Tarbert Comprehensive School

NEWSLETTER | OCTOBER 2026

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our first newsletter of the 2026-27 academic year. It is hard to believe that we are already well into October, with the weeks having flown by since the school reopened on 27th August.

We were delighted to welcome 93 new 1st Year students, as well as students joining us in other year groups. I hope they are all settling well into life at Tarbert Comprehensive School.

This newsletter provides a snapshot of school life, some important developments and a few reminders about school policies and procedures. I intend to send a newsletter like this to you twice a year. A more detailed snapshot of our School can be found by visiting the School website at **www.tarbertcomprehensive.ie**. I encourage all parents and guardians to stay regularly updated through this outlet. Additionally, the School is present on several social media platforms, allowing you to keep up to date with daily life in the Comp.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and co-operation.

- Richard Prendiville, Principal

STUDENT WELLBEING & PASTORAL CARE

The wellbeing of our students remains a very important part of school life. I would remind parents that our Chaplains, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor and Student Support Team are available to support students who may be experiencing difficulties, whether in School or in their personal lives.

Parents are very welcome to contact any of these staff members through the main school office. I would encourage parents to make contact at an early stage if they have any concerns, however small they may seem. We are always happy to help.

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The members of the school Board of Management are:

- ***Mrs Mary McGillicuddy (Chairperson),***
- ***Mrs Nicola Thompson (Parental Nominee)***
- ***Professor Michael Walsh (Parental Nominee)***
- ***Ms Maria O'Gorman***
- ***Mr Stephen Goulding***
- ***Sr Frances Day***
- ***Mr Kevin O'Keeffe***
- ***Ms Julie O'Connell***
- ***Mr Richard Prendiville (Secretary)***

Should parents wish to communicate with the Board of Management, they may do so by writing to the Secretary of the Board or contacting either of the parent nominees, using the school address.

All correspondence addressed to members of the Board is treated as private and confidential and is not opened by school staff.

ADDITIONAL STUDENT SERVICES CHARGE

Tarbert Comprehensive School does not seek a voluntary contribution as the Department of Education funds our day-to-day running costs such as heating, lighting and maintenance. However, schools are permitted to collect a charge to cover student-related services that the Department does not fund.

This annual charge helps to meet the cost of items such as student accident insurance, bus hire for trips and matches, venue hire, referee & entrance fees, guest speakers and other educational activities such as reflection days that enrich student life. Collecting the charge at the start of the year avoids the need for students to bring money to school throughout the term.

For 2026-27, the charge remains €80 per student, €130 for two siblings and €180 for three or more. Payment details have been circulated to households and are displayed on your child's VSware account. I would like to sincerely thank the many parents who have already paid this year's charge. Your support is greatly appreciated.

As always, we would never wish a student to miss out on any activity for financial reasons. If any difficulty arises, please contact me or Ms. Moloney in confidence.

YEAR HEADS/CO-ORDINATORS

If you have any concerns about your child's progress or wellbeing, please contact their Year Head in the first instance. While there will always be occasional settling issues or personal challenges, keeping the School informed ensures that we can provide support quickly and appropriately.

The Year Heads and Coordinators for the 2026-27 school year are:

- ***1st Years - Ms. Siobhán Fitzgerald***
- ***2nd Years - Ms. Elaine Fitzgerald***
- ***3rd Years - Ms. Katie Mullane***
- ***Transition Year Coordinator - Ms. Úna Thornton***
- ***Leaving Certificate 1 and Leaving Certificate Applied 1 - Ms. Rachael O'Donoghue***
- ***Leaving Certificate 2 and Leaving Certificate Applied 2 - Mr. Cormac Leane***
- ***LCVP Coordinator - Ms. Linda Flynn***

You may contact any of the above through the School Office. All teachers have formal teaching timetables, so while they may not be immediately available, they will return your call as soon as possible. The Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal and Principal may also be contacted if required. If you wish to meet a staff member in person, please arrange an appointment through the office in advance, as unannounced visits cannot be accommodated.

SCHOOL TERM AND FAMILY HOLIDAYS

Regular school attendance is one of the most important factors in a student's progress and success at school. With this in mind, I want to draw parents' attention to a growing trend that has concerned me over recent years.

