



# JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

OLD CONNA, FERNDALE ROAD, RATHMICHAEL, CO. DUBLIN.

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May 31, 2024

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We have arrived at the end of a very eventful academic year. Our 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-year students start exams tomorrow, and I wish all students the strength and stillness to give their full attention to the exams they face.

Here are just a few notices I would like to share with you.

## **Assembly Themes**

The whole school assembly has continued for the past term. The main feature of these assemblies was the many student contributions, including musical performances and speeches on various topics. We also explored themes such as

Who do you trust?

How do I move from darkness to light?

How does the music influence me?

Can we live in harmony with nature?

Can I speak the truth, kindly?

For more information about the assembly themes, please click [here](#).

## **Summer Assessment**

Students from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> years completed summer assessments last week. In addition, 2<sup>nd</sup>-year students completed standardised tests in Maths and Literacy. We will share feedback from these assessments with you in the coming weeks.

## **Graduating 6<sup>th</sup> Years**

We wish our graduating class of 6<sup>th</sup> year best wishes in their exams and the decisions they will need to make about their future studies. I know they will make a considerable impression and contribution wherever they go.

## **Whole-School Inspection**

We would like to thank all the parents and students for their contributions during the recent whole-school inspection. The previous inspection was held in 2011, so these inspections are not frequent. The initial feedback was overwhelmingly positive, praising the excellent holistic care and high standards of learning and teaching. A more detailed written report will be published next September, and we will keep you informed when it becomes available.

## **School Policies**

The Board of Management and teaching staff review various policies every year. In the past year, the Board reviewed the Additional Education Needs, Transition Year, Anti-Bullying and Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, Anti-Bullying and Child Safe-Guarding policies. The updated policies and all other school policies can be found on the school website [here](#).

### **Board of Management**

The school Board of Management consist of two parents, two staff members and four nominations from the Board of Trustees. The Board meet approximately every six weeks to discuss and review various aspects of the school. The Board creates "Agreed Reports" from these meetings to summarise topics discussed and to disseminate them to the school community. These agreed reports can be found on the school website [here](#).

### **School Fee increase**

The school does receive a grant from the Department of Education and Skills based on the number of students enrolled, which covers the costs of several teachers. However, all other costs are covered by the school fee. These fees are used to pay for teacher salaries, catering, administration, building, maintenance, and transport costs. In the past few years, costs have risen with inflation, so there is now the need to increase the fee. At the recent Board of Management meeting on May 27, the Board agreed to increase the school fee for John Scottus School to €6,000 for the 2024/25 year – an increase of €225 (4%). The catering charge will increase to €660 – an increase of €30 (5%). These increases have been kept to the minimum while maintaining the school's high standard of service. For your information, a letter from the treasurer of the Board of Management is being sent along with this newsletter.

### **Transition Year Update**

The TY Musical was a great success! Congratulations to all the Transition Year students for putting on an amazing performance of "Grease" at the Mermaid Theatre on May 8th and 9th. This performance resulted from weekly rehearsals from September to May, and the students showed great teamwork and confidence. A big thank you to the parents of the TY students for their help in finding costumes and props for the show. The event even made the papers, please see here for more details: [\*Local students wow Bray stage with 'Grease' | Irish Independent\*](#)

### *TY Ball*

On the 19th of April, the TYs hosted a memorable TY Ball. The glamorous red carpet theme and live music from the TY band created a special atmosphere. We are proud to note that the event was inclusive, extending to the 5th, 6th, and some Italian exchange students, fostering a sense of community and belonging. To see pictures of the event, please follow the link [here](#).

### *Community work*

In May, the TYs made a significant and lasting impact on the local community. Their participation in Friday towns for Shankill involved the laborious task of laying mulch around hundreds of new tree saplings, ensuring their survival and growth for years to come. Their visit to Shankill Daycare Centre was a heartwarming experience, not just about tending to the garden, but also about forging connections with the members and enjoying a song from them, fostering a strong sense of community.

### *End of year trip*

The final week of Transition Year (TY) included a hike in Glendalough on Monday, the 27th, followed by a presentation to parents during the TY graduation in the evening. After that, the students went on a 2-night trip to Galway City, which included visits to the city museum, bowling, a ferry trip to the Aran Islands, and a visit to the Cliffs of Moher.

The TYs have been fantastic this year, showing real growth and a positive mindset throughout. They have bonded closely and further developed their own unique qualities and strengths. They have set a high standard for future TY groups.

