



Newsletter



A Warm Welcome...

December 2016 Volume 5 - Issue 02

Welcome to the final newsletter of 2016. As the year draws to a close I feel it's important we keep you up to date with developments within the school over the past few weeks.

Firstly, thank you for your patience and understanding around the recent school closures. It is my hope than the current dialogue between the government and the ASTI will mean that school closures are a thing of the past, allowing everyone to move on with the important work at hand.

I can assure you that staff will be working diligently to ensure that there are no adverse affects on our students and the lost tuition time is made up. Thankfully the school was in a position to open on days when supervision and substitution was withdrawn by ASTI members. This allowed us to minimise disruption of the school day when many other schools were not as fortunate. That said I must also prepare for a scenario where talks between the government and the ASTI do not succeed. If the ASTI dispute continues then the school will have to close on days where there is strike action. However I would envisage that the school will be in a position to open on all other days. Naturally a text message will be sent around that time to keep you up to speed. If the dispute continues there will also be a knock on affect on both staff meetings and parent teacher meetings after the Christmas break as they may have to occur during the school day (as opposed to after school). Parents will be advised by text closer to the time. In such a scenario the school would close at 1pm and buses would run as normal at this time. A text message will be sent a week prior confirming the times for you.

Finally I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your support and cooperation with the school over the past 12 months. I wish you and your family a safe and peaceful Christmas and I look forward to working with you in 2017.

Richard Prendiville - Principal



Year Heads & Co-ordinators 2016/17

1st Years Mr. K. O'Keeffe

2nd Years Ms. E. Fitzgerald

3rd Years Ms. S. Fitzgerald

LC1 Ms. R. O'Donoghue

LC2 Ms. G. O'Callaghan

LCA Co-ordinator Ms. M. Hogan

TY Co-ordinator Ms. M. Hogan

LCVP Co-ordinator Mr. P. McElligott



L-R: P. McElligott, R. O'Donoghue, G. O'Callaghan, K.O'Keeffe, Standing L- R S. Fitzgerald, E. Fitzgerald, M. Hogan

You may contact any of the above by telephoning the school in the first instance. Naturally all staff have formal timetabled classes and so may not be in a position to speak to you instantly but they will get back to you at their earliest convenience. Please also note that it is vital appointments are made through the office should you wish to meet any of the above in person.

If you require a face to face meeting with any staff member then it is vital a pre-arranged appointment is made through the office. Unfortunately arriving at school without a pre planned appointment in the hope of meeting a staff member cannot be accommodated.

Main Car Park & Front Gate

Parents should note that the main school car park is for school staff only. Students should be dropped off and collected on the road-side footpath or the bottom of the steps. Unfortunately the main car park has no capacity to accommodate parent's cars.

Parents are equally reminded that the front gate is exceptionally busy. I am asking parents **NOT** to turn here in the mornings or evenings. Cars are asked to turn at any of the upper entrances instead.

Open Night 2016

Tarbert Comprehensive Open Night was held on Thursday 27th of October. Large crowds attended the event offering primary school pupils from far and wide the opportunity to view the school facilities and mingle with the school staff. Presentations at the end of the night from Mr. Prendiville, Sr. Frances, Leaving Cert. Mentors, Mr. McNamara, and Mrs. Griffin highlighted the uniqueness of the Comprehensive School ethos, pastoral care structures as well as the Curriculum on offer in the school.

Remaining Parent Teacher Meetings

The following are the remaining Parent Teacher meetings this school year:

2nd Year P/T Meeting
Tuesday 13th December 2016

1st Year & TY PT Meeting
Thursday 12th January 2017

LC1 PT Meeting
Tuesday January 31st 2017

New Format of Parent Teacher Meeting

As you are aware this year saw the introduction of a new trial format for LC2 Parent Teacher meetings. **For the first time the students themselves were also asked to attend along with their parents.** The aim of this was simple – parents AND students should get feedback from teachers as regards the level of progress students have made in that subject to date and should hear directly on how to improve or maintain their grades.

