweets, toiletries, school supplies and even thoughtful handwritten notes. Each box represented not just a gift, but a message of hope to a child who may otherwise go without any this Christmas.

These small gifts will travel across the world to children facing poverty, giving a reason to smile this holiday season. On the 19th of November, the collection tables were overflowing with stacks of colourful shoeboxes, each one packed with care and love and ready to be picked up the following day.

Giving back to those in need is a large part of what we do in Transition Year and I really hope we achieved that this Christmas. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our students, parents, and teachers we were able to donate over 200 shoeboxes to the Hope Foundation this year. We are so proud of our school community for showing the true nature of Christmas, you have helped make this season brighter for so many.



WORK EXPERIENCE

By Iseult Naidoo

One of the main parts of Transition Year is that we get 3 weeks allocated to us by the school to take part work experience or community service.

Each student can choose a business that they would like to work with and apply to them for a space. This was only our first of the 3 weeks, and we all came back with interesting stories and ideas on what we would like to do in the future. I interviewed a few different students to get some information on how their weeks went.

The first person I interviewed was Michael Kinsella. He did his work experience with his dad in EAGUSI, where his day-to-day work was very varied, making the experience both interesting and engaging. Some days were spent in the office completing administrative tasks such as writing and organising letters, printing and preparing documents, and helping with social media marketing by reviewing Instagram analytics. Other days involved going on site visits, where Michael learned practical, hands-on skills including measuring rooms, cutting carpets to fit properly, and observing how teams work together to prepare and finish spaces. He also spent time visiting different suppliers to source furniture and lighting, which helped him understand how interior design projects come together from start to finish. His favourite parts of the experience were the site visits and furniture sourcing, as they gave him a real insight into the interior design industry. An interesting fact Michael learned was that carpets are fitted slightly larger and then cut down to achieve a perfect fit. Overall, he would definitely recommend this work experience, as he found it enjoyable, educational, and a great opportunity to learn about the industry.

The second person I interviewed was Conor Khalifa. He did his work experience in Qatar with Film House. A typical day working behind the scenes would consist of doing jobs like getting props for advertisement videos, he also got to talk to the directors and hear about their jobs. When I asked Conor about his favourite day he told a really interesting story about how he got to be involved in a movie scene in Qatar airport where he got the opportunity to meet Emily Blunt. Conor said he enjoyed his work experience especially because he was able to get the chance to go abroad for it. He would definitely recommend doing something similar as it is a job that he will be definitely looking into in the future.

The third person I interviewed was Bibi Devereux. Bibi did her work experience at Universal Music in Dublin City centre. Her day to day would consist of getting the Luas into town for 10 o'clock. She got to meet and talk to all of the people in the office and hear about all of their individual roles in the office. The role she liked most in the office was the marketing position because she would have the freedom to put her own ideas to life. Her afternoons consisted of packaging PR boxes. Her favourite day was the second day where she got meet the opening act for Amble. The most interesting thing Bibi learned is how much thought and effort goes behind every song on the radio. She would highly recommend this work experience and it is definitely something that she would be interested in doing in her future

FILM WORKSHOP

By Nina Boydell



This term each form class was able to participate in a film workshop where we got to learn all about cinematography and even direct our own short films. Each class had about three hours with the equipment and a very knowledgeable instructor.

We were first told to film a short video on any object in the room. This was so he could see our camera skills and explain about portrait versus landscape, camera movement and angles. We could tell he had lots of experience and so we took all his feedback and criticism seriously. We were then split into groups and told to direct a short scene. He wanted us to create a story of conflict. The groups were very imaginative with their camera work and storyline. However, our instructor explained to us that none of our scenes were meaningful enough to actually be engaging and interesting to an audience.

