



# Newsletter

## A Warm Welcome...

**October 2017 Volume 5 - Issue 01**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the new School year, 2017/18. I especially want to welcome newly joined parents and guardians to the School community.

This summer break has brought some changes to staffing. Firstly I want to thank the staff who have moved on, for their commitment and contributions to the school over the years. New members of staff have also joined the team and I know you will get to know them better in the coming weeks and months.

87 new first years joined us a number of weeks ago as well as new students into senior cycle from other schools and indeed other countries. These students are a welcome addition to the Tarbert Comprehensive family! Each of these young people will bring their own unique qualities and individuality in the next 5/6 years. While they are new to us initially, I am confident we will get to know them very well in the coming weeks. I am equally confident they have a lot to offer the School. It's this yearly fresh injection of youthful, dynamic energy that keeps us all fresh – the vibrancy and eagerness of youth can be a powerful learning tool. It will be harnessed and moulded with care in our School.

Three times a year a newsletter like this is compiled. It is designed to keep you informed on various matters in our School. A more current and regular snapshot of our School can be gained by downloading the School app to your smartphone. I encourage all parents and guardians to do so.

**Richard Prendiville - Principal**

## Year Heads / Co-ordinators

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. So if you have any concerns at all then you should contact your child's Year Head in the first instance.

## Year Heads & Co-ordinators 2017/18 The Year Heads for the academic year 2017/18

- 1st Years** Ms. G. O'Callaghan
- 2nd Years** Mr. K. O'Keefe
- 3rd Years** Ms. E. Fitzgerald
- LC1** Mr. J. Dore
- LC2** Ms. R. O'Donoghue
- LCA Co-ordinator** Mr. D. O'Shea
- TY Co-ordinator** Ms. M. Hogan
- LCVP Co-ordinator** Mr. P. McElligott

You may contact any of the above by telephoning the school office. All members of staff have their own 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 (Ms Yvonne O'Connor), Deputy Principal and Principal may be contacted.

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.

## School Closures

As part of the new Junior Cert, whole School teacher training must be completed this year. To facilitate this training Tarbert Comprehensive School will therefore close 2 days for students – **Monday October 23rd 2017** and another day yet to be decided **before Easter 2018**. (Please note these days are not printed on the School calendar). Parents will be reminded by text closer to the days in question.

## 1st Year Mass

The traditional 1st year mass has been scheduled for Thursday October 12th. This is a lovely occasion where students new to the School mark the transition to the Comprehensive School. Further queries can be directed to your child's RE teacher or School Chaplain.

## Guidance Dept.

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 is now in use and highlighted for your attention. Also listed are some very important 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.

**Success is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration!**

*Best of Luck for the year ahead!*

*Jeanelle Griffin.*

## Parental Contribution

The yearly contribution of €65 (€110 per family) which we asked from parents is used as follows: student insurance providing 24hour cover all year round, Study Skills for Leaving and Junior Certificate students, school reflection days, buses for all matches and all extra curricular outings, photocopying and upkeep of the library. As you can see the money is put to good use.

## Attendance

This year Tarbert Comprehensive School is rolling out a new 3 year strategy (2017 – 2020) to increase levels of attendance and reduce absence rates. While School statistics are better than national figures, I still feel there is room for improvement.

**Why is attendance so important?** Well, much research has pointed to the benefits of good school attendance as well as the negative impact on students when school attendance is poor, for example:

- high levels of attendance has a positive impact on teaching and learning (McCoy et al, 2014; Claes et al, 2009).
- established links between good attendance, student engagement and staying at school to complete the Senior Cycle (Smyth, 1999; McCoy et al, 2007; Byrne and Smyth, 2010).
- well-established impact of poor attendance on a student's educational outcomes (McCoy et al, 2007).
- the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).
- the pressures for students and their teachers when students miss out on classes and key parts of the curriculum (Lupton, 2004; Wilson et al, 2008).

This body of knowledge is the foundation of our School attendance strategy. In June 2017 the Board of Management ratified a new whole School Policy on student attendance and it can be viewed on our website.

