



AGM is on Oct 7th with guest speaker Adi Roche of Chernobyl Children's International.

## Sports Kits

Following representation to the Parents' Association (PA) we were asked to assist in reviewing the current state of some of the sports kits for the students in St. Colmcille's.

The PA approached Ms Ní Mhuirí who is in charge of the school kits and she undertook a comprehensive review and advised the committee that the girls basketball jerseys, the soccer jerseys, and all the gaelic jerseys (boys and girls) are quite dated and most are in need of replacing.

*"I have been teaching in the school for 8 years and training girls teams all that time. In those 8 years, none of the girls teams have received new jerseys".*

They are used when playing against other schools but it is obvious that our jerseys are not as new or modern as other schools.

It appeared that the girls basketball and gaelic jerseys are in existence for at least 8 years and are probably the original set purchased when the school first opened.

The PA decided that it would sponsor a set of jerseys for the girls gaelic team along with a new kit for the girls basketball team as these were considered priority items for replacing.

It is hoped that the PA will be in a position to sponsor a set of gear for one of the boys teams in 2015, with the intention to replace all team kits over the next few years, on a needs basis.

Should any parent or company be in a position to help sponsor a team kit they can contact the PA, who would be delighted to discuss and assist such sponsorship.



## Sports Hall protective floor covering

When the new sports hall wooden flooring was laid, it was known that after a period of time and floor use it would need protection to preserve it. Sanding and varnishing suffices for sports usage, but as the sports hall has multiple uses now, it was decided that an extra covering was needed to protect the surface. After discussions with flooring experts, various floor coverings were looked at and evaluated. It was agreed that one would be trialled on a rental basis.

For this to be a success the covering needed to be flexible for all events, easily and quickly laid out and then re-wrapped and put in storage for future use. The covering system chosen is made up of large rolls of specialist covering material on an "A frame" from which it can be quickly deployed to cover the floor. This covering allows the school to host events in the hall without fear of the beautiful wooden floor being damaged by spillages, scuffs or gouges.

Following the successful trial/rental period, during which the new floor covering was fully tested with the many varied activities making full use of the sports hall, it was decided to purchase the covering.

This is now helping to keep the wooden floor in top condition, ensuring many years of service to all who use this excellent school facility.

# Lab Aid and IT Support

For the past several years, the Parents' Association, in recognition that Science and Technology will offer major employment opportunities in the future, has supported the school's students by funding a Science and ICT position. This support position has been invaluable in the continuous development of the science department and school's ICT capacities. To this end the school employed Dr. Thomas Foyle, an NUI Galway graduate, who has extensive experience, having lectured at University level in both science and computers.

On a day to day level Thomas provides assistance by preparing laboratory experiments and chemicals and setting up the labs. All students in the school have 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. This is of particular value to the junior certificate students who as part of their third year State exam, are required to design and carry out their own experiments. These experiments are worth 25% of their science exam. Additionally, with the introduction of the new junior certificate reform and the emphasis on projects and experimental work, the need for Thomas's support of both students and teachers will further increase in value.

The role also includes the management of science resources, including stock control, new resource acquisition and equipment maintenance and repair. This centralises the management of the science department function and frees up teacher time to focus 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 in both junior and leaving certificate levels.

Thomas's in-house ICT support has been essential in helping to keep the complex computer systems for the 700+ student and staff body running optimally. Repairs and maintenance can be carried out promptly to minimise disruption to staff and students. As the need to embrace technology throughout the school has developed, the school has invested in 100 Mb wireless technologies, with the planned roll out of ipads and other ICT devices for students. This in-house ICT expertise has been invaluable in the decision making process.

Thomas's on-going training, such as the attendance of Apple Tech programs "Mobility with Apple for Education", has helped inform ICT development policy. Thomas's 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. One of the exciting outcomes from the computer club was a smartphone app that was successfully entered into this year's BT Young Scientist Exhibition.

This entrepreneurial technology project was titled "Mediavista - Smartphone controlled TV Media Centre". The students picture and project also featured in the Irish Times, in an article entitled "Smart, Easy-to-Market Product puts Technology Centre Stage at the RDS", on Friday 10th January. It also drew high profile interest from the Chief Technology Officer of RTE, Richard Waghorn, who was interested in its potential to be integrated with RTE's Saorview service. The project also drew the attention of the Labour Tánaiste, Eamon Gilmore and the CEO of BT Ireland, Colm O'Neill. Overall the project received an excellent "Highly Commended" award.