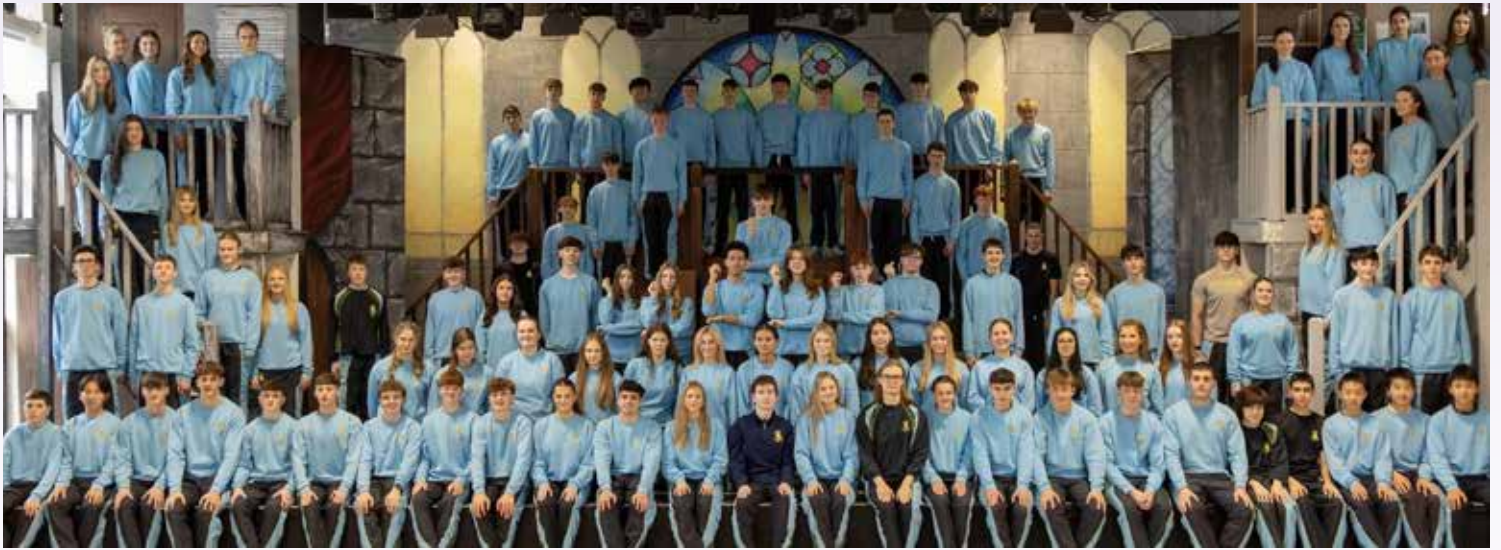
Now, with his guidance we re-shot our scenes and they improved immensely. There were so many different jobs you could be from an actor or director to a camera manager and even the person who operates the clapperboard.

Finally we moved on from using our phones to film to using the cameras, lights, microphone and monitor. My group and another were combined to create one short film. Although we sometimes found it hard to be serious in front of the camera and our improvisation left much to be desired I think it will turn out amazing. After each workshop is finished the takes will be sent off and properly edited into a film. I think everyone really enjoyed this workshop and I know we all can't wait to see our finished productions.



MUSICAL OVERVIEW

By Millie Coulson



This year our school production is *The Addams Family*, based on the iconic characters created by cartoonist Charles Addams. The storyline of the Addams family musical is a story about two families coming together in harmony. One family, The Addams family, is a quirky,

cynical and anything but a normal family. On the other hand the Beinekes are a disjointed and stereotypical family.

The musical centers on Wednesday Addams, who has grown up and fallen in love with a “normal” boy

named Lucas Beineke. Wednesday invites Lucas and his parents to dinner, and it ends up that secrets are revealed, as tensions rise, both families are forced to confront what it truly means to accept one another.

The show is packed with sharp wit, energetic dance numbers and great songs. The show concludes in Fester flying to his ‘true love’: the moon, Lurch shocks everyone by finally singing, and Morticia mellows and gives Wednesday and Lucas her blessing.

THANK YOU FROM THE NEWSLETTER

By Nina Boydell

Our TY production of the Addams family could not have happened without the fantastic direction of Ms. Olohan and Roisin Currid who are both so talented and helped us discover our talents these past few weeks. I think I speak for all of us when I say, as we began rehearsals we weren't the best dance crew out there, however under Roisin's amazing guidance we were able to put the steps together and create seven whole dance routines for the show. Roisin was an excellent teacher who is great at explaining and breaking down the dances into manageable steps while still allowing a bit of our own creative freedom to come through. As always a musical is not complete without, well, music. This is where Ms. Olohan helped us shine. Our year was never really known for vocal talent, and so we truly had no idea how it would sound with all of us singing together on stage. Thankfully, through Ms. Olohan's teaching and her experience we began to find our voices and 'embrace our unknown'. Although there were some challenging moments especially during the last week of rehearsals Ms. Olohan and Roisin brought us all together to put on, in my opinion, a spectacular performance and we are so grateful to them both.

