



# Newsletter

## A Warm Welcome...

## September 2015 Volume 3 - Issue 01

### Year Heads & Co-ordinators 2015/16 The Year Heads for the academic year 2015/16

**1st Years** Ms. E. Fitzgerald

**2nd Years** Ms. S. Fitzgerald

**3rd Years** Ms. R. O'Donoghue

**LC1** Ms. G. O'Callaghan

**LC2** Mr. K. O'Keeffe

**LCA Co-ordinator** Ms. M. Hogan

**TY Co-ordinator** Ms. M. Hogan

**LCVP Co-ordinator** Mr. P. McElligott

Parents, welcome to the first newsletter of the 2015-16 school year. I hope that you and your family enjoyed the summer break. There have been a number of changes across the summer. Firstly I want to thank the staff who have left and moved on, for their commitment and contributions to the school over the years. The school has also seen changes to the building. Carpets have been replaced on all corridors and the school DCG laboratory has been equipped by 24 new state of the art PC's. It is hoped all students will benefit from this investment and that the school has a brighter and cleaner appearance that will last many years into the future. This investment is thanks to the foresight and generosity of the Board of Management and is greatly welcome. The school extension work continues. In the meantime we are operating on a reduced classroom capacity but it is hoped we will be in a position to move back into our 3 new classrooms by January 2016. The first few weeks here in school have gone by rapidly and it is my hope that for the most part things have gone smoothly for your child(ren). We have welcomed 94 new First Years to the school and they seem to have coped with the big change successfully. Credit must go to teachers and student mentors alike for their successful and continued induction and integration. Equally a number of new students have joined us from other schools into various year groups. They are most welcome to the Comprehensive School family. Naturally from time to time there will be settling problems at school, indeed there may equally be issues at home affecting your child, in any year group, therefore it is vital that we are let know if there are any concerns or difficulties; no matter how small they may appear. Small problems have a tendency to grow to larger ones if they are left unattended. So if you have any concerns at all then you should contact your child's Year Head in the first instance. *Richard Prendiville - Principal*



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. Equally the Guidance Counsellor (Ms. Griffin), School Chaplain (Sr. F. Day), Deputy Principal and Principal may be contacted. It is important for parents to note that Sr. Frances is a fully qualified

Counsellor and is accredited to IAHAAP. Please also note that it is vital appointments are made through the office should you wish to meet any of the above in person. Unfortunately arriving at school without a pre planned appointment in the hope of meeting a staff member cannot be accommodated.

# In-house Exams

## Important note

I wish to remind Parents / Guardians that we inform you about in-house exams dates at the beginning of each academic year so as to ensure that every student is available for the full duration of his/her scheduled exams.

Every effort will be made to accommodate any student who may miss an exam/part of the exams as a result of a bereavement or certified sickness but only within the duration of the in house exam dates themselves.

In some situations parents may be asked to administer a missed exam in a controlled environment at home to their son/daughter. Unfortunately no exam can be administered to a student ahead of the scheduled exam date.

Students who miss an exam or exams due to family holidays, sporting or cultural commitments such as concerts, weddings, etc. cannot be accommodated in this manner.

## Student Insurance

Parents should be aware that we pay accident insurance for all our students. We pay this from the voluntary contribution that we receive each year from parents. Students have 24 hour cover 365 days a year.

This means that in the event of even a minor accident at school or at home, even during holiday times, that incurs any medical expense, then the money can be claimed through Allianz Insurance Policy. Claim forms are available from the School Office or direct from **Allianz** at: **Burlington House, Burlington Road, Dublin 4.**

## Grinds...

I wish to take a moment to highlight my concern around the grinds culture that has become a national phenomenon and seems to have entered the psyche of many of our young people in believing it being vital in achieving exam success.

Unfortunately more and more parents have become forced into the grinds culture because their son/daughter comes home with the news that their teacher is 'useless' or they just 'don't get it'. This conversation is usually the result of an underperformance at a critical exam. Of course it's far easier to blame someone else rather than take responsibility for one's own actions. Very few students put their hand up and say 'I didn't perform at that exam because I didn't work hard enough'. Indeed it's possibly even harder to say 'I don't think I'm able for higher level'. And so parents often feel forced to support their child by getting extra tuition – after all we love our children and want the best for them. However should you bide your time and look deeper before jumping to grinds? I believe you should.

