

Art Room Extension Agreed

Art continues to increase in popularity as a subject choice of pupils in the school resulting in the need for two art rooms. Unfortunately the school was built with only one art room and whilst another room is being used, it is completely unsuitable for the needs of an art class. After much deliberation and a number of options designed by a firm of architects, the School Management in conjunction with the Art Department decided that an extension to the second room was the best solution.

The cost is quite considerable but given the long term benefit to the school, The Parents' Association have agreed to fund the full cost involved. The hope is that the room will be available for the new school year but this is dependent on planning approval, etc.



Voluntary Subscriptions

Every year the Parents' Association ask for a voluntary subscription of €250 per family. Your contribution is used to provide support to the school and fund the many services that benefit all our children. Your contribution is used to fund many of the activities mentioned in this newsletter. Some of the larger calls on your contribution include: funding the Lab and IT Technician, support for the Librarian and Library, counselling support, sports equipment, etc.

We continue to repay €19,200 per year on the loan for the school extension, which allowed the school to offer transition year to all students. This year a new requirement for funding will be to turn the art room extension into a reality. For each contribution of €250 (or over) we are entitled to receive a tax refund from the Revenue. In 2011 we received a refund of €23,000 which is a very welcome addition to our funds. While we realise that a lot of families 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.



Sports Hall New sound system

"Photo shows the sound test in operation"

The PA system used for various events and functions was felt to be inadequate for the size of the main hall and the school has been unhappy with the system for quite some time. At many past events, attendees regularly experienced difficulties in being able to properly hear what was being said.

The Parents' Association, in conjunction with the school Principal and a Sound Engineer, arranged to have the sound system tested.

The testing process revealed that there was too much reverberation in the hall. This is due to the high ceiling, concrete flooring with a thin wood covering and the block brick walls.

This apparently is quite a common problem in sports halls where there is generally no sound deadening material i.e. carpeting, furniture and curtains to absorb this reverberated sound.

The Parents' Association agreed that it would provide the funding to facilitate the acquisition and installation of a new sound system.

Combined with a new wooden floor installed by the school, the result has been a great improvement in the quality of sound in the hall as testified by those who have recently attended a ceremony / function where the new system has been used.

Lab Aid and 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 cost the PA about €30,000.

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 Certificate.

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.

Sports

The Parents' Association is continually looking at ways to improve student participation in sports in the school. We carried out a survey at the end of the last school year and have collated all the information. Amongst the huge volume of information gathered we found that 78% of students take part in external sports activities.

However, only 51% of students take part in school sports. We are currently working with the school to help increase the level of participation of sports in the school and will endeavour to provide help and support where needed.

We are looking for parents who would have an interest in training or coaching or assisting the sports coaches in any way. If so please e-mail parents@stcolmcilles.ie

Pupil Insurance No Longer Included in Evening Study Fee

In the past, students attending evening study were included in the Pupil Personal Accident Insurance scheme. From September 2012, this will no longer be the case. If you would like your child to be insured for the coming year, please tick the 'Insurance' box on the Back to School Checklist in September. The premium should be included with the school's registration fee.

A sincere 'thank you' to Christine Malone, the school bursar, who collected the premiums for this school year. It was a lot of work and we really appreciated her help. The insured students are covered 24/7, for 12 months from the beginning of September. Details of the policy and the cover offered may be viewed at www.allianz.ie - if you need to make a claim, forms are available in the school office, or may be downloaded from the Allianz website. Completed forms must be signed by the principal, Mr McKennedy, confirming that your child is insured, and then sent directly to Allianz.





The Parents' Association Blog can be found through our link on the School Website (<http://stcolmcillesparents.blogspot.com/>). The Blog, in addition to containing details of the PA Committee, also contains useful information in relation to what's going on in the school as well as wider issues relating to second and third level education matters. *Comments and opinions from parents are always welcome.*



ARE YOU ON OUR E-MAILING LIST?

We occasionally send out e-mail requests, reminder and articles of interest to parents. If you would like to receive these e-mails, please send your email details to **"parents@stcolmcilles.ie"**.

(By e-mailing the above address you can also be removed from our mailing list.)

NPCpp Conference PACCS (Parents Associations of Community and Comprehensive Schools)

This year the National Parents Council, an organisation who represents parents throughout the whole country, are hosting their Annual Conference in the Sheraton Hotel in Athlone on 12th and 13th of October .

The Conference promises to be informative and interesting, and will cover a broad range of topics that are helpful to parents. This is a forum for gathering and sharing information and parents will benefit in many different ways from the information gained from the talks and workshops.