INTERVIEW OF LEADS

By Siofra O'Farrell

From the start of this year we started rehearsing for the show. There is lots of parts in the show and so we decided to interview the cast and find out what they do and if they like the play etc. So here are their answers:

Alice - Molly

What is your favourite scene?

My favourite scene is the scene where we're playing the game full disclosure and we have to reveal our deepest darkest secret which is for me that my husband and I's relationship has lost its spark

Nina - Wednesday

Describe your role.

I play Wednesday Addams who is the daughter of the Addams family and she is very dark and moody and deadpan but then the whole point of the place she's having an identity crisis and becoming like a normal person

How did the audition go and did you think you were going to get the part?

To be honest, I was very nervous with the auditions because I hadn't done much singing before, only one time in the music festival and I wasn't sure how I would compare to the others. I definitely was not expecting to get Wednesday and I was actually auditioning for the role of Morticia cause I thought that would be more likely for me to get because less people are going for it but then when they called out my name was Wednesday I was so surprised but also so happy.

Hannah - Morticia

Describe your role.

Morticia is the mum of the family, she is very family orientated and she looks out for her husband and children wanting what's best for them at all times, she is perceived as very elegant and stern especially towards her husband which she loves very much, when she finds out that he is lying to her the whole time, her tone switches and she becomes a lot more distant to her family.

Noah - Gomez

If Gomez was a fruit, what fruit would he be?

He would be a passionfruit because he loves his wife very much and it's very exotic.

How did the audition go? And did you think you were going to get the part?

Originally I went for Lucas because I didn't want to sing or learn lots of lines, but then I gotta the part and had to learn lines and songs and do an accent. Now I'm glad that I got this part in the play as he is a very funny character and suits me well.

Frankie - Uncle Fester

If you were food, what food would you be?

Meatball sub it's a weird combination of food and it doesn't sit right with me.

If you could, what would you change about the play?

We cut the wedding scene, which is in my opinion not a good decision that we have made because the entire point of the play is that they get married and the two very different families come together and accept their differences. So my opinion removing the wedding is not a good decision.



INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME TEAM

By Iseult Naidoo

What made you both want to work on the costumes for this show?

Simon: I didn't get a main role, but I still wanted to be involved. Costumes seemed like a good way to stay part of the production.

Alex: I love seeing how clothes transform characters. It's incredible watching someone put on a costume and literally become that character.

Had either of you done costume work before this, or is The Addams Family your first time?

Simon: This is my first experience.

Alex: I've been fitted for costumes previously when I was working as a double, but I'd never been the person actually making the decisions or doing the adjustments. It's completely different being on this side of things.

When you first found out we were doing The Addams Family, what was your initial reaction?

Simon: I was initially disappointed because I thought there were lots of more well known musicals we could've done like Legally Blonde or High School Musical..

What changed your mind?

Simon: Once I actually listened to the music and saw the characters, I realised after all the auditions it was a great play, and it's been great fun to work on since then. The humor's dark and witty, and the costumes tell real stories.

Alex: I was surprised at first because there's not many well known musical numbers in the Addams Family but as time has gone on they're a lot catchier and it's been good to see it all come to life.

What exactly was your main role in the costume department?

Simon: We measured all the principals and featured ancestors, compiled everything for the designers, and looked around the junior school for spare pieces. We also got shoe sizes for the tap dancers.

Alex: Once costumes arrived, we organised and adjusted everything. Making sure shirts were ironed, wigs styled, ensuring dresses could actually be danced in. There were lots of last-minute fixes too.

What kind of last-minute fixes?

Alex: Costumes being too hot under lights, shoes not fitting right and makeup supplies being needed.

Which character's costume do you like most and why?