From a school and exam perspective a difficulty arises when students develop a mentality that they need grinds because success cannot be achieved without them. In fact I have become aware of some students who received grinds that actually underperform in that very subject as a consequence of grinds. Why? I believe this can be summarised for 3 reasons. Firstly the students become over confident. They assume high grades will automatically follow because they are paying for grinds and so it will just happen. Secondly some students turn off listening to their teacher at school because 'I'm getting grinds in that'. Ultimately this is not what grinds were intended for – **they are meant as a support to classroom instruction – not a replacement.** Finally some students may spend three, four or five evenings a week being driven to grinds. This loss of this time has a knock on effect on subjects across the board and students are so pressurised and exhausted that their education suffers as a result and grades tumble. Students also end up with multiple sets of notes, become so bewildered with material that ultimately they become bogged down and confused that the whole experience is counter productive.

Yes grinds have their uses and I can certainly see where they may be required at times. Take for instance a student who is having a particular difficulty in a chapter or topic - a short sharp injection of grinds for a few weeks in that area may enable the student catch up on the relevant material and regain confidence. This is especially true if the subject is at Higher Level and is a specific entry requirement for a course being perused by that student in third level. Equally a student who has missed a considerable amount of time at school due to a prolonged illness or a family bereavement may require grinds so as to allow them catch up. Some students may wish to pursue a subject outside of school that has always interested them – such as Music that requires the expertise of an outside tutor. All of these are genuine and valid reasons for requiring grinds.

There are several issues I have with all of this but my biggest concern is this – **what are we teaching our children about the values of hard work, perseverance or indeed education itself by booking the perceived 'quick fix' grinds?** A number of parents have informed me lately that grinds are even now engaged more and more at Primary School level also. If our young people cannot motivate themselves to learn, if they cannot initiate their own learning, if they cannot problem solve or if they cannot learn to roll up their sleeves and even attempt to work through it – then we are doing them a great disservice for later in life. They become accustomed to being spoon fed. Ultimately, I would argue, it is probably one of the main reasons for the exceptionally high dropout rates at third level where students go from a 'do it for me' second level system to a 'do it yourself' at third level.

In conclusion I would urge parents to seek advice before choosing grinds. Discuss your concerns with the subject teacher. Contact the Deputy Principal or myself. Don't be afraid to help the child yourself. Indeed tuition from an older sibling or a friend may be far more effective than a grind. In the long run we all want what is best for the student and the grind may not be the solution.

# The new Leaving Certificate Points and Grading System

A new points and grading scoring system has been introduced that will be used from 2017 onwards for all Leaving Cert. students (excludes LCA). There is no need to worry about this new grading format at all. There are now 8 grades at Higher Level and a further 8 grades at Ordinary level. Each grade will be awarded points - except H8 and O7 & O8. opportunities to our students in a wide spectrum of areas.

This system will be used by teachers from now on for all LC1 students only and will take a little time to get used to. Bonus points will still be awarded for HL Maths - except those who get a H7 & H8 grade. A copy of the new system has been emailed to each LC1 students school email account. I advise you print it off at home and become familiar with it.

Please note that as always the same advice applies regarding exams - never risk failing a Higher Level paper especially when you can aim for a top grade at Ordinary Level that carries the same points as Higher Level e.g. A student of English who sits OL can get the same 56 points (O1) as a student who sits HL English and gets a H5 grade.

New Grades and Common Points Scale for Leaving Certificate 2017			
Grade (%)	Points	Grade (%)	Points
H1 (90-100)	100		
H2 (80-90)	88		
H3 (70-80)	77		
H4 (60-70)	66		
H5 (50-60)	56	O1 (90-100)	56
H6 (40-50)	46	O2 (80-90)	46
H7 (30-40)	37	O3 (70-80)	37
H8 (0-30)	0	O4 (60-70)	28
		O5 (50-60)	20
		O6 (40-50)	12
		O7 (30-40)	0
		O8 (0-30)	0

  

What points will be given for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme?	
LCVP Grade	Revised LCVP Points
Distinction	66
Merit	46
Pass	28

# Leaving Certificate Results

Congratulations to the class of 2015 who continued our high achieving grades across all subject areas in Augusts results. A statistical breakdown shows that our school caters for students of all aptitudes and levels, from those entering the working world to those going on to the most academically demanding courses at 3rd level. Statistically we are not just above but well above the national averages in the points race at all levels.

I am equally pleased with the high number of A grades achieved this year. In fact several students achieved multiple A grades with some achieving four, five and six A grades. Overall these statistics are a remarkable achievement and are a testament to the comprehensive, mixed ability, co-educational ethos that permeates the school. I wish to congratulate the students and teachers on the quality of these results.