The National Parents Council Post Primary extends an invitation to all parents involved in second level education and would encourage you to join us for this Conference. Conference pack, lunch, tea/coffee on the Saturday is only €25.

Further details of hotel rates etc can be found on the NPCpp website.

St Colmcille's Community School is represented on PACCS. The role of PACCS is to provide a voice for parents of community school-going children for democratic educational reform at national level. Its role is also to provide advice and information to its members on educational matters.

PACCS aims to ensure that parents have an effective voice in educational development by asserting their right to information and consultation with regard to Government and other policy making organisations.

PACCS will come together with NPCpp this year again for a joint Conference on 12th and 13th of October in the Sheraton Hotel, Athlone. All welcome.

Rainwater Harvesting for St Colmcille's Community School

The Green School Committee, while applying for the Water Flag, evaluated the water usage in the school and produced an environmental review on how they could improve the school's use of water.



Having done some research they came up with the idea of introducing rainwater harvesting in the school which will help the environment and save the school some money into the bargain.

This system comprises a 5,000 litre rainwater tank that collects and stores rainwater and uses it in the school for flushing toilets etc. and so uses less mains water. The Green School Committee approached the Parents Association with a view to getting some assistance in installing the system.

At a recent meeting the PA was delighted to support the Green School Committee with this venture. So expect to hear more of this in the coming months.

School Uniforms

Yes, it's that time of the year again! Our school uniform supplier, Schoolwear house will be visiting the school for your convenience on Wednesday 16th May, between 3.00pm and 7.00pm where both incoming first year and current students will have the opportunity to purchase uniforms.

Incoming first years will be served from 3.00pm and any students in the school who wish to buy uniforms may do so by going to the Sports Hall from 4.00pm.



Remember uniforms can also be purchased at any time directly from their shop at Unit 3, Ballyogan Business Park, Ballyogan, Dublin 18. Tel: 2921504 / www.schoolwearhouse.ie

Schoolwear House are continuing to provide good quality uniforms and personal customer service to the parents of St. Colmcille's. They also very generously provided free t-shirts for last year's 6th Year trip to Sri-Lanka.

GAISCE

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.

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 and 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



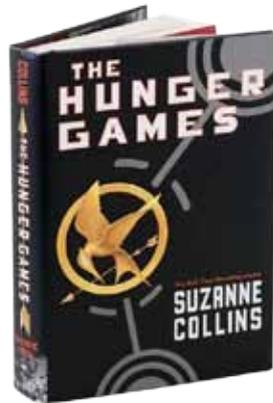
Library

The Parents' Association have supported the Vincent Kenny Library in the school from its inception. This year we contributed €2000 for the purchase of new books.

This year has seen the increase in the use of the library during school time with teachers of the First and Second years having their reading time in the library each week.

This has been very successful in that it familiarises the students with the library and it has led to book recommendations from the students themselves.

The Parents Association have arranged for a scoliosis specialist to come to the school in October of this year. She will screen first, second and third year girls and boys on two separate days. With an incidence in Ireland of two in every hundred girls and one in every thousand boys, we feel it's a worthwhile event.



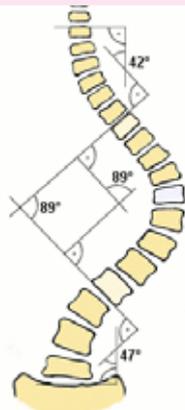
This year we have Audio books available which the Resource Dept. has found to be of great help. These audio books are from the suggested reading lists that are compiled for each year.

The library is also used for computer work and some students are using it for study purposes. The library also caters for the senior cycle's need for computer access in preparation for LCVP, 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 time from 3:45pm to 5:00 pm.

Scoliosis

Parental consent will be sought closer to the time. In addition, an educational video on scoliosis is also being purchased by the Parents Association and will be given to the school for all our pupils to view.



European Youth Parliament

The Parents' Association were very happy to sponsor two students, Matthew Brazel in May 2011 and Amy Dudley in March 2012 by helping with their expenses in travelling to the International Forum in Istanbul, Turkey. These students not only represented St. Colmcille's Community School but were each one of only seven students selected nationally to represent Ireland at this prestigious event. The EYP (European Youth Parliament) is one of the largest European platforms for political debate, intercultural encounters, political educational work and the exchange of ideas among young people.



