



St. Dominic's College

November 2021 Newsletter



Dear Students, Staff, Parents/Guardians,

It gives me great pleasure yet again to write a forward for our November newsletter. These newsletters which we put together in times of a pandemic will become social documents of the future.

Some things have not changed from when I addressed you in last year's newsletters and yet many things have moved along nicely. Thankfully our vaccination programme is an excellent one and has supported schools to remain open. Sometimes in school we forget what it is like on the outside! We are a very busy school. Our students are industrious and productive when it comes to their learning led by a group of dynamic teachers. Schools have done amazing work considering so much of society is still working from home. They are happy places for the vast majority of students and we function very well due to the considerable effort of all to keep our school safe and as free of Covid as we can. Students are resilient and school is the best place for them as a place of learning and as a place to socialise with each other.

It is incredibly important that you do not send your daughters to school if they are unwell and show any symptoms of Covid. This is for the collective good of all. Have a look at this newsletter and marvel at all the happenings in school that we manage to proceed with to give our students the best learning and wellbeing opportunities that we can. As our school has been a safe place free of Covid we ask you to help us keep it this way. Some of our students have contacted Covid but the source of these COVID infections has always been in the family and among friends and not in school. We have had a huge interest in parents joining our Parents Association. Parents bringing new skills and support to the school is always welcome and we look forward to the year ahead with you on the team.

I mentioned the excellent Leaving Certificate results our students achieved in my September letter to you. We are well on the way with that work with our present 6th and 3rd years for the June exams in 2022. The level of commitment from students regarding their studies is very important. We run after school study at a subsidised cost to parents/guardians and we serve complimentary tea, coffee, hot chocolate and biscuits so the warm welcoming atmosphere should encourage you to suggest doing after school study to your daughters. Anyone doing 5 days of study has 12 hours of study done by the end of the week. It is suitable for students in all year groups. Students must be willing to be an active part of their own learning.

Thank you to you, the Parents/Guardians of St Dominic's College. The Parental support we get from you helps us to drive on with how we encourage, educate, support and inspire your daughters which is a vital part of what happens in St Dominic's College.

Finally, we have continued to encourage Student Leadership over the last year and have made many more opportunities available for students to become involved in school life. Have a look at our website to meet our new Head Girls and Chairperson of the Student Council. After school sports clubs, Craft club, Games club, Creative Writing club, Drama Club all run to encourage active participation and fun among students.

So a big thank you to all our teachers, school staff, parents, students and all who help us keep the school doing so well.

I wish you and your families continued good health in the weeks and months ahead.

As the Irish seanfhocal or proverb says 'Ní neart go cur le chéile' meaning that there is strength when we all pull together. Go raibh maith agaibh go léir.

Is mise, le meas,
Ms Ann Cameron
Principal

School Self Evaluation

School Self Evaluation (SSE) is a process that schools all over the country are currently engaged in. It is a “collaborative, inclusive, and reflective process of internal school review”.

The process of School Self Evaluation involves gathering information from a range of sources about the quality of teaching and learning in our school, and then making judgements.

It culminates in the development of a School Improvement Plan which sets targets for improvement in certain areas. In short, SSE allows us to look at what we, as a school are doing well, identify areas for improvement, set targets for improvement and monitor and evaluate how successfully we achieve our targets.



As a school community, St. Dominic’s College has been engaged in the process of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) for some years, under the guidance of school management and the Department of Education and Skills’ Inspectorate.

In line with DES SSE recommendations, the school has identified a whole school approach to a number of pedagogical issues as key in the context of improving the overall quality of Teaching and Learning in our school. To date, the staff have focused on targets and agreed strategic plans in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy, Assessment and Feedback.

Our Targets this year:

- Continuing our improvements in literacy, numeracy, assessment and feedback.
- One Hour Classes
- Wellbeing (including Anti-Bullying)
- Digital Technologies



Anti Bullying Video

Psychologist Jennifer Ryan delivered a very informative presentation on bullying for our parents. The presentation was delivered last year but Jennifer has allowed us to share the recording on our school website so new parents to the school can continue to access this great presentation.

Please click on the following link and scroll right down to the end of the page.

<https://stdominics.ie/anti-bullying/>

The talk was organised by our Parents’ Association and focused on practical strategies for supporting your children and intervening in instances of bullying.

Jennifer is an expert in anti-bullying. She founded the organisation SuperMe, which supports schools and individuals in dealing constructively with bullying. In addition to this, Jennifer works as a guidance counsellor and part-time lecturer in Psychology in Trinity College Dublin and in Child Mental Health in UCD

Student Voice Forum

Student Voice is very much part of our culture here in St. Dominic's and to embed that further we have set up a Student Voice Forum on Learning. The forum is made up of 32 students, randomly selected. We meet once every half term and all year groups are represented. The term "student voice" describes how students give their input to what happens within the school and classroom. The Student Voice Forum (SVF) is a space for students to discuss and share ideas and opinions regarding their Learning experiences. This feedback is then shared with Teachers with a view to improving Learner experience.