### **Uniform Sale**

Our Parents Association organised a second-hand uniform sale on May 29. It was a very successful event, particularly for the incoming first-year students. The plan is to have another uniform sale sometime between Halloween and Christmas. I thank all parents who contributed items for the sale and who volunteered to organise it.

### **1st-year enrollment, August 2024**

We expect our first-year enrolment starting August 2025 to be oversubscribed. Our admissions policy does give preference to siblings. If siblings are interested in enrolling, please let us know before October 1, 2023.

### **Young Philosopher Awards**

In the Young Philosopher Awards, John Scottus Secondary performed exceptionally well, winning four awards. Dea Ramadani received two of these awards, including the First Prize in the 'Category Winner' and a joint runner-up for the Grand Prize in Philosophy across all age groups for her submission titled "Is football philosophical? A Socratic Dialogue". Additionally, Rintaro Okuda received a 'Highly Commended' in the Senior category for his submission titled "Why is Mythology important in Philosophy?". , and Cora Porter was the 'runner-up' with her submission titled in the sub-section 'Philosophy and Animation'.

The judges mentioned that this year's entries were of an incredibly high standard, making the competition tough. Despite this, JSS managed to stand out among schools from all over the country, with students from all 32 counties participating.

### **School Events**

Many school events have occurred during the year, including Founders Day, parent meetings, Open Days, Halloween, dress-up, Christmas Talent Show, House Activity Day, Sports Day, Speech competition, and Prize Giving. The website has many posts illustrating these events, and I hope you get the chance to read some of them.

Our school leadership team was instrumental in organising many of these events, and I must congratulate all involved for demonstrating such great leadership qualities in uniting the school and lifting the school spirit.

### **Student Leadership**

Our 6th-year leadership team took on the task of organising many school events for the school community. With great initiative and enthusiasm, the group organised a brilliant Founders Day filled with fun activities. Soon after, they continued to bring cheerfulness into the school by organising activities for the Halloween festival. In the run-up to Christmas, our leadership team again brought the school community together with various Christmas activities.

The interview for our Student Leadership team also took place in February. It is excellent to see many of our students put themselves forward for leadership positions. The incoming student leadership team wasted no time in organising various community-building events. In addition to organising several house lunches and sports day, they organised the World Cultural Day and the World Book. I must congratulate all involved for demonstrating such great leadership qualities in uniting the school and lifting the school spirit.

### **Celebration and Prize-Giving Event**

Graduation and prize-giving took place on Thursday, May 16. It was an excellent opportunity to celebrate quality learning in the past year. To see the prize winners for each category, please click [here](#).

### **Green Schools Week**

We are thrilled to announce that we have received our third green flag since we moved to Old Conna! This latest award was granted for our efforts in energy conservation, a significant step towards a more sustainable future. Our previous awards were for Litter, Waste, and Water conservation. Each flag takes two years to achieve. Our committee, which consists of students from all year groups, worked diligently to reduce energy consumption and raise awareness in the school.

We are fortunate to have an environmental scientist within our school community. We must thank Dr. Cara Augustenborg, a parent, who delivered a very engaging presentation to students and staff on the causes, effects, and solutions to climate change during Green Week 2024. I will take this opportunity to congratulate Ms McGoldrick and the Green School team for raising awareness of energy conservation.

### **Literacy Week and The Annual Whole School Speech Competition:**

Like all departments in our school the English Department of John Scottus Secondary School has been very busy this year. Along with working through the curriculum, preparing for state and inhouse exams, the students managed to also write and create beautiful pieces for our two important competitions in our school Calendar: The Annual Speech Competition and the Writing Competition.

John Scottus School prides itself on the ability to encourage students to express themselves so as to engender reflection and the possibility for change and development in our lives. This was seen in abundance during our Literacy Week when Mr Duffy (from the English Department) presented a Literacy Assembly at both the Junior and Senior assemblies and when our students presented their heartfelt and reflective speeches at our Annual Speech Competition after many months of support and guidance from our

English teachers. Throughout the week, the school was beautifully festooned with quotes from famous writers, encouraging the whole school community to acknowledge the wonder and importance of words. Thanks to all who worked tirelessly to make this week so wonder-filled!

On Monday, May 20th, we all gathered, united in the warm glow of the summer sun, to be entertained and delighted by the inspirational, serious, and, at times, funny ruminations and observations of our brave students. The speeches were diverse and gave us insight into the students' issues and concerns.