All stake holders are involved in this strategy. However you as a Parent or Guardian have a central part to play and I wish to highlight the important roles you have:

- **Take responsibility for your child's attendance**
- **Provide feedback on the policy and strategy through the Parents Association**
- **Be mindful that Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) must be balanced with over all school progress**
- **Keep updated on the importance of attendance at every level of school contact e.g. Newsletters, text messaging, website, app, information meetings etc.**
- **Monitor VShare as a resource to view attendance (including partial and whole day absences), not just exam results**
- **Attend Parent Teacher (PT) meetings to discuss attendance**
- **Avoid taking family holidays during term time**
- **Comply with school absence procedures**
- **Encourage your child to value the entire school curriculum not just the academic as it fosters their holistic growth and development**

These points summarise what is important from a Parental perspective. It should be noted that attendance can have just as much impact on student exam performance as their work rate or levels of study. In fact there is a direct correlation between underperformance in school and poor attendance rates.

School attendance should never be seen as something that can be treated as casual or irrelevant. I have therefore instructed all School staff to monitor attendance rates as an area of priority. The School will liaise with parents and outside agencies where attendance rates are significantly poor. However together, I am confident, we can meet our targets set for 2020 in this strategy and improve overall attendance rates by all students. Your cooperation as parents and guardians is therefore vital and your support is greatly appreciated.

## In-House Exams

I want 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.*

## Meet of 1st Year Parents

All parents of 1st Year students are invited to attend a meeting in the school on **Tuesday October 17th 2017 at 7.15pm**. The meeting is designed to give parents guidance on option choices following sampling for 1st Years as well as explain other School structures in place to assist 1st Years. Your attendance is advised.

## 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 Brennan's Insurance Policy. Claim forms are available from the School Office.

## Senior Cycle Parent Teacher Meeting

A reminder to Parents of **LC2 & LC1** students that there is a change to the traditional format of Senior Cycle parent teacher meetings. Therefore, similar to last year, **students themselves must attend along with their parents**. The aim of this is 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. LC1 and LC2 students will have, we expect, the maturity to take the feedback on board and use it in a positive manner.

## School Calendar/Parent Teacher Meetings

The school calendar 17/18 is available to view and print from the school website under Policies & Publications. 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 P/T Meeting - Monday 16th October 2017
  - 3rd Year P/T Meeting - Thursday 9th November 2017
  - 2nd Year P/T Meeting - Tuesday 12th December 2017
  - 1st Year & TY PT Meeting - Thursday 11th January 2018
  - LC1 & LCA1 PT Meeting - Monday 29th January 2018
- *Please note that the students themselves must also attend this year groups meeting along with their parents*



### TIME CONSTRAINT!



This teacher has a high number of Parents to see this evening – Please limit your discussion to 3 minutes!  
Thank You! Mr. Prendiville

I would like to highlight with parents that there are some teachers at every parent teacher meeting who teach a high number of students from that year group and can therefore have close to a hundred parents to see. It is crucial that, in order for these teachers to provide feedback to all the parents, that attending parents limit their meeting with these teachers to a few minutes. Teachers will discuss 3 main areas with you – attendance, behaviour and exam results. If you require a more in depth discussion with a specific teacher then I suggest you contact them again at a later date through the school office in order to arrange a meeting/phone call. This procedure will allow teachers with large numbers to see all the parents in a timely fashion.

At some parent teacher meetings a red labelled clock may appear on a teacher's desk who has a high number of parents to meet, In order to alert you that they are under these time constraint

# Leaving Cert Results 2017

**Congratulations to the class of 2017 who received their excellent results last August.**

A statistical breakdown shows that our school is not just above, but well above the national averages in the point's race. I am equally pleased with the high number of H1 grades achieved this year. In fact several students achieved multiple H1 grades with some achieving four, five and six. On average students received 71 points more in Tarbert CS for their top 6 subjects than the national average. That is almost 12 points more per subject. Overall almost 22% of the year group got over 500 points compared to 12% nationally, while almost 60% getting over 400 points, compared to 36% nationally. 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 students were Oran Pierse and Kelsey Ahern, both from Listowel. We wish both Oran and Kelsey and indeed the entire class of 2017 well in their future studies and careers.



Leaving Certificate Class of 2017

## The New Junior Cert

**The New Junior Cert continues to be rolled out in a variety of subjects from 1st year to 3rd year. Once rolled out, students will study a maximum of 10 examination subjects.**

To date the following is underway:

- 3rd years have a new course in English.
- 2nd years have new courses in English, Science and Business.
- 1st years have the most changes with new courses (specifications) in English, Science, Business, Irish, French and Art.

### **In addition**

- 1st years September 2018 (current 6th class primary) will see changes in all of the above subjects, plus Maths, Home Economics, Music, History and Geography.

