

New Vision for Art Room Unveiled



The need for better facilities to maximise opportunity for our students to develop their artistic talents to the full has been a concern for some time. Early in 2012 the Parents' Association, Principal and Board of Management agreed that they would work together to deliver on the school's vision for improvement with the Parents' Association providing the funding of in excess of €60,000.

Architects were engaged and Planning permission, Fire Certificate and Disability Access Certificate were all secured. An enquiry was issued and a contractor was selected in late July. Work started in August and finished in November with the minimum of disruption to students.



Left to right: John McKennedy (Principal), Patricia Walsh & Lorna Coolahan (Art Teachers), Majella Birmingham & Sandra O'Reilly (Parents' Assoc.)

In addition to the art room work, there were also improvements made in the adjacent kitchen. This work was coordinated with the contractor providing the hot meal service so as to ensure food safety and hygiene were managed. This and the other elements of the work that would have been disruptive to the students were carried out over the October mid-term break.

Formal opening of the new art room is due to take place shortly but the students are already enjoying the benefits of the greatly enhanced facilities.

Art Room Seating

It was brought to the attention of the Parents' Association that the chairs (mainly high stools with no back support) in the art and science rooms were not fit for purpose in that they did not support the student's backs when sitting for long periods of time.

With the new extension coming on stream the PA are going to fund the purchase of new chairs that will add comfort and support for the students in class. The high backed stools will hopefully be in place for the new academic year commencing September 2013.



Lab Aid and IT Support

For many years now the Parents' Association has allocated funding to the school to provide laboratory aid and ICT support. This funding has been invaluable in the continuous development of the science department and school ICT infrastructure. Indeed it is recognised that Science and Technology will offer major employment opportunities in these students' futures.

Every student in the school has benefited from this support as all students study science during the Junior Cycle and most study at least one Science subject for the Leaving Certificate.

The science support role includes the management of science resources including stock control, new resource acquisition and maintenance. On a day-to-day level they provide assistance by setting up laboratory experiments and offering assistance in innovative experimental design. The school has noted a continual improvement in the number of hands on experiential experiments being conducted which help consolidate the scientific principles taught to the student in class.

This support role has also freed up time for the science teaching staff to focus more on continuous improvement in curricular delivery and innovation. Since the inception of this role there has been an associated improvement in exam results achieved by students.

This role has expanded to offer assistance and mentoring of students involved in extracurricular Science activities such as the BT young Scientist and a lunchtime "computer club" where students can work on school related projects including computer programming.

The IT support has been invaluable, as the need to embrace technology throughout the school has developed. This in house support has helped to keep these systems running with minimum disruption to staff and students.

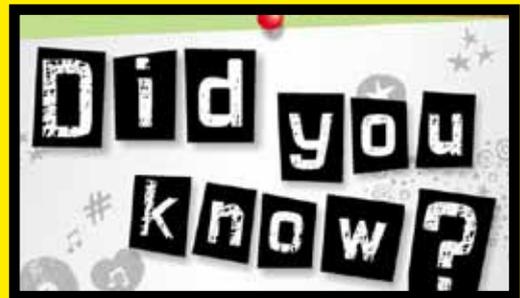
The schools investment in wireless technology and the planned roll out of laptops and other ICT devices for students would not be feasible without this assistance. The Parents' Association hopes to continue to support this important role into the future.



SCHOOL UNIFORMS

The School Wear House continues to provide a friendly, helpful and efficient service to the parents and pupils of our school. A uniform fitting day has been organised for new incoming first years on Tuesday, May 14th from 2.30pm until 5.00pm. The School Wear House will have a number of staff available in the school hall on the day to assist parents and pupils.

Alternatively uniforms may be purchased directly anytime for all pupils from their shop at Unit 3, Ballyogan Business Park, Ballyogan, Dublin 16 (exit 15 off the M50). They may be contacted by telephone at 01 2921540. They also provide an online service at www.schoolwearhouse.ie.



...about the Parents' Association Email?

parents@stcolmcilles.ie

...about the Parents' Association Notice Board in the school?

The Parents' Association notice board is located in the General Purpose Hall. On it you will find details and photos of some of the activities the Parents' Association have been involved in. There are also details of upcoming events. Please feel free to contact the Parents' Association with any comments, suggestions or queries you may have via our post box which is located in the school office or by email (shown above).

...about the Texting Reminder Service?

Have you received a text from the school to remind you of notes in school bags, important dates, exam payments, parent teacher meetings etc?