Our Junior Competitors (First to Third Year) raised issues such as: **'The Advantages and Disadvantages of Fitness'** by Harry Dunne (Second year), **'Life Beyond our Planet'** by Amelie Brocklebank (Third year) and **'The Benefits of Gaming'** by Dylan Scorgie Chersich (First Year) which achieved Third place. Second place was awarded to Aisling Gillen from Third Year for her speech on **'Femininity in Fiction'** and Nathan O'Connor from Second Year entertained us greatly with his speech on **'Nintendo'** claiming First prize.

Our Senior competition comprised of topics such as: **'The Profound Absurdity of Existence'** by Emma Fougerat (Sixth Year), **'Why Comics and Graphic Novels are just as valid as Other Forms of Literature'** by Cora Porter (fifth year) and **'What makes a person a Genius?'** by Rintaro Okuda from Sixth Year. Third prize was awarded to Adam Maguire (TY) for his speech on **'How did we lose community?'** A fellow TY student, Brenna Gallagher Doyle achieved Second place for her speech on **'What is Depression'**, and the winner of the Senior Competition was our incoming 5th year Head Girl Yusra Didani for her mature reflections on **'The Damaging Effects of Western Beauty Standards on the Wider world'**.

The Judges, Ms. Aisling Spratt, an Alumni of both the Junior and Senior John Scottus Schools and a past participant and winner of the Speech Competition and Mr. Mark McNally, a screen writer, praised the high standard and level of commitment each participant gave. We are so grateful to the external judges for taking time out of their very successful and busy careers to be part of our Speech Competition.

The Music Department entertained us with their musical talents during the judging interval. A sincere thank you to Ms. William, Mr. Gorey and all the students who took part in the musical interlude. It was a musical triumph and is such a lovely opportunity to witness and experience the fantastic creativity in music amongst our student body.

A special thank you needs to be given to all staff, judges and students who helped to make this event truly remarkable. All participants were fantastic and deserve fervent applause. Their determination, triumph over fear and reflective abilities are all aspects of what a winner really is. All in all, it is, was and continues to be, without fail, an inspiring event in the school calendar. To see some pictures of the event, please follow the link [here](#).

### **The JSS Annual Writing Competition:**

This is an important competition in the school calendar as it gives the students from all year groups the opportunity to delve deep into their imaginations and take time to reflect and create. All genres were welcome, and the theme for this year was 'Changes'.

Students took pen to paper and or finger to keyboard and created beautiful essays, poems and short stories. Both the Senior and Junior Winner were announced at our Speech and Prize Giving Event on the evening of Thursday May 16th. The Senior winner was Anahita Aryan (6th Year) for her reflective article 'Nature's Solution' and the Junior Winner was Iona Murnane (Third Year) for her poem entitled 'A Conversation with no-one'. All entries exhibited rich imagination, creative style and an original take on the theme. Thanks to all the students who participated.

*A quick word from the English Department:*

Overall, it must be said that the creativity, reflection and standard of expression is thriving amongst our student body. As Seamus Heaney says in his Poem Digging: 'Between my forefinger and my thumb a squat pen rest, I'll dig with it'. Keep writing, keep reflecting and continue creating!

Well done to Ms Maguire Timmins, Mr Duffy and Ms Franklin for their great work in co-ordinating these events.

### **School Trips**

Our 1<sup>st</sup> year, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, Transition Years and 5<sup>th</sup> years went on an end of year class trip to Carlingford and Italy. The feedback from the trips was that all students and teachers thoroughly enjoyed each other's company. Thank you to all the teachers involved, Ms Khlaed, Mr Gorey, Ms Franklin, Mr Telford, Ms Williams, Mr Bourke, Mr Burns, Ms Mhic Chionnaith, Ms Harte, Mr Duffy, Mr. Brady and Mr Walsh. To see some pictures from the trip to Carlingford, please follow the link [here](#).

### ***3<sup>rd</sup> year class trip to Zipit***

This trip was a welcome change from exam study for the third-year students. Students caught a close sense of freefall through the hair-raising slide that wound its way down from about 34 metres to near ground level. Some students, who we will not mention by name, managed to emit such resounding screams that there was no doubt among the facilitators of the good physical health of the John Scottus students. One facilitator, who retrieved the mats of those who came out of the tube, commented on how well-behaved and good-mannered our students were, how they took time to thank him and left the slide swiftly to allow the next student dispatch. To see some pictures of the event, please follow the link [here](#).