This year our highest achieving student was Conor Cregan from Glin who attained 6 A grades as part of his overall results. We wish Conor and indeed the entire class of 2015 well in their future studies.



Pic: Conor Cregan

For our current students I wish to emphasise that Examination success can often be put down to the following key factors:

- Student self motivation and commitment.
- Maintaining a positive attitude towards education as well as a sensible social life outside of school – senior students who socialise to excess on weekend nights are exhausting themselves and find concentration more difficult midweek. Equally those students who overly involve themselves in numerous sports teams find a similar problem. Try and find a healthy balance.
- High rates of school attendance.
- Completion of homework to a high standard.
- Taking advice from teachers (many of whom are State Examination correctors) on board. On many occasions this may revolve around dropping to Ordinary level for exams. Why take the risk failing a paper? After all it is worth remembering that an A1 grade at Ordinary level is equivalent in points to a C3 on a Higher paper (or H5 points equate to the same as an O1 on the new points system).

# School fitness Suite

Work on the long awaited school fitness suite will begin in the coming weeks. It is hoped it will be completed in tandem with the school extension. The suite is designed as an alternative fitness and exercise area to our main gym and we hope to further fundraise for the room in the months ahead so as to equip it with the necessary gym equipment. It will also provide valuable floor space for alternative activities like yoga for students. I want to thank the Parents Association and the Board of Management for their support in funding the project to date.

# Junior Certificate

The Junior Cert results were given to our students on Wednesday September 9th last to great excitement and nerves! Results this year were again outstanding with a large number of students achieving very high grades.

Success can be measured in numerous ways and it is important we keep in mind that each student is an individual who performs to their own particular strengths or may have to overcome their own unique obstacles along the way. In my view the student who had difficulty in basic reading when they arrived to us in 1st Year and manages to achieve a C grade is just as successful, if not more so, as the student who gets the A grade.

Credit for our overall success must go to the students themselves for their hard work. The supportive families who assisted them along the way and the teachers who encouraged, coaxed, and gently pushed them when required. Equally the hard work of our local primary school should not be forgotten. Finally success can also be attributed to our co-educational, mixed ability, comprehensive ethos that creates a warm and caring wholesome atmosphere in our school community.

It is worth noting that in 2015 70.1% of students who sat a paper at higher level achieved a C grade or above compared with only 57.2% nationally - a truly impressive statistic.



Pictured are the top 9 students of Junior Certificate 2015 who between them alone achieved 55 A grades. Pictured are: Seated L-R: Roisín Noonan (Loughill), Kelsey Ahern (Listowel), Ciara Shine (Glin), Molly Cluney (Athea), Standing L-R: Rachel Rowlands (Athea), Jamie Fitzgerald (Glin), Grainne Heaphy (Tarbert), Neal Carmody (Ballylongford) and Amy O'Riordan (Athea).

## Study Skills

In the coming weeks Leaving Certificate students will receive advice on study skills and techniques by Student Enrichment Services. An equivalent day will be held for Junior Certs. This is a very beneficial exercise in preparing students for their future exams. Parents will also have an information night on Monday October 12th at 7.30 pm – parent/guardians from ALL year groups are invited to this presentation that advises you on how to get the best out of your child's study.

## Farewell Anthony!



Anthony Stack on the day of his retirement at the end of June 2015, handing back his school keys to Mr. Prendiville. Anthony retired from the Comp. after almost four decades of dedicated service.

## School Website



The school's web page is designed to keep you up to date with school information.

Please visit [www.tarbertcomprehensive.ie](http://www.tarbertcomprehensive.ie) for school news and events. Other useful information such as subject specific links can be found there.

# Book Grant

The Book Grant is used to help those who experience financial difficulties with back to school costs. The money is distributed as equitably as possible. It is used primarily to support LC1 students and book grant forms were distributed to each LC1 student. The grant is then used to pay for the Pre Examination fees for those families who hold medical cards. Any money then left remaining in the fund is used for families of 1st Year students who may be experiencing financial difficulties. It is hoped that these grant forms will be processed as soon as possible.

From time to time families can experience financial hardships. It is never our intention to add to those hardships. However by their nature schools will always have costs associated with them e.g. supervised study, book rental, pre exam fees, TY fees, school outings or field trips. However at Tarbert Comprehensive we try as much as possible to keep these fees as low as we can and we compare very favourably with other second level schools.