If not, it is likely that your most up-to-date mobile number is not in the system! Important messages will be sent by text, usually before it can be posted on the website, so it is important to check that we have your most up-to-date number. This is a service provided by the Parents' Association for you and continues to get very positive feedback from parents.

If you have changed numbers or are not sure if we have the correct number, just send an email to the address below or drop your details in to our post box in the school office.

Send emails to
parents@stcolmcilles.ie

Scoliosis:

In October of this school year, the Parents' Association arranged for and funded an orthopaedic scoliosis specialist from Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin to come to the school.

With parental consent, the specialist screened first, second and third year girls and boys on two separate days. With an incidence of 1 in 50 girls and 1 in 1,000 boys, we felt that this was a worthwhile event.

In addition, we purchased an educational video on scoliosis and presented it to the school for all the pupils to view.



Normal vs. Scoliosis



Counselling

Our school is in the fortunate position of having a qualified counsellor one day a week. The funding for this service comes in part from Family Affairs, a small donation from families themselves and as always our Parents' Association supports us by taking care of any shortfall that exists and they ensure that no child is denied access to a counsellor due to lack of funds. We are indebted as a school to our Parents' Association for their amazing generosity and commitment.

Anne Loughman



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.

A WORD OF THANKS FROM THE STUDENTS AND GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT OF ST COLMCILLE'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Many thanks to the parents who gave up their valuable time and interviewed our sixth year students in St Colmcille's Community School. Thanks to Dave Hanley for all the organisation of the interview packs and schedules! A great night was had by all.

The students enjoyed the feedback from interviewers and gained new skills and confidence. Some student feedback included:

"I got so much from the mock interviews, I know this helped those doing UCAS interviews, we also had to do LCVP interviews as part of our Leaving Certificate. This experience will help my LCVP grades! The mock interviews helped to give me confidence."

Mock Interviews

"My interviewer spent ages giving me tips on how I could improve and what I did well on! I recently did an interview for a Higher National Diploma course in creative media production. I work in a radio station during weekends and we produce live shows. This course is a radio production course. Even though this course is my back up option, I know that it is really competitive. The mock interviews provided me with invaluable preparation for the real thing!!"

Megan Phillips

"The best thing about the Mock interviews for me, was the fact that I learnt so much about primary teaching!! I got lots of career advice and I knew then that I was on the right track!"

Aoife O'Brien

I think that this feedback says it all. Thank you for your support. This is an invaluable service for our students!

*Dinah Kenny
Guidance Counsellor*

Pupil Insurance

The Parents' Association organise a 24/7 Personal Accident Insurance for school students. Currently, the group scheme is provided by Allianz Insurance Company.

A fee of €8 is payable to the school in early September and the Parents' Association administer the above. If you wish to make a claim, forms can be downloaded from the Allianz website. They must include the policy number and be signed by the Principal before being returned directly to Allianz.



Library 2013

“Books are uniquely portable Magic.” Stephen King

This year Ms. Hayden has been appointed to promote a renewed interest in reading in the Library.

A number of initiatives have been taken to encourage the students to read and to use the Library.

- The Library is open during **lunchtime** every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The students also have access to the Library after school till 5pm Monday to Thursday.
- The choice of books available in the Library has been expanded and updated based largely upon students' recommendation. Students were surveyed and the titles and authors they recommended purchased.
- All 1st and 2nd year classes have been assigned a reading class in the library on a weekly basis.
- Encouraging all students and staff to read a book of their choice during the last period highlighted the importance of World Book Day 9th March.
- There is a new online facility on the school website where students can rate the book they have read and encourage other students to borrow the book.

- During the holiday period students are encouraged to read the book taken from the library.
- We also are in the process of stocking the library with a choice of books that would suit weaker readers and a choice of biography/auto that would appeal to the student populace.

We here at St Colmcille's acknowledge the importance of independent learning and we try and foster a love of reading among our students. As CS Lewis so poignantly put it *“We read to know that we are not alone.”*

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

European Youth Parliament Representatives Supported

The Parents' Association were delighted to be in a position to help with sponsorship of four students who were chosen to represent not only St. Colmcille's Community School but were also selected to represent Ireland at different International Youth Forums over the past twelve months.

This sponsorship helped with their expenses incurred when travelling and attending the Forums.

Brendan Byrne attended the Forum held in Amsterdam, Holland.

Eoin Hennessey attended in Istanbul, Turkey.

Cian Rynne and Lauren Mulhall attended their Forum in Ghent, Belgium.

