



ST COLMCILLE'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARENTS' ASSOCIATION



High Speed Broadband & the Ministerial Visit

In October last Eamon Ryan, the then Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources visited St. Colmcille's to formally launch the Government's pilot project whereby 78 second level schools had their broadband capacity significantly enhanced through the installation of 100 mbps of bandwidth. This allows teachers and pupils access speeds similar to those on offer to multinational corporations based in Ireland. This high speed broadband capacity has the potential to revolutionise the classroom environment and will benefit current and future generations of schoolchildren attending St Colmcille's.

This investment will deliver a technology-rich and multi-sensory learning environment for both teachers and students. The students demonstrated the capabilities of the technology by carrying out interactive science experiments, as well as going on a 'virtual tour' of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The event was a great success with the active participation of a number of teachers and pupils demonstrating the practical elements of this new bandwidth and was well-covered by the media, including a filmed report on TV3's news programmes that evening.

Lab Aid & IT Support

The Parents' Association for a long number of years now have supported the school in providing lab aid and IT support. This support costs the PA about €30,000 per year.

Every student in the school has benefited from this support as all students do science for junior cycle and most have a science subject for the Leaving Cert. The lab aid's role is to assist in the setting up of lab experiments (sometimes prior to class) thus saving valuable teaching time, maintaining lab equipment and ensuring relevant equipment & materials are available and ready. The school has noted an improvement in the number of experiments being conducted and in the exam results achieved by students in this discipline since its inception.

The IT support has been a valuable aid not only in computer labs but as reliance on classroom technology has increased in many areas throughout the school. This in house support has helped keep these systems running with minimum disruption to both staff and students. It is only when these systems let us down that we realise how much we depend on them in today's world.

This support has been invaluable to the school in keeping systems running seamlessly. The Parents Association hope to continue the support for these important roles into the future.

School Uniforms

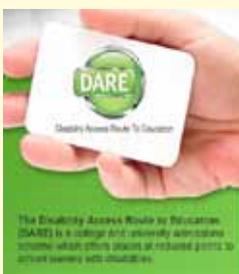
As you know we have changed our main uniform supplier to Schoolwear House in Ballyogan. We would advise parents that on Tuesday 10th May from 4pm, Schoolwear House will be in our school selling uniforms to current and new incoming students.

A pricelist of the uniform is with this Newsletter. The feed back has been positive and we invite you to let us know what you think of the new service.

Equity of Access to Higher Education

Irish Higher Education and Government are committed to the objective of promoting 'equality of access to higher education, irrespective of social class, age or disability'.

To widen access to 3rd level, participating colleges have developed a range of initiatives including the DARE & HEAR supplementary admission routes.



Our Blog is now hosted on the school's website and we thank Mr O'Neill for his help in setting it up. It can be accessed directly using the address above, or from the school's website by selecting: 'Parents' Association' from the Main Menu (on the left) and then selecting: 'For all our latest news:> Click Here'.

It's full of interesting articles, school events and links to other useful websites. You are welcome to leave comments on items of interest, and suggestions for topics you would like to see discussed. Be sure to add it to your 'Favourites' so you can check our regular updates.

!!NEWSFLASH!!

Fastest growing Irish Schools

"The fastest growing school in Dublin is St Colmcille's Community School in Knocklyon, an area of rapid population growth. Like many community schools in Dublin, the school has built a very strong local reputation since it was opened in 2000."

Full Irish Times article can be read at:
<http://stcolmcillesparents.blogspot.com/>

!!NEWSFLASH!!

Allianz Pupil Personal Accident Insurance

A total of 474 students took up the optional insurance this year. The €8 premium for 24 hour cover for the whole year (Sept-Aug) is really good value!

A sincere 'Thank You' to Christine Malone, the school bursar, who collected the premiums for us. It was a lot of work and we really appreciate her help.

In the event of an accident, claim forms are available from the school office or they may be downloaded from Allianz.ie.

The completed form must be signed by the principal, Mr McKennedy, and then forwarded to Allianz.

Allianz Pupil Personal Accident Insurance will cover pupils attending VHI Swiftcare Clinics for treatment following an insured accident.

Bonus Points for Leaving Cert Higher Level Maths

The current 5th years will be the first year of a 4-year pilot scheme which will award an extra 25 points to students achieving a D3 or above in higher level Maths at their Leaving Cert in 2012.

These students will have 25 points added to their score in mathematics. The six highest subject points will then be counted to achieve a cumulative score, as is normal practice. Consequently, if higher level mathematics (cumulative points score) is not among these six subjects, the bonus points will not be included in the total points scored.