I would never want a situation to arise whereby a student is deprived an opportunity to participate in any activity or is embarrassed because of an inability to pay. So if this arises for you during the year please contact Sr. Frances, Ms. Moloney or myself and the matter will be dealt with sensitively and in total confidence.

The yearly contribution of €60 (€100 per family) which we ask from parents is used as follows: student insurance providing 24hour cover all year round, Study Skills for Leaving and Junior Certificate students, school retreats, buses for matches and extracurricular outings, photocopying and upkeep of the library. As you can see the money is put to very good use and allows us offer opportunities to our students in a wide spectrum of areas.

# Use of The Journal

The school journal is one of the main methods of communication between school and home. It is therefore vital that parents of **all year groups** view it regularly. Journals are collected weekly at Junior Cycle by class teachers and monitored by core subject teachers at senior cycle. All notes should be signed by a parent/guardian.

These signatures should be made in full (not initialled – this lessens the tendency of forgery). There should be no tippex appearing on notes and pages in the journal are numbered, gaps in page numbers may indicate a page has been removed.

As the journal is crucial in Home/School communication it is of paramount importance that parents of **ALL** year groups monitor its contents on a regular basis.



# Lourdes 2015

The annual Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes took place from the 2nd to the 7th September.

As is the long standing tradition in Tarbert Comprehensive School, four of our current Leaving Cert students joined the team of helpers who care for the sick there. Nine former pupils were also in attendance. This is a magical experience for everyone who goes-despite the early mornings, hard work and long days! It is an experience of a life-time and as anyone who has been there knows. On departure day from Lourdes, everyone is already planning to return next year or whenever possible. Our sincere thanks to Gerard Stack (Ballyhahill), Michelle McCarthy (Ballylongford), Sr. Frances Day (School Chaplain), Maggie Flavin (Ballylongford) and Jamie Diggins (Tarbert).

Mentors 2015 - An overwhelming response from this year's Leaving Certsto the request to train and help our new comers settle into First yearmeans that we have class mentors as well as sport, drama, music and tuition assistance clubs available at lunch hour for them.

The commitment and dedication of the senior students means that our new first years are already well underway to feeling at home and part of our school community.

Our thanks to the L.C.2 students for the time and care they have already given to their new first years.



# Tarbert Comprehensive

## Parents Association Fashion Show comes to the Comp!

The Tarbert Comprehensive Parents Association Fashion Show will be held earlier than normal this year on Friday the **23rd** of **October** in the School Gymnasium at 8pm.

Shops taking part from the North Kerry and West Limerick region will have an opportunity to show the latest autumn and winter collections. Models will comprise of local talent as well as our talented Transition Year students and children from the local communities. The night will be hosted by Ms. Siobhan Fitzgerald and Mr. Denis O'Shea.

The Fashion Show is the Parents Association annual fund raiser and all funds raised go directly to improving the facilities and services in the school. The Parents Association would like to acknowledge that this fund raiser is only possible each year thanks to the support and generosity of the School, the shops that take part, the local businesses for the sponsorship and donations, and of course the families and local community members that purchase tickets.

Tickets cost €10.00 each and are now on sale. Sales will also be conducted in school over the coming weeks during lunch time. We would ask if it is at all possible if you could please support the Association. Even if you cannot attend on the night, if possible please buy a ticket any way and put your name on the back and give to a member of the Association and you will be entered into the door prize draw.

So relax with family and friends and have a great night out. We thank you most sincerely for your support in the past and we look forward to your continued support for this year's event.



## Green Schools

Tarbert Comprehensive School is participating in Green Schools to make our school more environmentally friendly and also to inform the wider community on how to reduce, reuse and recycle in terms of litter and waste. This is our first attempt at acquiring a flag and we hope to attain this by the end of this academic year.

Green-Schools covers many different aspects of the environment. Litter and waste is chosen as the first theme because:

- The subject is particularly relevant to and part of the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools.
- Litter is a visible problem; both students and the local community will notice improvements in the appearance and image of the school.
- It is a good starting point for encouraging a sense of personal pride and responsibility.

Food waste is a major concern with 35% of all the food we buy is thrown out- This can cost the average Irish householder up to €700. What can you do to SAVE money and stop food waste?

- Never Shop when you are hungry.
- Always use a shopping list.
- Beware of special offers- do you need multiple of the same item?
- Learn to Store food correctly.
- Use serving bowls at family meals.
- Start a home composting system- make your own compost and SAVE.

