



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

The Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate exams are well on the way at this stage and I wish all students strength and stillness to give their full mindful attention to the exams they face.

This is the last parent newsletter for this academic year, and here are a few notices that you may be interested in, so it is a little bit longer than usual.

Assembly and Philosophy Themes

The aim of the weekly themes is to promote curiosity, critical thinking and kindness. Some of the themes for the past few weeks have been:

How do you have real conversations?
How do you practice “May all be happy”?
How do you move from Darkness to Light?
Why look upstream?

To see the full list of weekly themes from the past year and read more about them please click [here](#).

In addition to the philosophy themes, each weekly philosophy class explores these topics and more. A special thank you must be given to our Philosophy teaching team of Dr. Telford, Mr. Kortenhorst and Ms. Franklin for all their stimulating lessons.

Teaching and Learning

This year there has been focus on developing literacy, numeracy, student engagement and effective feedback. In literacy, the objective has been to increase confidence in speaking out loud in class. In numeracy, the focus has been to improve perceived ability in numeracy and to understand how numeracy is used in all subject areas. We have also placed huge emphasis on how feedback is provided and can empower future learning. Research indicates that effective feedback is one of the most important factors in learning. Some examples of strategies used this year include giving students post exams reflection sheets that identify strengths, areas of improvements and space for personal reflection and future actions to take place. We hope this emphasis on feedback will develop in our students the habit of reflection as this will have a positive impact on their learning.

In addition we have placed a huge emphasis on developing a peer coaching strategy where teachers collaborate together and visit each other’s classroom.

All of this has been enabled by a myriad of staff meetings looking at how to improve learning habits by tweaking different aspects of our learning and teaching model.

Particular mention must be made of two of our Math's teachers, Mr. Brady and Ms. Creaney who presented their work on new teaching methodologies in Maths at the recent Maths Counts Conference in UCD.

This year, our Art Department had a subject inspection from Department of Education and Skills and the feedback report can be found [here](#). It is worth mentioning that the report complimented the overall quality of teaching and learning as very good. Well done to Ms. Sweeney for all her work in the Art Department.

Theme weeks

There have been many theme weeks during the year focusing on particular aspects of academic, personal and social development. These have included

Science Week (click [here](#))

Philosophy Week (click [here](#) and [here](#))

Sechtain na Gaeilge (click [here](#))

Literacy Week (click [here](#))

Green Schools Week (click [here](#))

Active School Week (click [here](#))

Thank you to all respective teachers for organising these weeks and the many students who engaged in the various activities.

School Events

There have been many school events during the year including the various theme weeks, parent meetings, Open Days, Evolving Education Seminar Series, Annual Church service Halloween Dress up and Christmas Carol Service. There are many posts on the website illustrating these events and I hope you get the chance to read some of them. Some of the more recent ones are listed here

Celebration and Prize Giving Night

Celebration and prize giving night took place on Thursday May 17th. It was a great night of celebration enjoyed by all. To see the prize winners for each category please click [here](#).

Literacy Week

Literacy week took place from May 8th to May 11th and included activities such as a dress up assembly, a talk by an author and our annual speech competition to name but a few. To read more please click [here](#).

Launch of Transition Year Book – The Door Handle

Recently our Transition Year students, coordinated by Ms. Maguire-Timmins, put together a great compilation of short stories and essays as part of their English studies. To see the finished book please click [Door Handle 2018](#).

School Trips

Our 1st year and 2nd years visit Carlingford Adventure centre for their class trip and our 5th years travelled to Holland for their class trip. The feedback from the trips was that all, both students and teachers, thoroughly enjoyed the company of each other. For more information and pictures please click [1st and 2nd Year Trip](#) and [5th Year Trip](#). Thank you to all the teachers involved, Mr. Kortenhorst, Ms. Wyer, Ms. Swan, Ms. Sweeney, and Ms. Breen for organising the trips.

Other web posts describing recent events that may be of interest include:

[Student Council Development Workshop](#)

[Business students receiving their Ambassador School Award](#)

[One School One Book Initiative](#)

[2nd year student wins Science Competition](#)

[Making Weather stations](#)

Graduating 6th Years

We wish our graduating class of 6th years best wishes in the exams and in the decisions they are making about their future studies. At this point it is worth mentioning Eve O'Reilly and Van Tran who received full marks in their entrance portfolios for their respective colleges of choice. Special mention must also be made of Aditi Verma and Akila Anand who received special commendation from the Institute of Physics for outstanding work in Physics. To see some pictures of their last day please click [here](#).

Transition Year

Transition Year students have had a busy past few months. To get a flavour of the many activities they have been involved in please follow these links:

[TY do Radio Transmission Course](#)

[Building Hoovers in Transition Year](#)

[TY do Driver Education Course](#)

[TY present at the ECO-UNESCO finals](#)

[TY group present at Young Environmentalist awards](#)

[Transition Year Display Night](#)

The Transition Year students produced a fantastic performance of the Midsummer Night's Dream. They delivered scintillating performances to enthralled audiences over four days in the Player's theatre in Trinity College. It really was impressive to see how this Transition Year group have grown in self-confidence, strength of character and unity throughout the year. Well done to all involved, in particular the drama coordinator Mr. Casserly and the Transition Year coordinator Mr Telford. For some pictures from the performance please click [here](#).