Thomas has also managed the Schools Badminton teams over the last three years. This year's achievements include the under 14 and 16 girls and under 14 boys teams reaching the Leinster badminton finals. The under 19 boys team have excelled and reached the all-Ireland finals.



# Defibrillator

The Parents' Association have funded, in conjunction with the school, 2 defibrillators. A defibrillator is used to administer an electric shock to a person who is having a cardiac arrest. They will be placed outside the reception area and in the sports hall of the school. They are designed to allow non-medical personnel to save lives. We are also funding the education of 18 staff in the use of the apparatus. With such a volume of students and adults using the school premises, we were anxious to get this equipment in place and available for use.



# National Parents' Council Post Primary

(NPCpp) represent the views of parents through the five constituent bodies at national level, PACCS is one of these bodies. NPCpp supports parents by:

- Providing the Leaving Certificate helpline in August each year.
- Holding an annual half-day educational conference in March, parents are asked to support.
- Hold an annual educational conference in November, all parents are asked to support.
- Providing training for the parents role in Parents' Associations nationwide.
- Providing training for parents on issues regarding antibullying nationwide.
- Developing various information leaflets, newsletters and booklets to support/inform parents in their role.
- Work on issues such as a)weight of schoolbags b)cost of schoolbooks.
- Promote parents as being equal partners in education.
- Promote the views of parents at national level.

Visit [www.npcpp.ie](http://www.npcpp.ie)

For further information on PACCS/NPCpp please contact your Representative **Julie Kilroy on 087 3633230**



## 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, 4th and 5th years to visit Cuan Mhuire in Co. Kildare.

Speakers from Cuan Mhuire came to the school to speak to our 3rd and 6th years.

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 all the parents who make this possible. As a result we hope our students will live richer and fuller lives.



## Benefits of reading – why we should read everyday



*On display in the GPH  
(created by Ms Hayden & Mr O'Malley)*

When was the last time you read a book or a substantial magazine article? Do your daily reading habits centre around tweets, facebook updates or the directions on your instant oatmeal packet? If you are one of the countless people who don't make a habit of reading regularly, you might be missing out: reading has a significant number of benefits, such as mental stimulation, stress reduction, vocabulary expansion, memory improvement, better writing skills and improves focus and concentration.

Here at St. Colmcille's we run a number of incentives to encourage reading by our students:

1. Students have access to the library after school until 5pm Monday to Thursday.
2. The library has been utilised to facilitate the introduction of first years to secondary school life. From Monday to Friday first year students have access to the library at lunch time to partake in a Homework Club.
3. In conjunction with the English Dept., all first year and second year students are assigned one reading class a week.
4. Following recommendations from students and Ballyroan Library, the choice of books has been expanded and updated.
5. On World Book Day (6th March) the importance of reading was highlighted by encouraging all students and staff to read a book of their choice during the last period.

However children mirror the actions of their parents. We can only do so much. This year make reading the action your children mirrors. Finally, all this would not be possible without your support. Your voluntary contribution at the beginning of the year has been instrumental in the development of the library. Step away from your computer, crack open a book and replenish your soul. There is always something out there to capture your curiosity and imagination.

## Scoliosis

The Parents' Association have arranged for a scoliosis nurse specialist to visit the school this coming October. She will be available to screen all first year, second year and third year girls and boys. With an incidence of 1 in 50 girls and 1 in 1,000 boys, we feel this is an event worthy of our support. In addition, we purchased an educational video on scoliosis and presented it to the school for all the pupils to view. The screening will take place on Monday, 6th October 2014.

## Did you know?

You can contact the Parents' Association  
**Email - [parents@stcolmcilles.ie](mailto:parents@stcolmcilles.ie)**  
**Or via our post box**

Please feel free to contact the Parents' Association with any comments, suggestions or queries you may have via email or our post box which is located in the school office. 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, alongside details of upcoming events.

# Voluntary Subscriptions

As we approach the end of another school year, we want to say thank you to the families who paid some, or all, of the suggested €250 voluntary subscription.

We realise that many families are experiencing additional financial pressures and we welcome any contribution, however small. 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.

Voluntary subscriptions can be paid by; standing order (see [www.stcolmcilles.ie](http://www.stcolmcilles.ie) to download an SO form); cheque (drop envelope in to the office for the attention of the PA); Easy Pay option on the school website (from September 2014).

Tax back - the Parents' Association can claim thousands of euro every year thanks to tax relief given by the Revenue to approved bodies.

This is a straightforward and simple process, which allows your subscription to go even further and us to get the most out of it. Changes to this tax relief came into effect from 1st January 2013. The main points of change:

Any tax payer, either PAYE or self-assessed, who donates €250 or more in a year to the Parents' Association can:

- Fill out a form and allow the Parents' Association to reclaim tax on their donations.