Let me be clear that I fully understand there are times when students must be absent from school. Illness, bereavements, medical appointments and family circumstances are part of everyday life, as are celebrations such as Communions and Confirmations. I would simply remind parents to record the reason for any absence on VSware.

My concern relates specifically to the increasing number of planned family holidays being taken during the school term. I appreciate that holidays outside the official school breaks can be considerably cheaper, but taking students out of school for this reason is regrettably becoming increasingly normalised.

When students miss school, they miss more than the lessons taught on those days. They can lose continuity in their learning, miss important classroom activities and assessments and find it difficult to catch up. There are particular implications for Junior Cycle Classroom-Based Assessments (CBA's) and for the new Senior Cycle Additional Assessment Components (AAC's), which account for at least 40% of the marks in redeveloped subjects. It may not be possible to rearrange important assessments missed because of a family holiday.

I strongly believe that family holidays should be confined to official school holiday periods. While I fully appreciate that travelling during term time may save families a considerable amount of money, I would ask parents to consider the potential cost elsewhere. You may save financially on the holiday, but that saving could come at the expense of your child's education, their progress in school or indeed, marks in important State Examinations. These are consequences that cannot always be put right afterwards. In my view, that is simply too high a price to pay.

I would ask all parents to reflect carefully on this practice. Ultimately, we all want our students to have the best possible opportunities to learn, develop and achieve their potential. Every school day counts.

PARENTS ASSOCIATION AGM

Our Parents' Association AGM was held on Monday, 5th October. I would like to thank all parents who attended and those who continue to support the work of the Association.

The Parents' Association plays an important role in our School community and I would encourage more parents to become involved. Further meetings will take place throughout the year and parents who were unable to attend the AGM are very welcome to join us at future meetings. New members are always welcome.

PARENT – TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Good communication between home and school is very important and I would remind parents that they are always welcome to contact us if they have any questions or concerns. Parents can telephone the School office on (068) 36105, email admin@tarbertcs.ie or contact individual teachers through VSware.

Parents may also request a face-to-face meeting with a teacher or Year Head. However, I would ask for your understanding that all teachers and Year Heads have teaching and other school commitments and it may not always be possible to arrange an immediate meeting or response. Staff will endeavour to get back to you as soon as reasonably possible.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION – SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS

Industrial action involving the ASTI and TUI teaching unions has affected some school arrangements this term. Teaching, supervision and substitution continue as normal on days when the School is open. However, certain meetings and events have had to be postponed or rearranged.

The LC2 and LCA2 Parent–Student-Teacher Meeting originally scheduled for Monday, 12th October, is being postponed and will be rescheduled. Our 1st Year Parents' Information Night will instead be made available as a recording through students' school Gmail accounts.

At the time of drafting, strike action is planned for Wednesdays, 14th and 21st October, when the school would be closed to students. These arrangements are subject to change. We ask parents to follow school communications on VSware and by text message for the latest information. We sincerely hope for an early resolution with as little disruption to students as possible.

BÍ CINEÁLTA ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Our Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy is fully in effect at Tarbert Comprehensive. The policy reflects our ongoing commitment to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all students. I would encourage parents to familiarise themselves with the policy, which is available on our School website.

Should parents have any concerns regarding bullying, I would ask that they contact their child's Year Head in the first instance so that the matter can be addressed promptly and appropriately. Working together, we can ensure that every student feels safe, supported and respected in our school community.

NEW ASTROTURF DEVELOPMENT

Work is progressing on our new astroturf facility, which will be a significant addition to the School's sporting and recreational facilities. This development will provide our students with improved opportunities to participate in physical activity and sport throughout the year. I would particularly like to thank our Parents' Association for their fundraising efforts and all parents who have contributed towards making this development possible. Your generosity and continued support are very much appreciated.

FOR ALL THE LATEST SCHOOL NEWS AND UPDATES VISIT US ONLINE AT

WWW.TARBERTCOMPREHENSIVE.IE

IN-HOUSE EXAMS – IMPORTANT NOTE

All students sit in-house examinations at various points during the school year. These exams are an important part of ongoing assessment and help students, parents and teachers to track progress.