Simon: Gomez, definitely. The pinstriped suit and smoky jacket are insanely cool, sophisticated and smart which is perfect for him.

Alex: Morticia's dress. It's elegant and mysterious. It completely captures the essence of her character.

And what are your own costumes for the show?

Simon: I'm playing a scientist in the ensemble. I've got white trousers, a white top, and a lab coat. I'm adding safety glasses and gelling my hair up with silver hairspray to make it look mad-scientist-ish.

Alex: I'm a chef. I've got a chef's hat, a proper culinary jacket, and a white skirt.

The musical's in five days, how excited and ready are you guys feeling?

Simon: I think it's going to be incredible. It's gonna really show the work that we've put into it for the quality of the play and I'm really excited for it.

Alex: Yeah, I'm really excited for it all to be put together. Right now everything's being done section by section, but seeing everyone in full costume with all the acts pieced together is going to be amazing. I think people are going to love it.

REHEARSALS

By Hazel Carroll

Throughout the production process of 'The Addams Family', a significant number of rehearsals took place to ensure the show reached the highest possible standard. Rehearsals began almost immediately after the casting list was released, allowing the cast and crew to start developing their roles without delay. Under the guidance and leadership of Ms Olohan and Róisín, we were initially divided into two groups, each focusing on different musical numbers and choreography at scheduled times. This structure allowed us to work efficiently and gave everyone the opportunity to develop their skills in a focused environment.

Members of the principal cast attended rehearsals more frequently so that they could dedicate additional time to acting, character development, and dialogue work. This enabled them to fully understand and embody their roles in preparation for the performances ahead. As the production date approached, the rehearsal schedule became more intensive, with longer and more frequent rehearsals designed to bring together all aspects of the show.

Eventually, the two rehearsal groups merged, and full-cast rehearsals took place in the junior school hall from 10.10 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. These full day sessions



allowed us to perfect choreography and musical numbers, and to practice scene transitions and stage timing as a complete ensemble. We also held a full-day rehearsal on the bank holiday Monday from 2.00 p.m. until 6.00 p.m., which proved invaluable in preparing us for the final stages of production.

The dedication shown by everyone involved, such as the students, teachers, and production staff was truly remarkable. These rehearsals not only allowed us to develop our performance skills but also gave us the opportunity to build strong friendships and a supportive team spirit. Without the commitment and enthusiasm demonstrated throughout this process, the musical would not have been possible. Overall, the rehearsal period was an incredibly rewarding experience and played a vital role in bringing 'The Addams Family' to life for our school community.



INTERVIEW WITH MEGHAN MC DERMOTT

By Laura Keogh

What was your inspiration for the set?

The set was actually designed by Katie Magee. So I got given the design, but then we adapted just one or two things as far as colour. Just put in a bit of variety. Maybe it's a bit nerdy. You can say it's all that really old Gothic style.

What was the biggest challenge so far?

It's a really big set and then it actually has a lot of different vibes in it. So it's all really fun and interesting, but it's just a lot working out the scope of it.

How did you get involved in painting sets for these kind of productions?

So I went to art college and studied design for stage and screen but I specialised in character making. So makeup for film and TV. I worked in that for a year. But over COVID, I couldn't really work as a makeup artist anymore, so I moved more and more into painting. I found it's what I enjoyed more anyway.

What do you enjoy most by working on musical backdrop?

Musicals are so fun. because people ask me, would you work in film? Because everyone thinks it's so glam. But you get to do such different things for theatre and musicals in particular which is the fun of it, it's not super, super serious but you still get like a nice technical challenge.

How did you decide on like the colours and styles that fit, like the show?

I tried to keep everything fairly rough. So if you look at the set, there's not a lot of nice smooth blended colours. So everything's a little bit rough and lived in, making that was one of the big texture things. We tried to make sure some of the colours have warm tones so you're not just looking at something that's blue. A lot of the greys that have touches of brown in them. And some of the ones on those balconies either side they are a tiny bit purply. just so it's a little bit different.

How do you think the set helps tell the story?

I think it's really effective and that it has the interior and exterior at once, and even the fact the clouds come in, it kind of feels a little bit oppressive just like the stress of Wednesday trying to introduce her new boyfriend to her family.