### **Theme weeks**

Throughout the year, our teachers organise various theme weeks to promote enquiry into the world around us. These theme weeks include Maths, Science, Stand-up, Philosophy, Music, Literacy and Seachtaine na Gaeilge. The various theme weeks encourage our students to reflect on how important the various subjects influence and enhance the world around us. Thank you to all the respective teachers and students for organising and engaging in the various theme weeks.

### **Global Citizen Education**

One theme we explore is becoming a global citizen, understanding the harmony between all people, and working from the principle of "May all be Happy". I was very

impressed with the many significant fundraising initiatives organised throughout the year. Many different groups of students have been involved in fundraisers for various charities. These fundraisers include a TY sleep out to raise funds for Focus Ireland, care packs for Kilcoole Nursing Home, Unicef, the Irish Cancer Society, and the DSPCA, and various charity events organised by second years.

These fundraisers are practical examples of how we explore the theme of becoming a global citizen. They are great examples of young people taking a stand and practising giving and helping. I commend all students for initiating and organising so many fantastic fundraisers and demonstrating outstanding leadership and enthusiasm.

### **Wellbeing Workshop**

On Saturday, April 13th, John Scottus School held a Wellbeing Workshop for Teachers and Parents at the Old Conna. There were 26 participants, mainly teachers from Dublin and Wicklow, and a few parents.

Dr. Camillus Power, an Ayurveda expert and a doctor at Tallaght Hospital, explained how Ayurvedic principles can contribute to children's physical Wellbeing. Simultaneously, Mary Williams led a calming Yoga practice on the mat. The groups switched after a break for croissants, tea, and scones. Each session lasted one hour. A delightful half-hour lunch break followed, and the morning concluded with practical applications from Patanjali's Yogasūtras, designed to promote mental Wellbeing.

For those interested, the website <https://sanskrit.ie> has a section on Ayurveda and another on Yogasūtras. If enough parents and teachers from Dublin and Wicklow express interest, we could potentially organize a minicourse on Wellbeing.

### **Extra-Curricular**

#### **School Newsletter - Pause Magazine**

The student-led school newspaper, the PAUSE, came freshly out in print in the last few weeks. Many students have worked tirelessly in the school to bring this to fruition. Student journalists have written fantastic articles alongside two exceptional senior students. The articles include philosophical reflections about education and sport, book reviews, art in politics, and key moments of school life. Our students also displayed fantastic editing and designing skills to give a professional look and cover for these thought-provoking and well-written articles. Well done to Ms Khaled for her great work in co-ordinating the magazine.

#### ***Extra-curricular clubs and activities***

John Scottus School considers extracurricular clubs essential to well-being and a sense of belonging. This year, various teachers organised an extensive range of extracurricular activities. Well done to all students and teachers for participating in the various clubs and bringing great energy and enthusiasm.

#### **Scratch Club**

On Thursday, April 25th, the World Scholar's Club and Scratch Club students went to see the Bricktionary exhibition at The Point Village Theatre of Light in Dublin. For the

students who went, this was a valuable experience culturally, educationally, and creatively. To see some pictures of the event, please follow the link [here](#).

### ***Physical Education and Sports***

Once again, the JSS PE department of Mr Pender and Ms Broaders was busy organising a wide range of sports and activities for students to enjoy as part of their PE lessons. Their efforts culminated in a wonderful Sports day on Friday, May 10th, held on our Old Conna grounds under glorious sunshine. The day was great fun for all, with outstanding individual and team performances. The event was filled with enthusiasm and a strong sense of teamwork as students took part in various contests throughout the day in the hope of winning the House Cup for their house. Congratulations to the House Team of Demeter for clinching the first prize, and a huge well done to all the students who participated to the best of their ability on the day. To see some pictures of the event, please follow the link [here](#).

We made the most of the good weather throughout April and May and got out onto the grass pitch for our PE lessons. Our two main sports this term were Gaelic Football and Rounders. It was great to see students from all years out enjoying themselves in the sun.

### ***Extracurricular Sport***

The 2023/2024 academic year has been another great one for sport in John Scottus. Our Soccer, Frisbee, and Hockey clubs have finished training after long and fulfilling seasons. It has been great to see an increase in the numbers participating in our clubs throughout the year.