Students should take each set of exams seriously, as the results inform future teaching, study planning and parent–teacher discussions. Reports are available through VSware and parents are encouraged to review them carefully and discuss feedback with their child.

If a student is absent during an exam, parents should notify the School in advance where possible. Make-up exams are only arranged in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are also reminded that days of in-house exams are normal school days and full attendance is necessary. Students must be present for the full days during the exams and late arrivals or early departures are not allowed. Student who disregards this instruction may have to sit certain exams at home.

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.

EXAM WINDOWS

- **November Exams: 16 - 27 November, 2026**
- **February Pre-Exams: 2 - 12 February, 2027**
- **Summer Exams: 1 - 4 June, 2027**

Parents of 6th Year and LCA2 students should note that the first week of the Easter holidays has, in recent years, been the period during which the State Examinations Commission conducts the Leaving Certificate oral language examinations. The Music practical examinations also take place in the School during this week. These examinations may occasionally extend into the first weekend, Saturday and Sunday. Further details will be issued closer to the time when exact schedules are confirmed.

DIGITAL LEARNING AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Digital technology continues to play an important role in teaching and learning at Tarbert Comprehensive School. Platforms such as Google Classroom allow teachers to share resources, set assignments and support students in their learning. Artificial Intelligence (Ai) is also becoming an increasingly familiar part of students' lives.

While AI can be a valuable learning tool, it must be used responsibly and should never replace students' own thinking or work. Students must always follow their teachers' guidance on the appropriate use of Ai, particularly when completing assignments and assessments.

Our school's Artificial Intelligence (Ai) Policy is available on the school website, along with separate student and parent versions. I would encourage all parents to take the time to read the relevant guidance and discuss responsible AI use with their children.

MOBILE PHONES REMINDER

I want to thank parents for their continued support and co-operation with our Mobile Phone and Digital Device Policy. A simple reminder that all mobile phones must be switched off completely on entering the school grounds and remain off throughout the school day. For Junior Cycle students, phones must be switched off and secured in their locked pouches. Senior Cycle students must also have their phones switched off and kept out of sight, whether in their schoolbag or pocket. Silent or vibrate mode is not acceptable.

I would also remind parents not to contact their children directly by text, WhatsApp or phone call during the school day. If you need to contact your child, please ring the main school office on (068) 36105 and we will pass on the message. Equally, students who need to contact home must do so through the office.

Thank you again for your support in helping us maintain a safe, focused and distraction-free school environment.

STUDENT SIGN-OUT PROCEDURES

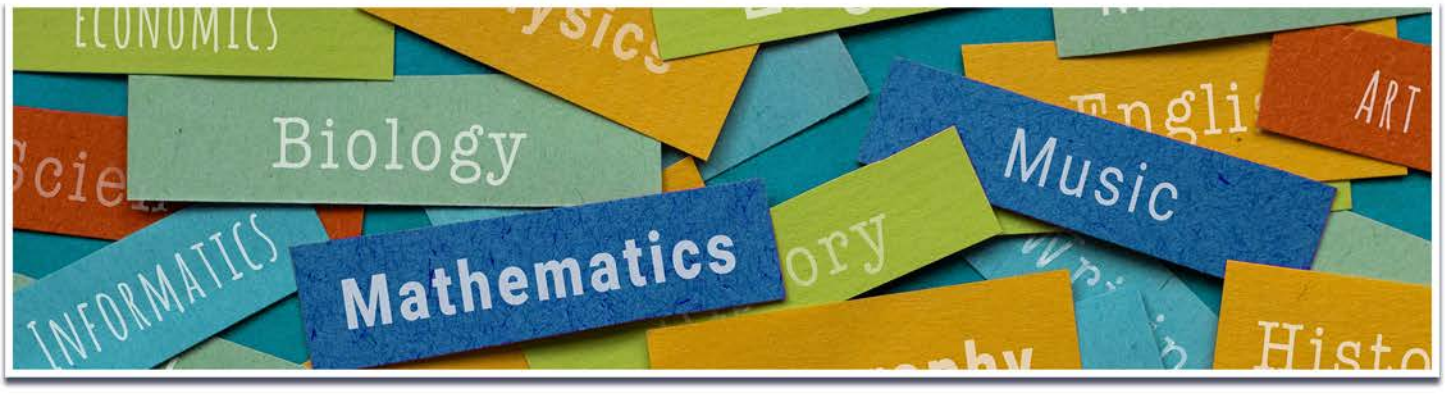
A reminder to all parents and guardians that if you wish to collect your child during the school day, you must come in person to the main school office and sign them out. This is an important part of our Child Protection and student safeguarding procedures and applies to all students in every year group, including those living locally. Parents must also record the reason for the early departure on VSware.