From now on the current 1st years and all subsequent years will also study a new area of learning called 'Wellbeing'. Through the Wellbeing programme students will be learning the knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others. The junior cycle Wellbeing programme began this September and students will have up to 300 hours of timetabled learning in Wellbeing over the three years of junior cycle. This will build up to 400 hours for students by 2020 as the new junior cycle is implemented. The Wellbeing programme is comprised of 4 main areas – CSPE, PE, SPHE and guidance education but will also incorporate other aspects of learning such as through computers, English modules and Science modules. More information on the Wellbeing programme can be viewed on the School website under Guidance – First years.

As part of the new Junior Cycle programme the current 1st years will also study computers and aspects of ICT up to and including 3rd year. It's our hope the skills gained will provide our students with knowledge to assist them in future learning and the future workplace.

# The Revised Leaving Certificate Points System Kicks Off

This August a new points and grading system was used for the first time for all Leaving Cert. students (excludes LCA). For those who are unfamiliar - 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.

This system is used by teachers for all LC1 & LC2 students. Bonus points will still be awarded for HL Maths - except those who get a H7 & H8 grade. A copy of the new system is included in the senior student journals and is available under the Guidance section in this newsletter.

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.

It should also be noted that the basic entry requirement for entry to colleges and universities will change as follows from 2017:

- The previous 5 Ordinary level D3's will become 5 O6 or H7's  
(this will require students sitting Ordinary level papers to still get over 40%)
- The previous 2 Higher C3's and 4 Ordinary D3's will become 2 H5 and 4 O6/H7's
- The previous 3 Higher C3's and 3 Ordinary D3's will become 3 H5 and 3 O6/H7's

## The School 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.

## Adult Education

Would you attend an Evening Class? Are you prepared to share your knowledge of a Subject or Craft Skill with people from the area? Is there any particular subject area that would entice you to attend an Evening Class at Tarbert Comprehensive School? A series of talks/classes or single lecture can be arranged if a sufficient number of persons express an interest.

Please contact [n.keenan@tarbertcs.ie](mailto:n.keenan@tarbertcs.ie) if you have any special requests or suggestions.

## Parental Procedures

Parents are reminded that should they wish to collect their son/daughter from the school they must do so in person from the main office and sign them out. This policy is equally true for parents of students from Tarbert village. This procedure is designed as part of our Child Protection Policy and though a little effort is required, it is in everyone's best interest to ensure the policy is complied with. Of equal importance is the necessity for Parents to provide their children with a note when they arrive after 9 a.m. This note should specify the reason for lateness.

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 was reviewed and updated during the Summer of 2016 with the valuable input from the Student Council. It 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.*

# Junior Certificate 2017

The Junior Cert results were given to our students on Wednesday September 13th last to great excitement! Results this year were again outstanding with a large number of students achieving very high grades.

This year English was graded differently to other subjects in line with the new Junior Cert. A, B and C grades will be gradually phased out over the next few years in all subjects and be replaced with Distinction, Higher Merit, Merit etc. English was the first subject to use this new grading this year.

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.

Pictured below: Clara Hanrahan (Ballylongford) and Orlaith McSweeney (Ballyhahill) - Both girls recorded the equivalent of 16 A grades between them. Well done girls and well done to the entire 3rd Year group of 2017.



## 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 Ms. O'Connor, Chaplain, Ms. Moloney or myself and the matter will be dealt with sensitively and in total confidence.

## New Timetable layout

This year the school moved from a 44 to 42 period week following the elimination of 35 minute classes by the Department of Education and Skills and as part of the introduction of the new Junior Cert. The only noticeable change is that classes now end at 1.20pm each Wednesday instead of 2pm previously and all classes are now 40 minutes long.

The School has maintained its full subject and curriculum choices. However a phase in period was necessary meaning that some subjects had to be offered differently from former years. LC2 students can now avail of PE after school each Wednesday (only this year) and the format of LCVP has been changed so that it is held both within school time (for some) and after school time (for others).

## After School Study

For different reasons many students find it difficult to study. Often there can be too many distractions. The internet, snapchat, text messages, noise and Instagram cause havoc to students, even those with the best of intentions. For some the problem is a lack of self-discipline to get into a regular study pattern. It is very frustrating knowing that valuable time is being wasted.

At Tarbert Comprehensive School we offer a supervised study program from 4.15 to 6.15 Monday Tuesday and Thursday. Starting in October Friday evening will also be added. Friday evening study will be offered FREE to those students who attend the previous three study days in the week. When sufficient numbers of leaving certs sign up, they are allotted their own study centre.