Texting Update

The texting system is still proving very popular with parents. It provides valuable information for parents e.g. reminders about notes in schoolbags, payment of state examinations and parent / teacher meetings etc.

The Parents' Association provide this service for the school to facilitate good communication with parents.

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

Aedin on 087 958 1759 or send an email to parents@stcolmcilles.ie

6th Year mock interviews

In conjunction with the school's career guidance department, the PA has, for the past few years, been involved in organising mock interviews for 6th year students.

This informal process is aimed at demystifying the interview process and giving students an opportunity to learn how to prepare a CV, apply for a job or college place and experience what an interview is like.

These mock interviews which are held in October each year, are conducted on a one-to-one informal basis and the feedback from students is universally positive.

The PA continues to benefit from the voluntary input of parents to help in the running of this very worthwhile annual event. Parents who would be willing to act as interviewers should contact the PA or sign-up at our annual general meeting.



Project Maths

Project maths is a program of reform in second level schools. Its overall aim is to teach maths in a way that leads to understanding, to introduce new ways of doing and thinking about maths and to encourage more students to take maths at higher level.

The initiative was piloted in 24 schools in September 2008 and the national roll out began in September 2010. It is now coming to fruition for our current leaving certificate students. Project maths consists of five strands:

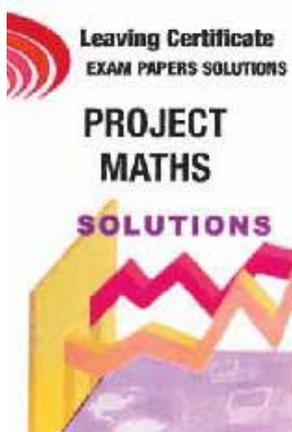
- Strand 1- Probability and Statistics
- Strand 2 -Geometry and Trigonometry
- Strand 3- Number
- Strand 4- Algebra
- Strand 5- Functions

The first phase of project maths will be examined in June 2012 to Leaving Certificate students. They will sit a new second paper consisting of Strand 1 and Strand 2.

For those students taking higher level mathematics for their leaving certificate a bonus of 25 extra points can be obtained by achieving a grade D3 or higher on their maths paper. We wish all students the best of luck and look forward to a higher standard in Maths.

More information is available on the national council for curriculum assessment website.

www.ncca.ie/projectmaths



PROMOTING
Community • Business • Employment
in Knocklyon and South Dublin

Knocklyon Network are a business and community group whose aim is to promote, support and motivate local people who are seeking work or local self-employed people who need assistance with their business.

This is done whilst also working to better our community by linking with, for example; the school to involve Transition Year students in local community projects such as caring for the elderly. Their current project, called KLIP (Knocklyon Local Initiative Project), seeks to further integrate the community and local business to source and access the extensive skill sets that are available in Knocklyon.

www.knocklyonnetwork.com

Knocklyon Network is a Not-for-Profit Organisation and is Supported by Dodder Valley Partnership.

Parents Talks

November Talk

Our November talk was given by a speaker Patricia Kennedy, Director of Sticks & Stones. Since its launch in 1993 Sticks and Stones has visited schools all over the country, hearing and seeing at first hand the suffering caused by bullying, and the effective strategies that have been developed to combat it.

Patricia's talk was very interesting and covered topics such as different types of bullying, who is likely to be involved?, what characterizes the child who bullies, the effect and signs, what parents do to help their children.

She was available afterwards to speak to any parent who had a concern. The talk was well attended and feedback very positive.

February Talk

Our February talk was given by Orlaith Flannery from St. John of God's. Title of talk was **"Keeping Afloat in Times of Stress – Who will look out for you?"**

She spoke on how to reduce, prevent and cope with stress. There were Junior and Leaving Certificate students in attendance and she gave them good advice for the forthcoming exams.



She discussed controlling our thoughts, emotions, schedules, environment and the way we deal with problems. The ultimate goal she said is a balanced life.

April Talk

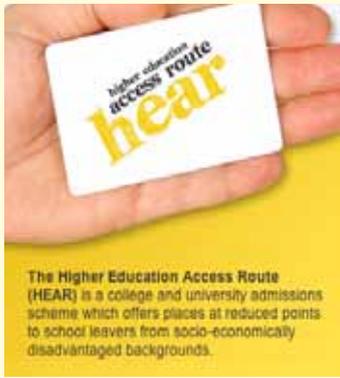
Our April Talk had the title **"Healthy eating on a budget"** which covered topics such as the building blocks of a healthy diet, what is a calorie, protein, fat, etc. Diet in childhood and adolescence, shopping and cooking, meal tips and recipes.