Is there a specific scene or moment the set is designed to capture?

The sky, and specifically, the placement of those ironworks all have to be carefully run by Paul, who's in the lighting, because of that projection to the moon. So, you know, while it's lovely to kind of be an artist in your own right, with this kind of work, you're always working between departments and making sure you're not accidentally making a headache to someone else. So that was a big thing to get right. and make sure the moon could come in and fit and look well.

What's your favourite part of the whole set?

Probably the stairs. I always love a bit of set that moves and gets used in different ways. And it was quite fun for me to paint because it's always just a big challenge.

What advice would you give to students interested in things like set design and painting?

I would say watch loads of films and theatre. Like what you're doing now is brilliant because like you're kind of getting to see everything. You can do courses and even email local theatres to get a bit of a taster and see what it's like. And just keep painting and drawing as it all comes down to practice.

REVIEW

By Sean Óg O'Neill

The annual TY Musical is one of the biggest events of the school year. We found out that our TY production was going to be 'The Addams Family' earlier in the school year, just after our first round of auditions. The show was scheduled for the 10th to the 12th of February 2026. The rehearsals started straight after Christmas Holidays. Auditions for main roles began in November and by the time Christmas Break came around, the full cast was chosen and ready to begin rehearsals once back for school in the New Year. I was excited to take part in the ensemble and it was fun to spend a few hours enjoying ourselves every week. One of the most memorable moments was in rehearsals. Learning and practising the dances and songs for the Ensemble seemed to be an enjoyable experience for all, including those who didn't receive a main role. Once we got the all clear to use the Junior School Hall for rehearsals, everything began to fall into place. After a few rehearsals in the Junior School Hall we finally got to perform our dress rehearsal in front of the 1st Years. Naturally, not everything went exactly to plan as of being the first live performance but as a group we reflected on this and improved our organisation and timing with the help of Rosin and Ms. Olohan. The main cast were, as ever, fantastic and didn't let a few minor mishaps deter them from their acting. That evening we held the first, open to everybody production and it went amazingly. Any previous mistakes were wiped clean and everybody really enjoyed performing. Every other performance was just as good if not better than the one before it and on the final evening performance on Thursday, everybody was buzzing to get on stage.

The main cast had their best all round performance as a group and brought a real sense of emotion alongside their acting skills. With this being the last show, everybody wanted to give it their all which is exactly what happened and Thursday night was the best performance by far. Once the last scene had ended and all the bows were finished, Ms Olohan, Rosin, and all of the staff behind the set, organisation, lights, sounds were given their well deserved recognition from our Headmaster, Mr. Petrie. It was truly a wonderful experience for everybody to be apart of and something we can all look back on for our TY year in St. Gerards. We look forward to seeing the future performances.



DEMENTIA TALK

By Éabha Denvir



On the 8th of December, Transition Year students were given a talk by volunteers from St Joseph's Dementia Care, to talk to us about the importance of understanding what it's like for someone to live with dementia and how it affects them. The two volunteers were lovely and they went into depth about the different forms of dementia and also the specific symptoms that tend to appear at different stages. This helped us gain a better understanding of how the condition affects people in various ways.

They told us what the homes at the Centre were like, saying they are solely dedicated to dementia care and follow the Butterfly Model, which focuses on feelings, comfort, and creating meaningful moments. They described how the homes are designed to feel homely rather than institutional, with a warm atmosphere that helps residents feel at ease. They also talked about the skilled and compassionate team who work there, and how the homes stay actively involved in the community while offering support for carers so families can stay connected and feel supported too.

They talked about how a normal aged brain is 1300g and a brain impacted by dementia is 520g. They used a really effective metaphor for dementia. They used the saying that their memories were on a bookshelf and when you live with dementia, there are times when it feels like an earthquake in your brain. The older memories are the strongest, so people can sometimes be transported back into an old memory which the speakers emphasised on Connect not Correct. This was a very eye opening talk.