Following the meeting I conducted in depth surveys with parents, students and teachers to gauge the overall effectiveness of the new format. The results are very encouraging. The main findings following the meeting were:

- 98% of students felt the new format was either a positive or very positive experience
- 100% of parents felt the new format was either a positive or very positive experience
- 93% of parents felt the feedback they received on the evening was either useful or very useful
- 80 % of teachers felt the new format was either a positive or very positive experience

Therefore given this feedback I have concluded a number of points going forward:

1. The vast majority of all stakeholders favour the new system & see the benefits outweighing any drawbacks
2. However there is strong feedback to suggest that this new meetings format is confined to senior students only, thus allowing the new format to become embedded over time.
Therefore, for now, this new format of meetings will be restricted to LC1/LCA1 & LC2/LCA2 students only. These students will have, we hope, the maturity to take the feedback on board and use it in a positive manner.
3. The LC1 meeting in January 2017 will also now take on this new format
4. It is compulsory for all senior students to attend these meetings along with their Parent(s)
5. As the meetings can be quite lengthy - no homework will be issued by teachers on the nights of the meeting to the students in question
6. Finally it is my hope to review the format of the meetings within the next 2 years with a view to consider rolling it out to TY & JC3 groups also

Official School Opening & Blessing

The school's new extension and fitness suite were officially opened and blessed on Friday October 28th by Reverend Ray Browne, Bishop of Kerry. Members of Boards of Management past and present, as well as current and former staff, Parents Association members, locals and those involved in the construction project itself celebrated the occasion.



L- R: Mr. Prendiville (Príomhoide), Ciara Shine (Student Council), Ms. Moloney (Leas Príomhoide), Caelán Fox (Student Council), Mr. David Moriarty (Architect), Mrs. Mary McGillicuddy (Board Chairperson), Mr. Mike McElligott (Builder) and Bishop Ray Browne



L- R: Mr. Mike McElligott (Builder), Bishop Ray Browne, Mr. Prendiville (Príomhoide), Mrs. Mary McGillicuddy (Board Chairperson), Canon James Linnane (Former Board Chairperson), Mrs Ann Woods (former Parents Association Chairperson), Mr. David Moriarty (Architect)

Board of Management

The members of the school Board of management are:

Mrs. Mary McGillicuddy (Chairperson)
Ms. Ann Flavin
Cllr. Jim Finucane
Ms. Ann O'Dwyer, Kerry RTB
Ms. Niamh Wall
Mr. Ted O'Connor
Ms. Anne O'Sullivan
Mr. Andrew McNamara
Mr. Richard Prendiville (Secretary)

Should you wish to communicate with the Board of Management you may do so by writing to the Secretary of the Board at the school address, or contacting either of the parent's nominees, again using the school address. All correspondence addressed to members of the Board is treated as private and confidential and is not opened in the school.

Communication

Given that a lot of communication between school and home occurs by text can I remind you that if it is a case that you change your mobile number or feel you are not receiving such messages then please contact the school office and we will rectify the problem. The school app will be replacing more and more general text messages so it is advisable to download and install it on to your Smartphone.

It is at all times vital that home and school are communicating. Use the journal, check the journal and telephone whenever you have an issue that needs more than a note. Please be sure to make an appointment before coming to the school. We welcome parents but school is a very busy place and we need advance notice of all meetings and appointments. Naturally, when there is anything urgent, no such formalities apply.

Please remember to check the school journal at least once a week. From time to time notes and signatures may be forged by students. This not only breaks the home-school communication but can lead to problems being undetected and consequently unresolved.

The New School App & Revamped Website

Modern technology is allowing us make the school more and more accessible to members of the school community. The school now has its own unique app that will keep you up to speed on all the developments within the school. Simply download the app if you have an iPhone or Android Smartphone. We eventually hope the app will allow us replace much of our general text messaging.