Texting Update

We continue to receive very positive feedback from parents about the texting system. It proved invaluable during the snow days last winter and saved a lot of unnecessary journeys.

It's also useful for reminders and letting us know about notes in the schoolbag. The Parents' Association provide this service for the school to facilitate good communication with parents. We hope you find it worthwhile.

If you are not receiving texts or if your number has changed, please contact

Antoinette on 0876832825 or send an email to parents@stcolmcilles.ie

Mock Interviews

A scheme run by the Parents' Association with assistance from Ms Kenny - the career guidance teacher - has been in place for a number of years now whereby 6th years are offered a mock interview with someone from their chosen career area. We have a list of parents and members of the community who volunteer to be interviewers. Students submit a letter of application and their CV in advance of the interviews which are usually held in November.

The response of students who have taken part was overwhelmingly positive and the interviewers were very impressed and complimentary in their feedback. If you would like to help out by becoming one of our interviewers please contact Ms Kenny through the school or Sandra O'Reilly (mobile 0876799679) or parents@stcolmcilles.ie

Gaisce – The President's Award

Gaisce - the President's Award is Ireland's National Challenge Award, the country's most prestigious and respected individual award programme, and a challenge from the President of Ireland, to young people between 15 and 25 years of age.

It is a self-directed program which aims to contribute to the development of young people through the achievement of personal challenges. Established in 1985, it has three levels - gold, silver & bronze.

Young people may do one or all of the awards in any order. Gaisce - the President's Award is a member of the International Award Association of National Challenge Awards Worldwide.

Currently all TY students at St Colmcille's are offered the opportunity to undertake the Gaisce challenge. Further information is available at www.gaisce.ie

Help Required

The Parents' Association is looking at ways to improve student participation in sports in the school. We hope to get feedback from students using a questionnaire on sports and physical exercise. We will then try to provide help and support in the areas where needed.

We are looking for parents who would have an interest in training or coaching or assisting the sports coaches in any way. Do you have an interest in Chess? Would you have time to introduce Chess to the school? If you can help please call Joe at 0872485245.



"There aren't any icons to click. It's a chalk board."

PACCS Parent Associations for Community and Comprehensive Schools

PACCS had their Annual Conference on March 4th/5th this year in Galway. The theme of the conference was 'Reflect and Move Forward'. It proved to be a success and was well attended by parents. The conference will be taking place again next March and we will keep you informed regarding dates and venue on the Parents' Association link of the school website or checkout www.paccs.ie. All are welcome to attend.

Scoliosis Update- Screening 2012

Following the screening of first, second and third year girls for Scoliosis in 2010, we have received some queries regarding future assessment dates. We are currently planning to have the Scoliosis Specialist back in the

school in 2012 to screen first and second years. With an incidence of 2 in 100 girls in the general public showing signs of scoliosis, we feel this is a worthwhile event.

School Dinners



On Friday March 11th three representatives from the Parents' Association along with Ms Ryan and six student council representatives visited the Dominican Convent School in Wicklow town.

Our purpose was to check out and sample the hot meal service that is being provided there. What we witnessed was an efficient service that provided tasty & healthy food options. Adults and students alike were extremely happy with what we saw and unanimously agreed that a hot meal service would be widely welcomed in our school.

Some sample prices:

Home Made Soup & roll -	€1
Chicken Pasta dishes / Spaghetti with Meatballs -	€3.50
Chicken Breast with Baked Potatoes -	€3.50
Roast Beef with Potatoes & Veg. -	€4.50
Large bowl of fresh fruit salad / home made smoothies -	€1.50

If you have any comments, concerns, ideas or thoughts on the provision of a healthy, hot food service at St. Colmcille's, please contact us ASAP by email or through our mailbox in the school office.



Project Maths



Project Maths is the phased introduction of the revised syllabus for Junior and Senior Cycle Maths with a corresponding incremental change in the examinations. It will change how maths is taught and learned in school. It aims to change attitudes to maths, introduce new ways of doing and thinking about maths and encourage more students to take Maths at Higher level.

Strands 1 and 2 were introduced in September 2010 for 1st and 5th years.

Strands 1, 2, 3 and 4 will be introduced in September 2011 for 1st and 5th years.

All 5 strands will be introduced in September 2012 for 1st and 5th years.

Strand 1 - Probability and Statistics
Strand 2 - Geometry and Trigonometry
Strand 3 - Number
Strand 4 - Algebra
Strand 5 - Functions

More information is available on the National Council for Curriculum Assessment website www.ncca.ie/projectmaths



Cushions

You may have noticed at your last meeting in the school that the benches are now covered with soft cushions - funded by the Parents' Association. We're sure you'll agree it makes for a more comfortable evening.