Students have found the program very beneficial in recent years and have the satisfaction of having most if not all of their learning done by early evening. The cost is kept to the bare minimum and hopefully as affordable as possible. It is €10 for the three evenings or €3.50 per day.

Any parent interested in the service for their son/daughter can look at the School Website for more details under the Curriculums dropdown or you can contact Mr Trench. I strongly encourage all students to consider this great facility, particularly if you are a student of an exam year or if you find it difficult to motivate yourself at home.

## LCVP at LC1

The layout of this year's timetable has been altered to accommodate a 42 period week. In a change to previous years – LCVP has been moved and so now will be held both within school time (for some) and after school time (for others). If your son/daughter is doing Ordinary Level Irish and Ordinary Level English then he/she will automatically do LCVP in School time.

However if your son/daughter does Higher Level in any one of (or both) Irish and English, LCVP cannot be done within school time (as Higher level students have extra classes in these subjects). Therefore in order to make LCVP available to these students, I have provided for the teaching of LCVP after School each Monday from 4pm-5pm.

It should be noted that LCVP is a very beneficial additional option for students wishing to maximise their points. LCVP has the advantage of:

- ✓ Providing invaluable future career investigation and CV planning
- ✓ Providing a potentially generous points return
- ✓ Requiring minimal study and homework compared to other subjects
- ✓ Being used on average by 2/3 students who sit it, for points in their top 6 subjects
- ✓ Being used by students of all abilities for points – including those who get over 500+ points
- ✓ Having the written exam completed in early May of the LC year and not in June

Classes began for those students who expressed an interest in LCVP on Monday September 11th. Currently over 40 pupils are doing LCVP outside school time. Well done to all.

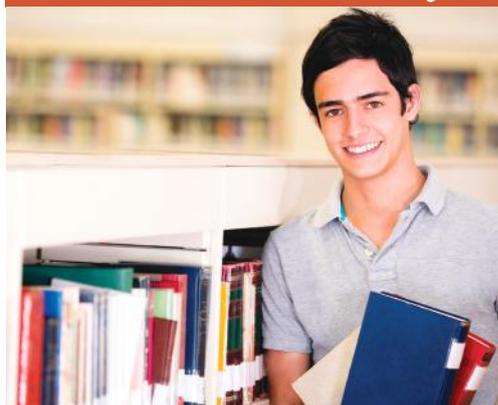
## New Chaplin

As most of you know Sr. Frances has retired from the Comprehensive School and we wish her well in the years ahead. Sr. Frances was a wonderful servant over many years and was a vital support to many students and families as well as staff.

We welcome Ms. Yvonne O'Connor as our new Chaplain. Ms O'Connor comes to us with a wealth of experience from another post primary school and I have no doubt that you will get to her better in her new role in the weeks and months ahead.



## The Thomas McGreevy School Library



**Opening House for  
Checking Out  
& Returning Books**

**Tuesday: Break Time  
Thursday: Lunchtime**

There is a wide selection of books to cater for all interests, drop in and browse!

## Important Dates

EVENT	DATE	VENUE
Open Day	14th Oct.	UCC Cork
Limerick Colleges Open Day	19th/20th Oct.	U.L., Mary I. & L.I.T.)
Tralee I.T. Open Day	27th Oct.	Tralee Institute of Technology
CAO Online Application Facility Opens	6th Nov.	Online
UCC Parent Info Evening	7th Nov.	Tralee Institute of Technology
Kerry IGC Careers Fair	16th Nov.	The Brandon Hotel, Tralee

## Important Closing Dates

NAME	DATE	DEADLINE
UCAS	15th Oct. 2017	Some Courses Close
	15th Jan. 2018	All Courses Close
CAO Application Deadline	20th Jan. 2018	Early Application Online Discount €30
	1st Feb. 2017	Normal Application Online/Paper €45
		Change of Mind facility opens 4th May 2018
		Change of Mind facility closes 1st July 2018
HEAR & DARE Schemes	1st Feb. 2018	Apply ONLINE as part of your CAO application
Higher Education Access Route ("HEAR") and Disability Access Route to Education ("DARE")		
	1st Apr. 2018	HEAR & DARE Supporting Documents
Post Leaving Cert Courses		Apply Mid Feb. to August 2018
SUSI Maintenance Grant		Apply April - July 2018

## Important Websites

[www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) (Essential Course Search Engine)  
[www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) (CAO Information & Application)  
[www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) (Hear & Dare Schemes)  
[www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie) (Essential Course & Career Portal)  
[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!