- Since January 2013, higher and standard rates of tax no longer apply, replaced by a composite rate of 31%.

- A donation of €250 is actually worth €362.32 to us.

If you are a PAYE or self-assessed taxpayer please take a few minutes to fill out the form included with this newsletter or download one from the school website.

Please note that this form is an enduring certificate, which will last for five years from the date of signature and will cover any future donations that you may make to the Parents' Association during that time.

# Funding for Orals

The parents of St Colmcille's are very fortunate when it comes to the mock Junior and Leaving Certificate exams.

Unlike most schools, almost all of the costs of these essential exams are included in the administration fee or eliminated by the staff themselves correcting the papers.

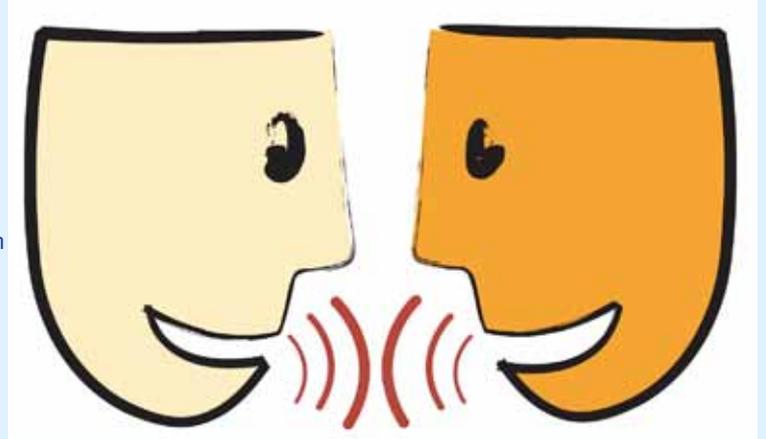
The one exception has been the mock oral examinations. As part of the state exams, students taking Irish and modern languages at Leaving Cert and Irish at Junior Cert, undergo an oral exam which is worth a significant proportion of their final mark (20-40% depending on the subject, exam and level).

Collection of fees for these has always been problematic / time consuming for the teachers and frequently does not cover the full cost.

In addition, the cost of the Junior Cert Irish Orals has never been covered by either the parents or the state and the school has had to find the funding from within its limited resources.

Hence, Mr McKennedy approached the Parents' Association with a view to discussing how to simplify the collection of these funds and ensure that the full costs were covered.

The orals are a part of almost every student's secondary education and mock orals can be among the most beneficial of the mock exams as most students will not have had to undergo an oral exam before they sit their state exams.



As parents, we are only too aware of the financial strain on so many of us. Hence, the Committee have offered to pay for the orals from the voluntary subscriptions we receive.

As with all other funding provided to the school, this will be reviewed annually to ensure funds are available. However, for 2015 at least, there will be no charge for the orals.

# Class Directory Update

Class directories have been produced since 2011 providing a listing of the students in your child's year along with any contact details provided by their parents.

Its main purpose is to provide parents with necessary information to enable them to contact other parents when trying to arrange lifts to school or social events or when trying to confirm arrangements for events.

We have distributed a new copy to each family with a student in the year annually. However, there has been little change in the directory from one year to the next.

Hence, it is our intention to only issue a new listing in September to First Years unless the number of changes to the directory for other years is significant.

However, if you are interested in a replacement copy of the directory for your child's year, you need only e-mail [parents@stcolmcilles.ie](mailto:parents@stcolmcilles.ie) giving your child's name and current year and one will be sent to you.

Anyone who wishes to have their details added to the directory or updated can also email them to the above e-mail address and the new details will be on any updates issued thereafter.

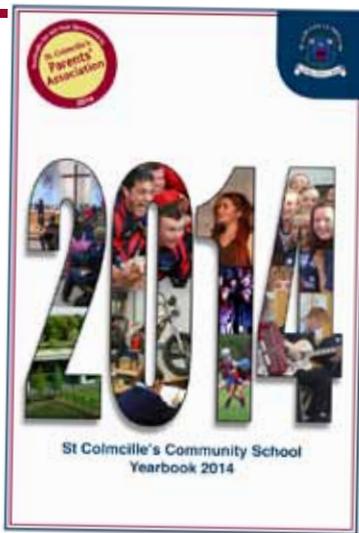
# Year- book 2014

*As a parent, have you ever read the yearbook?*

I had not, but did so recently. I recommend that every parent read it.