NPCpp National Parents Council Post Primary

The NPCpp will hold their Annual Conference on October 14th, 2011 in Athlone and should prove to be very informative for parents of Post Primary children. If you would like to attend this conference for all or part of it please checkout the school website or look up npcpp.ie for dates and venue and further information.



We occasionally send out email requests, reminders and articles of interest to parents. If you would like to receive these emails, please send your address to

parents@stcolmcilles.ie

Send a mail to the same address if you would like to be removed from the mailing list.

Careers Night

The Past Pupils' Association organised the inaugural annual Careers Night for transition year and senior cycle students on April 5th. It was great to see so many of our past pupils coming back to give help to the current students in the all important task of selecting a career.

There was a great variety of careers available - too many to mention - and a lot of interest was expressed to judge by the animation of the conversations.

The past pupils focused on giving insights into the courses they are undertaking while the parents gave equally valuable insights into the careers the students are likely to go on to post graduation.

The enthusiasm of the pupils - past and present - was evident as was that of the parents who joined them.

The evening ran very well, thanks in no small part to the support from Lorraine Daly and the transition year students as well as Dinah Kenny, the parents and the Past Pupils.

Voluntary Subscriptions

Every year the Parent's Association ask for a voluntary subscription of €250.00 per family. We depend on your voluntary subscriptions to continue to provide support to the school, and fund the many services that benefit all our children.

There are many ways we put your money to good use: providing funding for a Lab Technician, Librarian, library books, talks for parents and students, student counselling and support, new computers for the IT lab and sport facilities.

We also pay €19,200 loan repayments annually on the school extension (which allowed all students to participate in transition year). New expenditure this year included the cushions on the GPH seating for parent meetings, etc. We are also in the process of having a proper sound system installed in the school hall.

If you pay the voluntary sub of €250 in one calendar year, we can reclaim tax from the Revenue Commissioners. We received a tax refund of €22,000 for 2009 on your subscriptions, which was used to develop two new tennis courts and a basketball court at the side of the school.

While we realise that a lot of parents are affected by the economic downturn, we thank you for your continued support, which we need more than ever for the sake of our children's education.



Talks for Parents

On Tuesday the 8th of February John Lonergan came to our school to talk to us about the "Rewards and Challenges of Parenting". The talk was very well attended and those who braved the cold weather were really glad to experience such a motivating speaker. John spoke to us from his own life experiences. He delivered his talk in such an entertaining manner yet all his points were very valuable.

He left us with lots of challenges to work on and some everyday tips. His strongest suggestion was to value our child's happiness as a priority in parenting.

Drugs Awareness in our Community

On Tuesday the 8th of March we held a well attended and informative talk on drug awareness in the community. The main emphasis was on educating teenagers about the dangers of taking drugs.

Barbara Reid from Community Awareness of Drugs (CAD) gave a powerful presentation on the subject. Following the level of interest that was expressed at the meeting a six week Drug Awareness course run by CAD and funded by the HSE has already commenced in the School.

All our speakers are registered speakers and talks are free of charge. Your attendance is very much appreciated. (We hope to have one more meeting after Easter.)

Debs Ball 2010



The Debs Ball held on the 6th October, 2010 proved to be a great success. The Parents' Association, as in previous years, hosted a reception in the early evening providing non-alcoholic drinks and nibbles for the parents and students as they arrived.

We catered for a very large crowd and it provided a great start to the excitement of the evening to come for the students, who all arrived looking amazing, as can be seen from the sample of photos seen here.

(It greatly added to the occasion that Ms Coullihan was on hand to take the 'official debs photos' as the students arrived - before even a hair went astray!)

Ms Loughman also provided us with extra candles & stained glass candle holders, and to all those who assisted us with the décor and supplies and to our younger students who came along on the day to help us decorate the Main Hall and also assisted in the clean up, a big thank you.



The students were a credit to the school and a huge thanks also to Hannah Dooley and Laura McCarron who organized the Debs Ball on the student side of things.

This is definitely an event not to be missed for those lucky enough to qualify for the next Debs Ball in 2011!



Library

This year we have purchased all the reading material suggested by the English Department for the current 5Th years. Since January we have been restocking our junior section as these are the students who have been allocated specific reading classes in the library once a week.

We always appreciate recommendations of books which students have enjoyed and we have some avid readers who keep us updated.

The library also caters for the senior cycle's need for computer access in preparation for LCVF, Construction Studies and Engineering Portfolios. It is not always possible for teachers to incorporate library time into their classes so we suggest that you encourage your children to avail of our services after school from 3:50 - 5:00pm.

The Parents' Association have supported the Vincent Kenny Library in the school from its inception. This year we contributed €2,000 for the purchase of new books.