DIFFERENCE DAY

By Hazel Carroll

Every year, the Transition Year students at St. Gerard participated in "Difference Day," an initiative organized by Denis O'Reilly and his team. This day brings students together to undertake projects for communities in need, transforming facilities and surroundings to better serve the local people. To fund this year's projects, our year group first completed a sponsored hike around Howth Head, raising a portion of the necessary funds through collective effort. This year, we were fortunate to work with Scoil Mhuire in Shankill. From the moment we arrived, they welcomed us with open arms and provided incredible hospitality throughout the day. We were divided into four groups to each take on different projects. Group one constructed a brand-new outdoor classroom, group two built raised planting beds for a school garden, group three renovated an existing nature trail and Group 4 focused on a general cleanup and rejuvenation of the school grounds.

The day was a steep learning curve for many. Students gained hands-on experience with construction tools from mastering battery drills to learning about circular saws, challenging us in new and exciting ways. However, the most rewarding part was the interaction with the students of Scoil Mhuire. Their excitement at seeing their school transform was infectious, and it was heartening to see how eager they were to assist with the smaller tasks we assigned to them. By the end of a long day of tiring, physical labor, we were able to sit back and admire the transformation. The project was a true testament to the phrase "Many hands make light work." It was an incredible opportunity to give back, the memories of the day and the impact we left behind, will undoubtedly stay with us for a long time



HOWTH HIKE

By Laura Keogh

On Tuesday, 14th April, our year took part in a sponsored walk around Howth Head to raise money for Difference Day. We began the day by meeting at Bray DART station, where most students travelled together to Howth. Some students chose to meet at the school and walk from there, while others made their own way to the station.

Upon arriving in Howth, we set off on the green route of the cliff walk. Although the weather started off with a drizzle, we were well prepared with raincoats and jackets. As we continued, the rain became heavier, creating a misty atmosphere along the route. When the mist briefly cleared, many of us were surprised to

realise just how close we had been walking to the edge of the cliffs!

After completing the walk, we were given some free time to get food. Many students enjoyed a meal, with fish and chips proving to be a popular choice after the long, wet walk.

We finished the day by taking the DART back to Bray, feeling tired but happy after a memorable and rewarding experience. The sponsored walk was not only a fun day out, but also a meaningful way to raise money for a good cause.

TY SPORT

By Laura Keogh



ST GERARD'S DAY

By Micheal Kinsella

This St. Gerard's Day was so much fun. The entire Senior School gathered in the sports hall where Mr Petrie began the day with his short speech. Soon after Mr Drummy started the annual Gerard's Day quiz. Between the rounds of general knowledge, Sports and Gerard's Trivia we had games of Guess the Teacher, Darts and musical chairs.

Once we finished our morning of fun activities we got ready to pile onto buses to the Sugar Loaf. We took a new route for the walk this year and everyone was ready to return back to the school for some well deserved hot chocolate and cake. Everyone rested at home before arriving back at 7 o'clock for mass where we had the Junior and Senior School altogether. It was a brilliant day and thank you to all members of staff for organising such a memorable and important day in the school's calendar.

TY SPORT



YSI BABYBANK

By Abigail Galligan

 YOUNG SOCIAL
INNOVATORS



In Transition Year at St.Gerard's, as part of your timetable, there are module classes taken twice a week for six weeks these range from career guidance with Ms.Scallan to public speaking with Mr Wall. As one of 4E's modules they took part in YSI with Ms.Ní Fhéinneadha YSI stands for Young Social Innovators. Our role in this module was to come up with an innovative way to raise money for a charity.

As a class we considered many ways we could make money for charities until we decided on our baby bank. We wanted to do more than just raise money but be able to give physical thoughtful items to families.

Once we had our ideas we had to start by dividing up the jobs into poster makers, people to give classroom announcements, people to give intercom announcements and people to sort through the donated items. These jobs really tested our social, artistic, organisational and over all confidence skills.

The baby bank instructions were very simple we asked people to please bring in anything they thought was suitable for a new mother in a financially difficult position. These items could include nappies, bottles, blankets, clothes and wipes. After 2 and a half weeks we had the whole front of the schools entrance full of items for donation but we felt as though we could do more.

Then in class Paresia Phelan and Alannah Smith came up with the idea that they would teach our class how to crochet and we could make baby hats. The process was not easy as it took a while but they managed to teach us how to make hats and they turned out adorable. We made a lot of hats and now we have the crocheting skills to carry with us into the future. Helping others is a large part of what we do in Transition Year to give back and I really hope we managed to make a family's day just that little bit easier.