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.



Brendan Byrne



Eoin Hennessey



Cian Rynne



Lauren Mulhall

Voluntary Subscriptions

Like all voluntary organisations St Colmcille's Community School Parents' Association relies on voluntary subscriptions from its parents to fund its activities.

Your contribution is used to fund the many activities detailed throughout this newsletter. Some of the ways your money was put to use this year include: financing a new art room extension at a cost of in excess of €60,000; funding the lab and IT technician; support for the librarian and library; and counselling support.

Tax back - if you pay your voluntary subscription of €250 in one calendar year we can reclaim tax from the Revenue Commissioners. For the 2011 calendar year we received a tax refund of almost €25,000 on your subscriptions, which was gratefully received.

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

Please complete and return the CHY2 Cert for your 2012 subscription included with this newsletter so that we can receive the tax relief on your donation.

Parents Talks

The Parents' Association holds a number of talks every 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. Over the years we have had talks from Dyslexia Association, Aware and Sticks & Stones on the subject of bullying. Other talks included Healthy eating and Stress management.

In May last year we had a speaker from Trinity College on Cracking the College Code. This talk was very beneficial to all who attended. Catherine O'Connor spoke to us on how to let our children go and yet be supportive to them as they begin their new journey into college life. Lots of useful information was given to us in relation to college life.

This year we held one talk on April 16th last. We were delighted to welcome Bobby Kerr from Dragon's Den and *Insomnia* to our school. He gave a motivational talk and told us of his life experiences.

We were delighted with the good attendance, as we all know Bobby is a speaker that can share his positive experience to our benefit.

If there are any topics you would be interested in having discussed in our school please email us at parents@stcolmcilles.ie and we will certainly see if we can offer this talk to parents.

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



Sport

St Colmcille's school teams continued to perform well at all levels throughout the year.

Congratulations to Cillian Byrne, Ross McCormack, James Madden and Conor O'Donoghue who have been chosen to represent the school in the South Dublin Colleges league. They have now reached the Leinster Final & are due to play St. Kiernans College Killkenny. Some of our other achievements during the year were as follows:

U14 Girls Gaelic Team have reached the Leinster quarter fina. U14 Boys Gaelic Team reached the Dublin final & were narrowly beaten by a point. U14 Boys Hurling Team have reached the Dublin Final. U16 Division 1 Girls Badminton won the Dublin Final. Our Senior Rugby Team won the South Dublin cup narrowly 21-14. A big thank you to all players and coaches.

The Parents' Association continues to work with the school to help increase the level of participation in sports for all students. We are looking for parents who would have an interest in training, coaching or assisting the sports coaches in any way. We also need volunteers to drive students to some away matches. If you can assist in any way please email parents@stcolmcilles.ie.

PACCS

Parents' Association of Community & Comprehensive Schools (PACCS) – was formed in 1983 to act as one national organization for the Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools of the country. It was formally established on a national basis in October 1984. There are 93 Community and Comprehensive Schools in the country.

Membership is open to all Parents' Associations, Parents' Councils, Parents' Groups, Parent/Teacher Associations etc. of the Community and Comprehensive Schools, which are designated by the Department of Education.

PACCS aim to provide a national association for parents in the community and comprehensive sector, to promote the role of parents as primary educators of their children by providing an effective voice in educational development. Thus ensuring consultation with and representation on appropriate bodies, and providing an informative and advisory service for its members.

St Colmcille's Community School is a member of PACCS and is represented at a local and national level. PACCS is a member of the NPCpp (National Parents' Council Post Primary). Please visit the website for important educational information, e.g. for parents of students with special needs in our Special Needs Booklet. There is also information and links on the website for parents of gifted children. www.paccs.ie

Speaker Programme

"I came that you might have life, life in all its fullness." Jn 10; 10.

Living life to the full is what we want as parents and as a school community for all our young people. Our young people are physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual beings. If our young people struggle with anxiety, stress, depression, bereavement or lack of self esteem, it affects their ability to be all they are called to be.

Through our Speaker Programme funded so generously by our Parents' Association we have been able to have a series of speakers come and address our students on a variety of topics pertinent to their lives.

Some of the speakers share personal stories of pain, struggle and hope. Some present information on various issues. Some of the topics covered were Internet Safety which included a talk to the parents of 1st years.

People who have struggled with drug and alcohol addiction spoke. People who have overcome adversity from a very bad car accident to living life fully with a serious visual impairment.