We are currently looking for members for our Green Schools committee - if interested please ask Mr. Connolly for any info.



## Early Departures

Just a quick reminder on the procedures that should be followed if you are collecting your son/daughter from school before 3:50 p.m.

A Parent who wishes to collect their son / daughter before the end of the school day must physically collect them from the school office and not at the front gate. The Parent / Guardian must sign out their son / daughter in the 'Early Departures Book' at the office area and inform the Principal / Deputy Principal of their departure.

The school cannot (for legal & insurance reasons) allow a student to leave its grounds without being collected and accompanied by a Parent / Guardian.

If students are departing due to prearranged medical appointment etc. they should present a note, in their journal, to their Year Head, Deputy Principal or Principal at the earliest opportunity on the morning of the departure. These procedures apply all year and during the November, Pre-exams and the Summer In-House exams.

## School Calendar/Parent Teacher Meetings

The school calendar 15/16 is available to view and print from the school website. The calendar includes holidays, other school closures and important dates to remember.

My advice is for parents to print it off and keep it nearby. The following however are the planned dates for Parent Teacher Meetings. All meetings run from **4.15pm to 6.45 pm**. Parents are asked to arrive no later than **5.45pm** so as to be assured of meeting your child's teachers.

**LC2  
Tuesday 20th October 2015**

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**3rd Year  
Monday 16th November 2015**

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**2nd Year  
Thursday 10th December 2015**

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**1st Year & \*TY PT Meeting  
Tuesday 12th January 2015**

\*Please note that the TY Parent Teacher meeting will occur with 1st Years this year.

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**LC1 & LCA1 PT Meeting  
Thursday 28th January 2015**

## Parental Procedure

Parents are also reminded that it is school policy for students to turn off their mobile phones completely on entering the school grounds. Phones must remain off (not silent or vibrate) all day until leaving the school. Theft of mobile phones occurs rarely but when it does happen we make every effort to locate them. However, ultimately, we cannot accept any responsibility for mobiles lost or stolen during the course of the school day. In fact your child is simply better off leaving the phone at home entirely. The policy can be viewed in full in your child's journal.

Under no circumstances should students contact parents or vice versa by mobile phone. If necessary all critical messages can be routed through the secretary's office. It is equally unacceptable for students to text parents if they are ill. The school has procedures for dealing with illness that your son/daughter is aware of and this should be reinforced to them. Your co-operation is therefore vital in this regard.

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

Highlighted are some very useful websites to assist students and parents, in addition the school will host an information evening for parents on the CAO application process ("Hear"/"Dare" schemes 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.

**Best of Luck for the year ahead! - Jeanelle Griffin.  
Success is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration!**

## Important Dates

EVENT	DATE	VENUE
Open Day	10th Oct.	UCC Cork
Limerick Colleges Open Day	15th/16th Oct.	U.L., Mary I. & L.I.T.
Parent Information Evening in Tralee	3rd Nov.	UCC Cork
CAO Online Application Facility Opens	19th Nov.	Online
Tralee I.T. Open Day	13th Nov.	Tralee Institute of Technology
Kerry IGC Careers Fair	18th Nov.	The Brandon Hotel, Tralee

## Important Closing Dates

NAME	DATE	DEADLINE
UCAS	15th Oct. 2015	Some Courses Close
	15th Jan. 2016	All Courses Close
CAO Application Deadline	20th Jan. 2016	Early Application Online Discount €25
	1st Feb. 2016	Normal Application Online/Paper €40
		Change of Mind facility opens 5th May 2016
		Change of Mind facility closes 1st July 2016
HEAR & DARE Schemes	1st Feb. 2016	Apply ONLINE as part of your CAO application
Higher Education Access Route ("HEAR") and Disability Access Route to Education ("DARE")		
	1st Apr. 2016	HEAR & DARE Supporting Documents
Post Leaving Cert Courses		Apply Mid Feb. to August 2016
SUSI Maintenance Grant		Apply May - July 2016

## Important Websites

[www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)  
[www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)  
[www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) (Hear & Dare Schemes)  
[www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie)  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) (Study in England)  
[www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) (SUSI Grant Information)

All College Websites for Ireland - [www.name.ie](http://www.name.ie)  
 e.g. [www.ucc.ie](http://www.ucc.ie), [www.ul.ie](http://www.ul.ie), [www.dcu.ie](http://www.dcu.ie)



Best of Luck for the year ahead!