I was so impressed that the most recent 2013 yearbook was created, designed & written by students themselves. It left me with a sense of the volume of great initiatives that are available in St. Colmcille's, the number of activities & events, sports & clubs. As a parent who is told the minimum from my child as to what goes on in school it proved a really positive eye opener!

The inclusion of each year group class photos will be something that your child will treasure as they move through the school and indeed for many years after they leave, to look back with great memories and most likely have a laugh at their pictures! The 2014 year book was made available in May and the Parents' Association were delighted to sponsor the book for each 6th year student, to thank them for their contribution over the years to life in St. Colmcille's.



## MOCK INTERVIEWS...

### ...A WORD OF THANKS

On December 9th 2013, the Parents' Association organised mock interviews for our sixth year students. Many thanks to all those parents involved. A big thanks to Dave Hanley for coordinating the night.

Students applying for FETAC/UCAS and some CAO courses are now doing interviews as part of the application process. All students doing the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme interviews also find this experience invaluable.

They have to complete an interview as part of their LCVP exam and this contributes towards their Leaving Certificate points. Many students will also be applying for jobs during the summer! The effort and time spent running the mock interviews is really worthwhile as the students learn new lifelong skills.

The feedback forms filled out by students were extremely positive. The interviewers give comprehensive feedback. The students learn from the feedback and also gain confidence. Every year, the students leave their interviews with a really positive attitude.

This is thanks to the skills of the interviewers and the caring way that they give feedback. This is a really valuable exercise and we really appreciate the help and support of the Parents' Association.

**Dinah Kenny**  
Guidance Counsellor

## Parents' Association for Community & Comprehensive Schools (PACCS)

PACCS was formed in 1983 to support Parents' Associations of Community & Comprehensive Schools. The role of PACCS is to do the following:

- Inform of NPCpp training for parents which supports schools and parents.
- Meets with parents from other schools in the region to discuss regional issues.
- PACCS executive will work on issues raised by parents at conference.
- Will keep parents informed on educational matters. Visit our website [www.paccs.ie](http://www.paccs.ie) to keep up-to-date.
- Is active in seeking adequate representation for parents on the Statutory Curriculum and Exams Board.
- Is active in assisting parents in the formation of Parents' Associations/Groups.

- Provide advice and guidelines to help strengthen Parents' Associations.
- Meets with teachers' unions, managerial bodies, education officers and groups etc., promoting an understanding and acceptance of the role of parents.

PACCS is active through its four delegates in the work of the NPCpp which has been formed in co-operation with the Minister of Education and other parents' groups.

The Council acts as a forum for parent's views and opinions on educational policy.

**For further information on PACCS/NPCpp please contact your Representative Julie Kilroy on 087 3633230.**

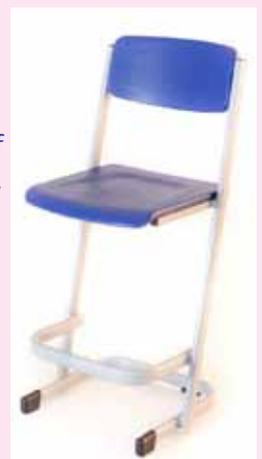
## Stools

Up until now the option classes in the school have contained stools which have no back support. Some student's timetables require them to sit on these stools for multiple consecutive classes.

The Parents' Association are funding the replacement of these stools with an improved version.

We are replacing 232 stools with a back support model which will be in place for the start of the new school year.

This will ensure that the students are sitting with proper back support while attending an option class.



# Debs Ball 2013



On the 10th September, 2013 the Parents' Association, hosted their, now traditional, reception in the early evening for parents and students, with both reception and Debs Ball proving to be another huge 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 graduating student Ciara O'Byrne who liaised with the Parents' Association in organising the event.

Ms Coulihan, as usual, was on hand to take the 'official debs photos' for the students as they arrived! Huge thanks goes to the 2nd and 5th (current 6th) year students who assisted - Ms Coulihan with organising the queuing for photos to be taken, manned the desk in handing out Debs Ball tickets to waiting students and assisted in the clean up.

Many thanks also to Ms Loughman for her beautiful candelabra and a big thank you to all the staff of the Community School for their assistance which allowed us to take over the school for their graduating students of 2013.

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'! Plans are already in hand for all the graduating students of 2014 and it is always a great occasion to look forward to.

Here are just a sample of photos taken at the reception. We regret we could not include all in this newsletter. All photos are displayed in the Parents' Association noticeboard, in the Main Hall, for anyone who wishes to view them and copies can be obtained.