Our school's Frisbee teams participated in various events throughout the year, culminating in our Senior Girl's team taking 3rd place in the Ultimate Frisbee All-Ireland Championships in April. A wonderful achievement for the JSS Girls, this was made all the more impressive by the news that two of our students Iona McCool Murnane and Keelin Doyle were selected for the Irish ladies u20's team and will travel to the UK this Summer to compete in the European Championships.

Our girls' and boys' soccer and hockey teams have shown immense dedication throughout the year, training every Wednesday after school. They have had a successful year, competing in their respective Leinster Leagues. Our girls' u15 and 17 teams, in particular, demonstrated their skills and teamwork, qualifying for the East Leinster Semifinals. While they didn't make it to the finals this year, their journey is a testament to their commitment and effort throughout the season.

Finally, our Basketball and Athletics teams also had a busy year. Our Basketball teams, coached by Ms Scott, trained on Tuesdays and Thursdays at lunchtime, with our u15 and u16 boys teams in Dublin leagues. Our u16 boys went to the Dublin finals in their division, where they were beaten by the narrowest of margins, losing out by just one point. All the boys had a really enjoyable season, and the JSS students are starting to catch the basketball bug. Our basketball teams will return next year with the addition of a girls team. Our Athletics club trained every Thursday after school. It was very



impressively run and organised by two 3rd year students. Who planned and delivered sessions each week for their fellow students. Our athletics teams had great days travelling to cross-country and track and field events throughout the year, culminating in the East Leinster Championships in May.

Thank you to all the teachers and external coaches who have organised many fun events and days out for our students throughout the year.

### ***Music***

What an exciting term for all of our musicians in JSS! Music week was a great success, with a host of pop-up performances throughout the week, ending with a lunchtime concert with the 'Jammin group' students and junior cycle students.

We had some outstanding performances at our speech and prize night with our Leaving Certificate music students performances, and we wish them the best of luck in their future music ventures!

Lastly, our TY and 3Y band set the stage ablaze with their sensational interval performance during the speech competition. We applaud their dedication and talent and extend our heartfelt congratulations to all our music makers this year.

## **School Management**

### **Parents Association**

We are grateful to have the support of a vibrant parent community. The parent association have been very active over the year, helping to improve communications, catering, uniforms and sports. In particular, our Parents Association organised a fantastic "Danceathon" on Wednesday, April 17. We are delighted that parents raised €2970 for the JSS sports department. I thank you all for your generous contributions.

We are thankful for the trust and partnership that underpins our community, and we look forward to continuing to work together to nurture the growth of our students and our school.

### **Management**

The daily management of the school involves a variety of activities, from refining the school's ethos to improving learning and teaching. To help manage all these activities, we had a Senior Management Team comprising Ms Swan, Ms Mhic Chionnaith, Ms Emma Maguire Timmins, Mr Pender, Mr Telford, Mr Bourke and myself. Ms Creaney and Ms McGoldrick also contributed enormously to managing our learning support provision. In addition, we have our Premises Manager and Bursar, Ms Madden, who looks after finance, transport and buildings maintenance. I want to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Senior Management Team for all their hard work, enthusiasm and creativity throughout the year.

### **Teaching Staff**

I must thank our teachers in John Scottus for their commitment and dedication. Our teachers in John Scottus are dedicated to empowering the greatness in our students.

Indeed we are very fortunate to have fantastic, enthusiastic, caring teachers who work tirelessly to support every student.

### **Communications**

We endeavour to ensure good communication 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 excellent support staff in Ms Telford and Ms Griffin as administrative support, Mr Mc Guirk as caretaker and Ms Salmon and Ms Flynn in cleaning. Thank you

### **Catering**

A special thanks must be given to the Catering team of Ann, Niamh and Tracy for their creativity in producing tasty food. As part of the ongoing process to refine the service, a student food committee meets regularly, and surveys on food are conducted on an annual basis. We look forward to getting more feedback next year as we endeavour to enhance the menu.

### **Summary of Events coming up**

Start of school – Monday, August 26, finish at 12.50 pm

Start of year meeting with Principal and Class Teachers- Thursday, August 29

Parents Association AGM – Thursday, Sept 12

Open Day – Wednesday, Sept 18 and Saturday, Sept 21

Founders Day – Friday, September 27

### **Philosophical thought for the day**

Finally, a philosophical thought for the day:

“Look well into thyself; there is a source of strength which will always spring up if thou wilt always look.” ~ Marcus Aurelius

Yours warmly,



Dr Declan Kelly

Principal

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