In addition the app and website will contain all our future newsletters. Traditionally newsletters from the school have been printed and distributed to parents at great cost to the school. However we are moving to electronic newsletters from now on. A text message will alert parents to the publication of the Newsletter online.

The school's web page has also been re- designed and modernised so as to keep you up to date with school information. Please visit www.tarbertcomprehensive.ie and see the layout of the new web-page. Other useful information such as subject specific links can be found there. It is our hope that the new website format will make information far more accessible to all.

Christmas Exams, School Reports & VS Ware

Christmas/Autumn Exams ran from Tuesday November 29th to Friday December 2nd. **Exam results will not be posted home this year** – instead they can be retrieved online through VSware. By now all parents have been issued their VSware login details. VSware is the schools computerised administration system. As our society becomes more IT savvy we believe the school should push similar boundaries. Therefore all school reports going forward from Christmas 2016 will be available to view online on VSware for your child or your children.

Please feel free to contact the school if there are any issues concerning access. Naturally the onus is on parents to keep their login details secure. In no way should login or password details be shared with others. The school will text home all parents to alert them as to the availability of the results online. It is my hope results will be available to view from mid December.

Students have been reminded about the importance of their Autumn/Christmas exams as a key stepping stone in their State Exams preparation and as an indicator on their progress in school to date.



School Closure

The possibility of school closure due to bad weather - **Red means STOP (in affected areas)**

Any decision, by the Board of Management, to close the school is not taken lightly. In recent years this has mainly occurred as a consequence of severe winter weather conditions or power loss.

All potential hazardous scenarios are weighed up carefully, by the school authorities, in light of the available information at the time and through continuous communication with the bus operators and school staff.

The school tries to strike a balance between, on the one hand, ensuring the health, safety and well being of both students and staff to the best of its ability while on the other hand, preventing the unnecessary disruption to teaching and learning of its students.

As with last winter, Bus Éireann has indicated that as a precaution against severe weather and in the interest of child safety, to introduce a policy applicable to all school transport services that it provides under the Department of Education and Skills School Transport Scheme nationwide - for ALL Met Éireann Status **Red weather events**.

This means that when a Red alert is issued by Met Éireann for the area in which you live – or an area to which your child(ren) are travelling to on a school bus – the services will not operate.

This policy is available on www.buseireann.ie/statusred.

All parents should be aware that:

- Bus Éireann has sole responsibility for school transport and NOT school personnel.
- A Status Red weather warning automatically means all school transport services provided by Bus Éireann under the School Transport Schemes are cancelled – in the affected areas – while the warning is in effect.
- Weather warnings are carried on all national and local news bulletins.
- Those families using private bus operators should contact their bus operators directly for up to date information about transport availability.
- **While Bus Éireann may not be providing school transport services because of this new policy, it understands that when any severe weather is forecast, it remains for each individual school to decide whether that school should close or not. Therefore the school may open as normal, if it so decides.**
- In the event that the school authorities decide to officially close the school for poor weather or indeed for any reason – a text message will be sent to all parents regarding the closure – every attempt will be made to do this as early as possible, keeping in mind that as Principal, I often rely on many others for information/recommendations before a decision is made and conditions can change rapidly in the early mornings.
- Parents should only accept text messages with the **'TarbertCS'** username.

Sickness

We are approaching that time of year when illness, bugs and flues become common and I want parents to be aware of a few points.

When a child indicates to a teacher that they are unwell, they are sent to the office area. In many cases the illness is minor and the student can resume classes later. On occasion students will be allowed to ring home (usually from a school mobile number) where they may have to be collected by a parent/guardian and taken home.

Students are under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** allowed use their own phones to ring or text about being collected by a parent/guardian.

Can I ask parents of students who feel unwell at home before school, not to send them in to school at all. These students usually get much sicker during the day and often can become distressed if they cannot be collected by a parent/guardian.