Students cannot simply leave the school following a phone call or text message from home. Your co-operation with this procedure is very much appreciated.

1ST YEAR TRANSITION AND SUBJECT CHOICES

Our 93 new 1st Year students have now been with us for several weeks and I hope they are settling well into secondary school life. Our 1st Year subject taster programme is coming to an end and we hope to have all students settled into their chosen subjects during the week before the October midterm break. This programme gives students an opportunity to experience a range of subjects before making their final choices.

Our 1st Year Parents' Information Night will be available as a recording through students' school Gmail accounts and I would encourage parents to take the time to view it. Should you have any questions about subject choices or your child's progress, please feel free to contact our Guidance Counsellor, Ms Juanita Lovett or any member of staff. We are always happy to help.



LEAVING CERTIFICATE CLASS OF 2026

We are extremely proud of our Leaving Certificate Class of 2026, who achieved wonderful results in this year's examinations. Almost a third of our students achieved 500 CAO points or more, well above the national average, with excellent results across the full range of abilities. These achievements reflect the comprehensive ethos of our school, where we strive to ensure that every student, regardless of ability, is supported and encouraged to reach their full potential. They are also a testament to the hard work of our students, the dedication of their teachers and the support of their families.

Our highest-achieving student this year was Caoimhe O'Sullivan from Glin who achieved the very top grade in five of her subjects. We congratulate all our graduates and wish them every happiness and success as they move on to further studies, training, employment and the next chapter of their lives.

SENIOR CYCLE REDEVELOPMENT – A CHANGING LEAVING CERTIFICATE

Many parents will remember their own Leaving Certificate (LC), where most marks were awarded through written examinations at the end of 6th Year. That system is now undergoing significant change through what is known as Senior Cycle Redevelopment. In simple terms, the LC is being updated to place greater emphasis on what students learn and achieve during Senior Cycle, rather than relying so heavily on examinations in June. These changes are being introduced gradually, subject by subject.

One of the biggest changes is the introduction of Additional Assessment Components (AACs), which can include projects, investigations, practical work and other assessments completed during the school year. While parents will already be familiar with oral examinations and practical assessments in certain subjects, the new arrangements extend this approach to more subjects. AACs account for at least 40% of the marks in new and revised subjects.

Biology provides a good example. Previously, LC Biology was assessed entirely through a written examination in June. Under the new course, the written examination accounts for 60% of the marks, with the remaining 40% awarded for a scientific investigation involving research, practical work and a written report.

For our current 6th Year students, sitting their LC in June 2027, these changes are already underway in subjects such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Business. Our current 5th Years are experiencing further changes in subjects including Geography, Engineering and Construction Studies, with additional subjects to follow in the coming years.

There are many positives to these changes. Students now have greater opportunities to demonstrate their abilities beyond the traditional written examination. The skills involved in researching a topic, carrying out an investigation, analysing information and presenting findings are precisely the skills many students will need in third-level education and their future careers.

However, these changes also bring significant responsibilities. Regular attendance, consistent effort and meeting deadlines are more important than ever. Equally important is the requirement that all work submitted for assessment must be genuinely the student's own. Students must understand the rules surrounding plagiarism, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and acknowledging outside sources. While AI can be a useful learning tool, work generated by AI or copied from elsewhere cannot simply be presented as a student's own. Teachers must also be able to authenticate the work submitted.

As a School, we will continue to support students and keep parents informed as these changes are introduced. The important message for parents is that the LC is changing and work completed throughout 5th and 6th Year can now have a direct bearing on a student's final results.

GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT NEWS BY JUANITA LOVETT

As we begin another academic year in Tarbert Comprehensive School I would like to wish all our students every success for the year ahead. Whether you are settling into a new class, preparing for examinations, exploring future career options or making important decisions about life after school, remember that every step forward counts.

Guidance is about helping students recognise their strengths, explore their interests and make informed decisions about their future. There is no single route to success, and everyone's journey will be different. University, further education, apprenticeships, employment and training can all provide exciting opportunities. The most important thing is to find the pathway that suits your interests, abilities and ambitions.

Throughout the year, students will have opportunities to explore careers, research courses, develop their skills and consider the many options available to them. Students are encouraged to make full use of the guidance resources available, including CareersPortal Reach+, which supports career exploration, personal reflection and planning for the future. Most importantly come into my office to make an appointment to discuss your career plans and get some advice.

LEAVING CERTIFICATE STUDENTS: THE 2027 CAO APPLICATION PROCESS

For our Leaving Certificate students considering higher education, the coming months are an important time for researching courses and preparing CAO applications.

The 2027 CAO application facility opens at 12 noon on Thursday, 5 November 2026. Students should begin researching their options early, taking time to consider course content, entry requirements, subject prerequisites, college locations and future career opportunities.

KEY CAO DATES FOR 2027 ENTRY

5 NOVEMBER 2026:	CAO APPLICATIONS OPEN AT 12 NOON.
20 JANUARY 2027:	CLOSING DATE FOR THE DISCOUNTED ONLINE APPLICATION FEE OF €35, AT 5PM.
1 FEBRUARY 2027:	NORMAL CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS, AT 5PM.
5 FEBRUARY 2027:	THE FACILITY TO AMEND COURSE CHOICES OPENS AT 12 NOON, SUBJECT TO A €10 FEE.
1 MARCH 2027:	CLOSING DATE FOR THE RELEVANT AMENDED COURSE CHOICES AND COMPLETION OF THE MATURE APPLICANT, HEAR AND DARE APPLICATION SECTIONS, AT 5PM.
5 MARCH 2027:	LATE APPLICATIONS OPEN AT 12 NOON, SUBJECT TO ELIGIBILITY AND RESTRICTIONS.
5 MAY 2027:	THE FREE CHANGE OF MIND FACILITY OPENS AT 12 NOON.
1 JULY 2027:	CHANGE OF MIND CLOSES AT 5PM.

Please note that dates and requirements may be amended. Students should consult the official CAO website and the 2027 CAO Handbook for the latest information.

A FEW IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR APPLICANTS:

- Research courses thoroughly and check all entry requirements, including specific subject requirements.
- List courses in genuine order of preference, rather than trying to predict points requirements.
- Remember that Level 8 and Level 7/6 course choices are considered separately.
- Pay particular attention to the HEAR and DARE application processes if you think you may be eligible, as these have additional requirements and deadlines.
- Check your CAO account and emails regularly, and ensure that all information is accurate and complete.

Students do not need to have every answer immediately. The key is to start researching, ask questions and seek my support when needed.

A MESSAGE FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

To all our students, remember that your results do not define your worth, and your future is not determined by one examination or one decision. Progress comes from showing up, putting in the effort, learning from mistakes and having the confidence to ask for help when you need it.

For our Junior Cycle students, focus on building good habits and discovering what you enjoy. For our Transition Year students, embrace the opportunities to gain new experiences, develop skills and explore possible career paths. For our Senior Cycle students, keep your goals in sight, but remember to look after your wellbeing along the way.

Parents and guardians also play an important role in supporting young people as they navigate their choices. Encouraging open conversations, listening to concerns and allowing students to explore their own interests can make a real difference.

The Guidance Department is here to support students throughout the year. If you have questions about subject choices, career options, college applications, apprenticeships or future pathways, please contact me. Remember to believe in your potential, be open to opportunities and remember that small steps taken consistently can lead to great things. I look forward to supporting all our students as they work towards their goals in the year ahead.

JUNIOR CYCLE RESULTS 2026

Congratulations to our Junior Cycle students of 2026, who received their examination results on Wednesday, 7th October, amidst great excitement in the school. We warmly congratulate them on their achievements and wish them continued success in their studies.