We had our first meeting the 15th of September. The focus of the meeting was on the student experience of one hour classes to date. The vast majority of those in attendance were in favour of the timetable change. Students willingly shared their concerns and insights. Ms Cameron, Ms Egan and Ms Murtagh were also in attendance. We were very interested to hear student's perspectives and intend to act on these where possible.

The Forum aims to empower students to participate meaningfully and collaboratively in improving their experience of school and to take ownership of their learning. We have had our second meeting about digital learning. We have set up a Teaching and Learning noticeboard beside the library. It contains tips and information regarding Learning – please keep an eye on it! I look forward to continuing to work with the SVF team – both Students and Teachers. Many thanks to everyone involved!

Ms Mc Manus.



Student voice forum

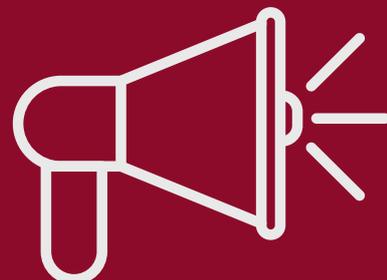
The Student Voice Forum (SVF) is new to our school this year and is led by Ms Mc Manus. There are 32 students on the Forum altogether and every year group is represented by 5/6 students. We were all chosen randomly. Here we get an opportunity to share our opinions on our learning experiences. We have discussed two topics so far: our new one-hour timetable and also Digital learning. We express our opinions and concerns and the teachers present really listen and then our opinions are shared anonymously with teachers at staff meetings. The teachers then aim to make improvements where possible.

The forum allows us students to communicate with each other and with the teachers. It is also a great way for the students to listen to their peers and compare each other's experiences. We have an opportunity to meet new people and to learn from each other.

At our last meeting we were presented with Student Voice badges. The SVF is an important exciting new initiative in our school and its aim is to amplify the student voice. I am really enjoying being part of the SVF and I look forward to future meetings!

Elene Javakhishvili

6th Year.





Junior Cycle Award Ceremony

On Thursday, October 21st, St Dominic's College hosted an award ceremony for students who completed the Junior Cycle course in May 2021.

Each student was awarded a certificate from our Principal, Ms Cameron and Deputy Principals Ms Maher Smyth and Ms McGowan. Each certificate outlined the students' achievements pertaining to 'Wellbeing' and 'Other Areas of Learning.'

These categories are important reminders that we in St Dominic's College are a community of truly diverse and talented students. Additionally they also serve to highlight the important role that our school plays in the formation of the whole self and to remind each student that success in the Junior Cycle is not merely measured through academic results, but also through participation in areas such as sport and wider community initiatives.

It was a lovely occasion and one that our students will surely remember.

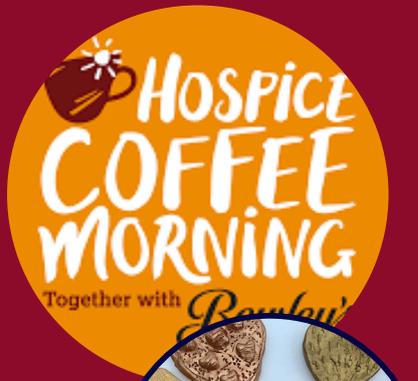


Coffee Morning

First Year students had a lovely break from classes on Wednesday 22nd September when a group of Transition Year students hosted a coffee morning to support the *St. Francis Hospice*. We were blessed with a beautiful autumn morning and the event was held outdoors in the courtyard.

The following morning the staff held their own event and a total of €892.15 was collected over the two mornings.

A big 'thank you' to all who contributed to this event.

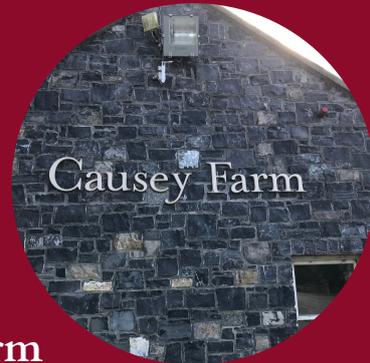
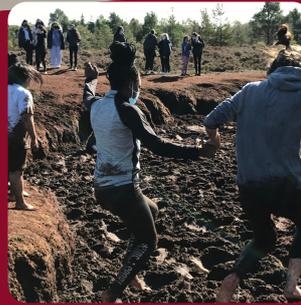


Heart of Hearts

This "Heart of Hearts" was made by 1st years. It reflects on the year 2020 and the struggles we had while learning remotely and in isolation. Each heart is an important part of an even bigger unit.

We are stronger together.

It continues on the theme used for the Leaving Certificate Graduation. 6th Years left a Heart behind at the end of their St. Dominic's journey and 1st years created a Heart as they began their St. Dominic's journey.