Physical Education and Sports

It has been an active year in Sport, with some great performances. The Ultimate Frisbee Senior Girls reached the final of the Murray Cup, winning the "Best Spirit" of the competition award. It is noteworthy that the team won this award as we believe in John Scottus that sport not only nourishes the body, heart and mind but the spirit too.

Both our hockey and soccer teams have been very competitive, again winning many games. Particular mention must be made of our Senior Girls hockey team who qualified

for the quarter final of their league. Our Athletics team have been training all year in all types of weather and we must make particular mention of Julia Ivanova who competed in the Leinster finals recently. For the most recent May Sports update please click [here](#) and to see our Athletics team in action please click [here](#).

Sports Day

In the build up to sports day 'Active Schools Week', encouraged students to become more active during their down time. Activities included, Sports Quiz, Healthy Breakfast and the Teacher/Student soccer game (see [here](#) for pictures), which the teachers won for the first time in a long while!

Our first Sports day in our new grounds at Old Conna took place on Friday May 4th in glorious sunshine. The day was a great success with many great examples of individual and team performance. There was a great spirit and engagement throughout the day as students competed in various competitions, including our new long jump facility. For pictures of the event please click [here](#).

Well done to all our students involved in Sports this year and to Mr Pender and Ms Sweeney for organising such a comprehensive sports campaign.

Music

Our school choir have been practising every week since the start of the school year and performed brilliantly in the Celebration and Prize Giving on May 17th. Well done to Mr. Dempsey, Ms. Franklin, Ms. Telford, Mr. Telford, Mr. Kerr and Mr. Kortenhurst for supporting and directing the choir.

In ensuring that Music education is a core aspect of the education of all students, from next August 2018, all students in 1st and 2nd year will be studying Music.

In addition all students in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year who are studying Music, will be encouraged to be members of the John Scottus School Choir. Others will be encouraged to participate in other Music Making activities such as instrumental performance and, subject to numbers and types of instrument played, be actively encouraged to form ensembles such as a Band or Orchestra, under the guidance of Mr Kerr. In addition, students of more senior years who sing in Church Choirs such as St Bartholomew's will be encouraged also to lend their voices and talent to the JS School Choir.

The Music Department also plans to invite local Music instrumental teachers to come to Old Conna from the start of the next school year, to give lessons in various musical disciplines, if the demand is there. We also have a number of classical musical instruments which could be borrowed by students including a violin, cello, a double Bass and a clarinet.

John Scottus Mindfulness Practice in Schools Conference

On April 28th, the 4th Mindfulness Practice in Schools Conference took place in Old Conna. John Scottus School act as coordinators for the event as the practice of Mindfulness has been a key part of the ethos of the school since it started in 1986, as reflected in the school motto "Delight in the Present". For more information about the event please see <http://mindfulnesspracticeinschools.ie/>

Teachers

There will be some changes in our teaching staff next year as Ms. Breen is retiring, Mr. Pender is taking a one year career break and Ms. McGoldrick will be taking parental leave from August to December. The recruitment process to replace all three teachers is nearly complete and we look forward to introducing our new teachers to you next August. A special thanks must be given to all staff for their commitment, enthusiasm and hard work throughout the year.

Management

The daily management of the school involves a variety of activities from refining the ethos of the school to improving the way learning and teaching takes place in every respect. To help manage all these activities we had a Senior Management team in places that comprises of Ms. Franklin, Ms. Swan, Mr. Kortenhorst, Mr. Telford and myself. Ms Creaney also contributed enormously with learning support and Ms. McGoldrick with School Development Plans. In addition we have our Premises Manager and Bursar Ms. Madden who looks after finance, transport, catering and buildings maintenance. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Senior Management Team for all their hard work, enthusiasm and creativity when dealing with the many issues that have arisen.

Following a review of the middle management structure we have created a new set of middle management posts in the school which are Wellbeing coordinator, Learning and Teaching coordinator, Transition Year coordinator, Learning support coordinator and Community coordinator. Next year, this will be the team who will drive and implement the many initiatives that will help the school become even better at all we do.

Communications

We endeavor to ensure there is good communications through the school community using parent meetings, the website, parent newsletters, class representative meetings, Board of Management meetings and staff meetings. Your input is greatly appreciated and we greatly encourage parents to participate in the various structures in place.

Administration and support staff.

We are very fortunate to have great support staff in Ms. Telford and Ms. Griffin as administrative support, Mr. Farren as grounds man and Ms. Salmon in cleaning. Thank you

Catering

Our Catering policy was reviewed again this year and indeed there continues to be strong support for the school in providing food as part of a wholesome education. As part of the ongoing process to refine what is offered there is a student food committee which meets on a regular basis and surveys on food conducted on an annual basis. A big hit at the moment is porridge with fruit for the early morning break at 10.30. Our food menu changes during the course of the year. To see the current menu please click [here](#). In addition for those students who have allergies or food intolerances please complete the Student Allergy Information Sheet [here](#) and return it to the school office. A special thanks must be given to the Catering team of Grainne, Margaret and Audrey for their creativity in producing tasty food.