If you are collecting your child, for any reason, you must sign them out on the 'Departures Book' at the school reception area.

Maths Week

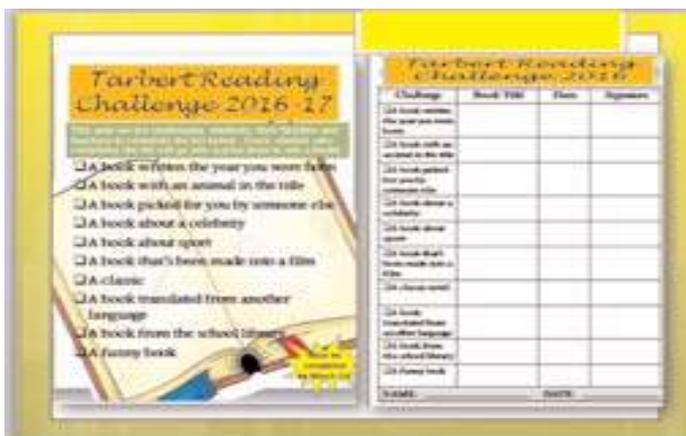


The Wellread Award

This year as part of our literacy focus in the school we have decided to pursue The Wellread Award. This is a national award which celebrates the commitment to developing a reading culture in the school. Throughout the year we will continue to focus on reading with our first year reading classes and library updates, as well as other initiatives aimed at promoting reading for pleasure.

Currently our students are encouraged to take part in the **Tarbert Reading Challenge**. We would like as many of our students and their families as possible to read the ten book genres listed between now and March. Details of the Reading Challenge can be found on the school website. If we are to attain the Wellread award, it is vital that we demonstrate our dedication to reading not only as a school but as a community.

Thanks to all the parents who responded to our request for book recommendations – these are regularly posted on the school app and website. Finally consider a book as a great Christmas gift – take a 'Caught Reading at Christmas' photo for our competition and help us to **Make Tarbert A Reading School**. Book recommendations and photos can be emailed to Ms. Kavanagh or Ms. Anderson at their school email address.



Transition Year

Term 1 has been a very busy and productive term for our 67 Transition Year students. We began with induction in Ballybunion where students got to know their new classmates as well as finding out what would be expected of them during the year. Since then students have learned how to surf, they've had sessions in the gym and pool and experienced the pain of boot camp!

All students completed proposals for the BT Young Scientist and two of the projects have been accepted for the finals in Dublin which is a great achievement. Students have at this stage completed a week of work experience with 2 more weeks planned for term three. Reports from the employers have been extremely positive regarding all students. We also attended Axa road safety show in Killarney recently along with several other schools from Kerry.

Student enterprise projects are also up and running at this stage whereby students are required to set up and manage their own small business. These include making chocolate, making seaweed bath products, selling hoodies, making protein bars, making apple juice, Christmas decorations, producing a CD, making candles, running a talent show and running kids activity campsthe list goes on. What an enterprising bunch of students we have, the entrepreneurs of the future no doubt.

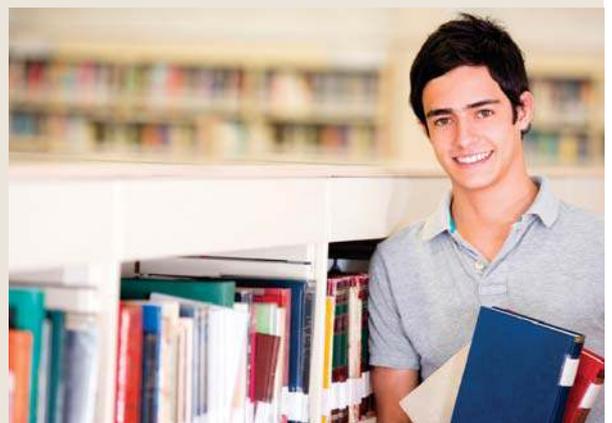
Finally, 46 of our students travelled to France on a school exchange at the end of November for 5 days while the remaining students went to Northern Ireland to sample some of the history, geography and culture of the 6 counties. Both trips were a tremendous success and we compliment all the students for their attitude, maturity and levels of co-operation.