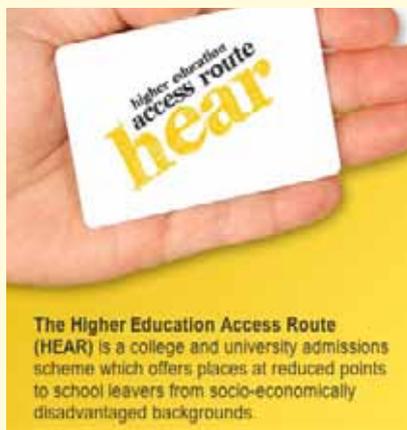
This year we arranged for our 2nd years and 4th years to visit Cuan Mhuire in Co. Kildare. Our 5th years will be going after Easter. Speakers from Cuan Mhuire came to the school to speak to our 6th years and will come to speak to our 3rd years after Easter.



We heard a mother share her story on the loss of her son by suicide and her encouragement to our students to talk when you are struggling and not to be afraid to get the support you need. We had Tony Malone share his story of loss and grief on the sudden death of his son Carl and how his faith has sustained him on his journey.

This is just a taste of what has been a very full programme of speakers for our students, particularly our 6th years. A big thank you to the Parents' Association who on behalf on the parents make this possible. As a result we hope our students will live richer and fuller lives.

Anne Loughman



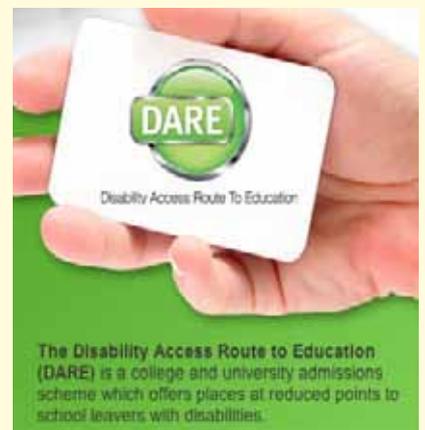
Achieving a fair Higher Education System

DARE & HEAR have been set up by a number of colleges and universities as evidence shows that disability and socio-economic disadvantage can have a negative effect on how well a student does at school and whether they go on to college.

Dates to Remember:

- January 12th 2013 – DARE & HEAR Application Advice Clinics, Nationwide.
- By 1st February 2013 - You must apply to the CAO at www.cao.ie
- By 1st March 2013 - You must complete the HEAR and DARE Online Application Form at www.cao.ie
- By 1st April 2013 - you must submit supporting documents to CAO

For more information see www.accesscollege.ie



Debs Ball 2012

12th September, 2012.

The Parents' Association, as in previous years, hosted a reception in the early evening for parents and students. Both the reception and Debs Ball proved to be another great success.

We catered for a very large crowd which provided a great start to the excitement of the evening to come for the students, who all looked amazing. The students themselves were a credit to the school and huge thanks to the students' committee who organized the entire event and on that score, required very little input from the Parents' Association.

Ms Coulihan (nee Burke) as usual was on hand in the music room to take the 'official debs photos' for the students as they arrived!

A huge thanks to the group of students from several year groups who assisted in various ways i.e. assisting Ms Coulihan with queuing to have their photos taken;



manning the desk in handing out Debs Ball tickets to waiting students and assisting in the clean up.

Thanks also to Ms Loughman for her beautiful candelabra and all the staff of the Community school for their assistance to us and allowing us to take over the school for their graduating students of 2012.

Last, but not least, a huge thank you to every member of the Parents' Association who all assisted in various ways as this is an 'all hands on deck event!'



This is definitely an event not to be missed for those lucky enough to qualify for the next Debs Ball in 2013! Above are two of the photo's taken at the reception.

We regret we could not include more in this newsletter. More photos are displayed on the Parents' Association Noticeboard, in the Main Hall, for anyone who wishes to view them and copies can be obtained.

All photos are referenced by number.

CLASS DIRECTORY UPDATE

The concept of a class directory was successfully introduced by the Parents' Association in 2011. It provides a listing of all students in each year (in alphabetical order by first name) showing name, address and phone numbers for their parents. If no details are provided, then the name is all that appears.

It is then distributed to all families with a student in the year. Its main purpose is to provide parents with necessary information and they can now contact other parents while trying to arrange lifts to discos, matches or to confirm sleepovers, parties etc.

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

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

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@stcolmcilles.ie or post it into the school.

ARE YOU INCLUDED IN OUR CLASS DIRECTORY?