May Talk

In May we are hoping to sponsor a speaker from Trinity College to come to the school to facilitate a talk for parents of 5th and 6th year students on the transition from Secondary School to Life in college. **"Cracking the College Code."** We feel this talk would be very valuable to our parents.

The Parents' Association hold a number of Parent Talks each year. We try to vary our topics and endeavour to choose subjects that are of interest to the parents in our school and also the community surrounding us.

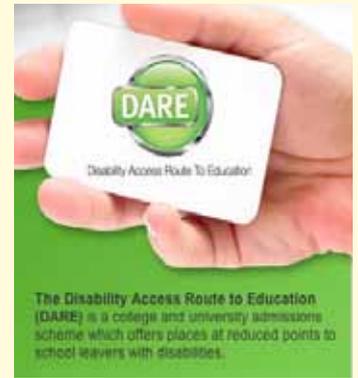
All speakers are registered speakers and talks are free of charge. Your attendance is very much appreciated.



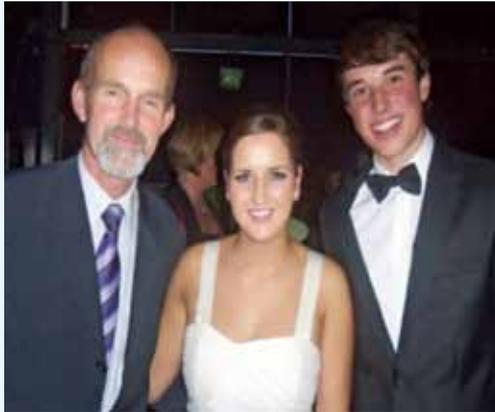
Equity of Access to Higher Education

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, participation colleges have developed a range of initiatives including the DARE & HEAR supplementary admission routes. For more information please go to www.acecsscollege.ie



Debs Ball 2011



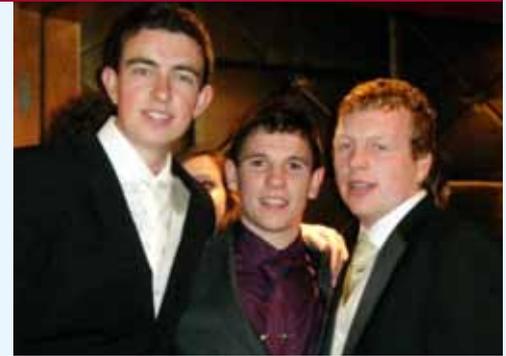
Congratulations to the Class of 2011 who celebrated their Debutantes Ball on Tuesday 11th October.

The Parents Association, as in previous years, hosted a pre-debs reception for the debutantes, their partners and families serving non alcoholic drinks and nibbles. The evening was a wonderful success enjoyed by all. The hall was packed and buzzing with atmosphere as you can see from the photos.

It was fantastic to see all the pretty girls and good-looking boys looking so happy and united.

The debutantes themselves enjoyed the reunion with their teachers and it was an opportunity to catch up on this very special evening which will be remembered and treasured always.

A big 'Thank You' to Ms Coolahan who was at hand to take the official photos, Ms Loughman who provided her beautiful candelabras and hand painted tea lights, the 5th year students who helped with the hall decorations and handing out the snacks/drinks and tickets and of course the clean up.



Special thanks to Alan O'Connell and his school debs committee who organised the hotel venue, tickets and buses in such a smooth efficient manner.

The Parents Association are always happy to sponsor this wonderful occasion and to give of their time to ensure it is enjoyed by all. We wish the 'Class of 2011' every success in the future.



CLASS DIRECTORY

This year for the first time the Parents Association created a class directory for each year in the school. This directory was distributed to every family in the school. It includes each student's name and the parents/guardians voluntarily include their name, address and contact details for inclusion in the directory.

Feedback has been very positive especially in the junior cycle when the students have moved from Primary to Secondary school and many new friends are made.

It has been compiled solely for the benefit of the parents who now have the necessary information to contact other parents while trying to arrange lifts to discos, matches or to confirm sleep-overs, parties etc.

The Parents Association use data provided solely for the purpose of the school directory and inclusion in the directory is of course totally optional.

Should you wish to have your details included in next year's directory and you are not already on our list, please complete the application form which is on the website and e mail it to the Parents Association at; parents@st.colmcilles.ie or post into the school.

ARE YOU INCLUDED IN OUR CLASS DIRECTORY?