The Thomas McGreevy School Library

One of our aims in Tarbert Comprehensive is to encourage and promote reading within the school community and develop a love of reading. To this end the library stocks a wide variety of books from modern fiction and fantasy, classic literature, sport, history and much more.

Students can check out and return books every Monday from 1.15pm-1.45pm and Friday mornings from 8.30am-8.55am. It's a resource waiting to be explored.



BT Young Scientist 2017

We would like to offer a big congratulations to the two groups that successfully qualified for the BT young scientist and technology exhibition in Dublin's RDS. The competition runs from the 10th to 14th of January 2017. Chloe O'Carroll, Aine Enright, and Aoife O'Brien have shown great interest and concern over the safety of equestrians on public roads. Having a high interest in horse riding themselves, they have noticed how there is a lack of awareness towards the correct rules of the road when encountering someone horse riding on public roads.

Our second qualified project, by Tomás Culhane and Ciaran Healy, is a technology and agriculture themed project. Tomás and Ciaran have noticed how there can be a struggle in maintaining the correct current in an electric fence as current can be lost due to vegetation being in contact with the fence. They are currently designing a fence in which current lost will be at a minimum.

Many other very interesting projects were submitted to the exhibition but unfortunately not everyone was selected. We would like to thank these students for their hard work and creative thinking when submitting their projects. Credit also to Mr. Nash for his work in bringing these projects up to standard for the exhibition next month.



Guidance Department

The final year of school is one of the busiest and most challenging times in a young person's life. While studying, there is the added stress of having to decide the next step in the career journey.

Students should take time to fully research their options (check entry requirements, course content, possible careers etc) and always ensure they have a "Plan B".

The new Leaving Certificate Grading Scale and Revised Points will operate for 2017 and is highlighted for your attention. Also listed are some very useful websites and key dates. In addition the school will host an information evening for parents on the CAO application process ("Hear"/"Dare" schemes, SUSI Grant etc) later in the term.

Students should consult the Guidance Notice Board in the school for up-to-date information, also the "Guidance" section of the school website.



Jeanelle Griffin
Guidance Counsellor

Success is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration!

Best of Luck for the year ahead! Jeanelle Griffin

Important Closing Dates

NAME	DATE	DEADLINE
UCAS Application Closing Deadline	15th Oct. 2016 15th Jan. 2017	Some Courses Close All Courses Close
CAO Application Deadline:		
Early Application Online Discount €25	20th Jan. 2017	Online or Paper
Normal Application €40	1st Feb. 2017	
Change of Mind Facility Opens	5th May 2017	
Change of Mind Facility Closes	1st July 2017	
HEAR & DARE Schemes	1st Feb. 2017	Apply ONLINE as part of your CAO Application
Higher Education Access Route ("HEAR") and Disability Access Route to Education ("DARE")		
Deadline for "HEAR" and "DARE" Supporting Documents.....1st April 2017		
Post Leaving Cert Courses	Apply Mid Feb. to August 2017	
SUSI Maintenance Grant	Apply April 2017 - July 2017	

Important Websites

www.qualifax.ie (Essential Course Search Engine)
www.cao.ie (CAO Information & Application)
www.accesscollege.ie ("Hear" & "Dare" Schemes)
www.careersportal.ie (Essential Course & Career)
www.ucas.com (Study in England)
www.studentfinance.ie (SUSI Grant Information)
www.susi.ie (Grant Application)

All College Websites for Ireland - www.name.ie
e.g. www.ucc.ie, www.ul.ie, www.dcu.ie