PARIS TRIP

By Alexandra Bruce-Tamakloe

Our Transition Year group set off for Paris on Friday, 17 April, with excitement starting long before we boarded our 9:30 a.m. flight. After meeting at the airport at 7:30, we were soon on our way, and by midday we had landed in a bright, bustling Paris.

Our first stop was the hostel, followed quickly by a metro trip to the Eiffel Tower. Seeing it in person felt completely different from photos, bigger, more detailed, and a little magical. A calm boat trip along the River Seine followed, giving us stunning views of the city's landmarks. We then walked to the Arc de Triomphe and climbed 175 steps for incredible views over Paris. After a well earned pizza dinner, we headed back to the hostel for an early night.

Saturday was all about Disneyland Paris. After a quick buffet breakfast, we took the metro and train to the park, where we spent the day exploring in groups. A colourful parade welcomed us, featuring characters from classic Disney films. There were millions of rides to choose from, but queues ranged from 20 minutes to nearly 2 hours. We stayed until the spectacular fireworks lit up the castle that night.

On our final day, we visited Sacré-Cœur and Montmartre, enjoying the quieter streets and beautiful views. A quick shopping stop followed before we collected our bags and made our way to the airport, which surprised us with its stylish shops and plush waiting areas.

The trip was a brilliant mix of sightseeing, fun, and time with friends. Disneyland was a highlight for many, and the whole weekend left us with memories we'll be talking about for a long time.



DIY SKILLS

By Laura Keogh

On the 13th of October, a group of students took part in a DIY skills course. It was a hands-on and practical course where we completed real-life tasks that tested our patience, precision, and teamwork.

We started by learning how to rewire a plug, something most of us had never done before. With the help of our instructors, we identified each wire (live, neutral and earth) and learned how to strip, connect, and secure them safely.

Next, we moved on to tiling a wall, which was extremely amusing. We measured the tiles carefully, spread the adhesive, and pressed each tile into place, trying our best to keep everything straight and even.

Finally, we sawed pieces of wood and built a picture frame. Measuring accurately was key and so was learning how to use a saw safely.



Once our pieces were cut, we glued them together to make our very own frames.

Through this course, we discovered how valuable learning these practical skills can be in everyday life especially as we get older and have our own houses and need to save money. We learned the importance of working carefully and accurately. Each task required not just focus, but also creativity. From lining up the tiles neatly to making our picture frames.

This experience has made all of us who took part appreciate the effort that goes into everyday repairs and handiwork and how important it is to be able to do these tasks by ourselves. It was fascinating to see how these things that we often overlook, which can be so small and

simple is such an important part of everyday life. The course was a great lesson in precision and patience and it's something that can come in handy later on in life. Most importantly, the workshop, showed all of us that with a bit of effort and confidence, we can fix or create things ourselves instead of relying on someone else.



COCO'S LAW

By Millie Coulson

Coco's Law, formally known as the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020, is a landmark piece of Irish legislation designed to criminalize severe online bullying, harassment, and the sharing of intimate images without consent.

It was enacted in February 2021 following years of tireless campaigning by Jackie Fox after the tragic death of her 21-year-old daughter, Nicole "Coco" Fox, in 2018.

On Monday the 20th of April, we had a very emotional and effective talk about Coco's law. Coco's actual mother Jackie Fox came in and spoke to the fourth and third years, making the talk extremely raw and heartbreaking.

She introduced herself and then she started talking about Nicole (Coco) she told us lots of funny stories about Nicole's childhood.

Then she began to talk about the horrible tragic events that engulfed her life when Nicole was only eighteen years old.

Following her 18th birthday, Nicole was subjected to three years of relentless physical and online bullying. Nicole was targeted by twentyfive women that focused solely on one thing, tormenting her.

Jackie spoke about how much Nicole, her daughter loved singing, dancing and McDonald's, which helped all of us relate to her and see how innocent she was making this already devastating talk even more unbearable.