Old Conna Move

We arrived in our new home Old Conna last August, 2 weeks before school started. Thanks to great attitude and enthusiasm of our student volunteers and teachers, we were ready to open two weeks later. There have been a few hiccups along the way, and really I must thank all the students, parents and teachers, staff in office, kitchen and caretaking, board of trustees and board of management for being so positive and patient during the course of the year. Thank you all for your support.

With these facilities, we now have the capacity to hold events such as Speech and Prize Giving and Sports Day at own campus.

In relation to sports facilities, the astro-pitch has now been installed and it is constant use during every lunch break. The goal posts and basketball posts will be installed shortly and ready for the start of the next school year. We look forward to using the new surface for a wide range of sports including hockey, soccer, basketball and tennis.

We are fortunate in John Scottus to have an environment such as this to educate our students, your children. It is an environment that can only enhance well-being and learning and teaching. Thank you for all your support in the move.

Daily Schedule 2018/2019

Please note the changes to the school day next year.

- The first class of the school day starts at 8.20 am.
- There is a small break from 10.25 am to 10.40 am.
- Lunch time will be from 12.45pm to 1.35pm. There will be sports and musical activities organized during lunch times.
- On two mornings of the week, at 10.40am on Monday and Wednesday, there will be 10 minute assemblies. On other days at this time there will be a 10 minute period with the class teacher.
- There are two 10 minute meditation periods from 9.20 am to 9.30 am and 2.30 pm to 2.40 pm.
- Classes finish at 3.40 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and 12.45 pm on Wednesday.

On Wednesday afternoon team sports activities will be organised. This is optional and is greatly encouraged.

Transport Services for next academic year 2018/2019

In planning for the transport arrangements for John Scottus Secondary School for the next academic year (2018-19) a major consideration for us has been our wish to continue to show appreciation for the great parental support and faith in our school that was evident during the move to our new location. In recognition of this the free transport arrangements that have been in place this year will continue in the next academic year. Specifically:

- City Centre (N11) and pick ups along specific M50 routes will continue free of charge next year. They will bring students to school for the start of the school day and will depart at the end of the school day.
- Shuttle buses to and from the DART (Shankill stop), LUAS (Brides Glen stop) and Shankill at start and end of normal school day will continue next year free of charge.
- There will also be a bus picking up students from the DART (Shankill stop) and LUAS (Brides Glen stop) who miss transport links before 9.00 am in order to ensure they are in time for their second class.
- For students who engage in after school activities, there will be shuttle buses to and from the DART (Shankill stop), LUAS (Brides Glen stop) and Shankill.

Please note that this provision of free transport cannot continue indefinitely and after the next academic year that is from August 2019 there will be an introduction of bus charges. Details on this will be forwarded to parents later in 2018.

Please note that as the school day starts 5 minutes earlier next year, the bus schedules will be changed to accommodate this. For example the bus pick up time at Herbert Park will now be 7.40 am to arrive in Old Conna for 8.10 am. The detailed bus schedules will be available on the website in the coming weeks.

School Strategic Plan

The school is currently formulating a plan for the future development of the school. Thank you for your input into the process, it is very much appreciated. If you have not done so already and would like to have some input, please complete the survey [here](#).

Recently, two workshops attended by teachers and members of the Board of Management and Board of Trustees have taken place. The focus of the workshops reflect the two main priorities of the strategic plan – Learning and Teaching, and Wellbeing.

To give you a feel for the conversations that have taken place, I list here the main priorities identified during each workshop.

Learning and Teaching:

Provision of personalised mentoring,
 Developing skills in questioning, organization, study and group work that help student become independent learners,
 Active learning methodologies that help students develop a love of learning,
 Effective assessment and feedback strategies.

Wellbeing:

Community activities such as clubs,
 Physical activity,
 Mental and emotional wellbeing,
 Everyday life skills,
 Conversations on philosophical topics,
 Meditation and mindfulness,

Connection with the environment.

The plan going forward to have more workshops, including you as parents, to further develop specific targets and actions in each area. We will be notifying you in early September about the details of these workshops and we look forward to your involvement.

Summary of Events coming up

Start of school – Monday August 27th

Start of year meeting with Principal and Class Teachers- Thursday August 30th

Founders Day – Friday September 7th

Study Skills Day – Wednesday September 12th

Annual Church Service – Friday September 21st

Parents AGM – Wednesday September 26th

A philosophical thought for the day

“I know that I am intelligent because I know that I know nothing” – Socrates

There is a huge team effort involved in running a school and huge thanks must be given to all teachers and support staff for their daily commitment to the welfare of our students. I cannot thank them enough. Of course none of this would be possible without your children, thank you parents.

I hope you and yours have a restful summer delighting in the present and we look forward to seeing you again in August.

Yours warmly,



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