After three years of hell, the bullying became too excruciating, leading to her suicide in January 2018. She however, did leave a legacy behind her. At the time of her death, Irish law did not adequately address cyberbullying,

meaning her abusers could not be held accountable. Her mother, Jackie Fox, advocated for new laws to ensure no other family would go through the same tragedy as she had experienced.

Jackie Fox ensured that Coco's Law became a powerful tool to hold bullies accountable. Since its introduction, it has been used to address hundreds of complaints regarding intimate image abuse and harmful communications. The law is now a cornerstone of Irish efforts to make the internet safer, particularly for young people.

This talk affected everyone listening to it greatly and left an inedible mark on us all. We will forever hold this sad, profound story with us.

TALKS

By Paresia Phelan

Niall Kennedy visited us on Monday morning and spoke openly about his life, including the challenges he faced growing up, his career as a professional boxer, and his struggles with mental health.

He talked about how difficult it was to deal with pressure, both in sport and in everyday life, and how for a long time he kept his feelings bottled up. He shared how important it is to speak to someone when you're struggling and not be afraid to ask for help. His main message was about building resilience by focusing on routine, structure, and small daily habits that help you feel more in control. He also gave us simple breathing techniques to use during stressful and overwhelming times.

Conor Harris visited the school later that day to speak to our year group

about his experience with addiction and recovery. He explained how he began using drugs as a teenager and how his addiction quickly escalated, leading to serious challenges in his life. Conor was honest about the impact of addiction, including the difficulties he faced and the steps he took to seek help. He emphasized the importance of making informed choices and reaching out for support when needed. His talk served as a powerful reminder of the dangers of drug use and the possibility of recovery.

On Wednesday Tony O'Reilly came to speak to our year group about his personal experience with gambling addiction. He explained how it all began with a small bet, which quickly spiralled into a serious addiction that took over his life. Tony shared how his gambling problem

led him to steal large amounts of money from his employer, resulting in a prison sentence. Despite these challenges, he used his experience as a turning point and decided to change his life. After his release, Tony became a qualified addiction counsellor and now works to help others struggling with gambling.

He also raises awareness about the dangers of gambling addiction, emphasizing that recovery is possible with the right support. His talk was a powerful reminder of how addiction can affect anyone and the importance of seeking help.

Overall, these talks were really helpful. They opened our eyes to the struggles that people face privately and made us realise that there is always help as long as we are willing to embrace it.

BARISTA COURSE

By Hazel Carroll

Throughout the week, many people from our TY group took part in a barista course run by the Dublin Barista School. We all arrived not entirely sure what to expect, but definitely excited. We started the morning with a quick icebreaker, chatting about our go to coffee orders and favourite singers, which helped ease everyone into the day before the real work began.

To kick things off, we learned the basic theory of coffee making and the different parts of the machine. We discovered that making even one shot was surprisingly tedious. We weighed the portafilter, reset the scale, added the grounds, tamped with the right pressure, and then "blessed the coffee" by brushing away any loose bits so they wouldn't get stuck in the machine. Once everything looked perfect, we locked the portafilter into place, started the machine and

timer together, and hoped to see that steady golden stream for a full 30 seconds. Afterwards, we cleaned our stations and were even graded on our tidiness.

In the afternoon, we moved on to calibrating the grinder. I hadn't realised how important this was until I tasted the difference: too coarse and the coffee is weak, too fine and it's bitter enough to make your eyes water. After a few attempts, most of us finally got our shots running at the right speed. Then it was time for the part I had been most excited for: milk frothing.

Milk frothing turned out to be one of the hardest skills of the day. The steam wand has to be at the perfect angle or the milk either stays flat or explodes out of the jug. We learned to keep to the right temperature so it wouldn't burn, and once we got the

basics down, we even tried some simple latte art.

For the final part of the day, we put everything together by running a mini café. Each person had a role, from making espresso shots to delivering drinks, and our TY year came in to place real orders. The room suddenly felt like a real coffee shop in the middle of a lunchtime rush. If a station got too messy, it would be shut down for five minutes, so staying organised was essential. Thankfully, we survived without any closures, and it gave me a real appreciation for how fast paced café work can be.

Overall, the day was incredibly enjoyable and genuinely useful. We all left with new skills, a much better understanding of the craft of coffee making, and definitely more admiration for baristas everywhere.