5th Year Team Building Day – Causey Farm

On Wednesday 29th September 5th years set out to Causey Farm for a day of fun, fresh air and plenty of new friends to make! The day started off with lovely blue skies and all students were enthusiastic about the day ahead. On arrival in Causey Farm five groups were formed mixing students from 3rd and 4th year and then each group went their separate ways!! Making Brown Soda Bread was a hit and the secret was that you had to catch the egg which was thrown from the top table. The corn maize was a challenge for many but thankfully no one got lost for too long. A visit to Causey farm would not be complete without seeing the animals pigs especially Gloria the pig, piglets, geese, sheep, cows and puppies to name just a few. The trip to the bog in the back of the trailer was a very different mode of transport – all students held on tightly on the rocky road to the bog and then the real excitement began where students jumped in many times and struggled to get out lots more. Ms. Shanley Blake represented the teachers very well here. The power hose was essential then to clean off the peat. The bus back was very quiet filled with the smell of freshly baked bread and exhausted students. Memories and friendships made for sure.

Baby Think It Over Program

As part of our SPHE TY module we took home the 'Real Care' babies in the 'Baby Think It Over Program'. So we could experience the realities of being a young parent. Here are some of our thoughts...

"Taking the baby home encouraged conversations with my mam about the struggles and realities of taking care of a young baby's needs while balancing your own."- Louise Owen.

"The purpose of the baby program was to learn how a real baby behaves and the proper way to take care of it."- Emma Forde

"Getting involved in this program really made me think about the responsibilities I would have if I were to have a baby."- Brodie Harold. "This program really taught me that having a baby is not all fun and games; They constantly require so much time and attention which made me realise how mature you have to be to have a baby."- Teegan Lynch "My advice for people taking part in this program in the future would be to test out the baby before you bring it home, make sure it's fully charged, and that you have the required equipment with you."- Emily Harold. "The only suggestion I have is that the students have an app on their phone to track how many times the baby cried, needed changing or needing feeding."- Lauren Birmingham. "I learnt that having a baby is not all about the baby sleeping and playing games with them, it's about looking after the baby and keeping your eye on them at all times of the day."- Tori McDonnell.



3rd Year Trip to the Zoo.

In second year, our science class adopted an orangutan from the Dublin Zoo. At the time we were learning all about conservation and what was happening in Borneo with deforestation and how the loss of these habitats meant that the orangutans were becoming endangered. Dublin zoo does a lot of work in conservation and we wanted to help the zoo through its struggles of the pandemic with funding.

We received an adoption certificate from the zoo at the time and looked forward to being able to see our adopted orangutang!

This year we were able to organise our trip to the zoo and got to visit our adopted orangutang on the 11th of October.

We spent an afternoon walking around the zoo and saw many interesting animals such as sea lions, Asian elephants, amur tigers, Asian lions, red pandas, flamingos, grey wolf, Humboldt penguin, snow leopard and most importantly our orangutang. The type of orangutans they have in the zoo are the Northwest Bornean Orangutan, who are critically endangered.

We were impressed by the large spacious enclosure the orangutans have, we were delighted that our orangutang looked happy and healthy in this new home.



Club Spotlight

Creative Writing Club

The Creative Writing club has started up once more, with first to sixth year students from throughout our school community writing and sharing their work every week in the feedback forum. Here every student, anywhere on their writing journey, is given the opportunity to read out their work and receive feedback from their peers. Writing from all genres and styles are welcome, each week the students are given a writing prompt to inspire new stories and poems.



Dungeons and Dragons club

The members of the Dungeons and Dragons club have started the school year with a new adventure, taking part in the world of table top roleplaying games. Students through their characters' work together to solve mysteries, complete quests and have some fun along the way. Guided by the game master, roleplaying as their characters and working as a team, the students are weaving a story unique to their experience. There is always room at the table to join if you are interested in an adventure.



First year drama club

We welcome all first years to our St Dominic's Drama club. It takes place on Mondays in St Patricks Hall and includes theatre games and drama skills. Our aim is to build confidence, self-esteem and verbal speaking skills for our students. We have help from our transition year students who help facilitate the club.



The Craft Club

We are currently designing and making tote bags. Some have painted, tie-dyed and embroidered the fronts of their bags.

Photo Wall



Getting ready for the cake sale- 5LCA selling cakes to raise capital to fund their mini company



Ms. O'Byrne's First Year baking class

Picture of TY students doing the William Hamilton Walk for Maths week



Here is a recent photo of the TY group that are organising College Awareness Week

Sixth Year Speaker Programme

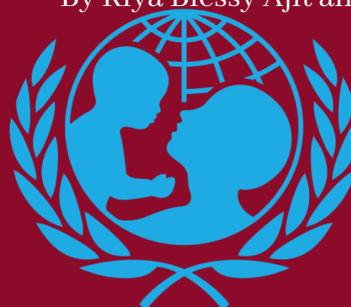
In October the 6th Year RE classes had the opportunity to hear a talk from Natasha Maimba, who came to Ireland with her mother and brother at the age of 9 to seek asylum.

Natasha told us about how she and her family were forced to flee their home in Zimbabwe in the middle of the night when the state attempted to persecute her mother for promoting education for girls and women.

When they arrived in Ireland they were put into Direct Provision, Ireland's system for accommodating those who come to Ireland seeking asylum. Direct Provision is only intended to be a temporary support, but Natasha and her family ended up spending four years there. Direct Provision places restrictions on people's lives and has been condemned by Amnesty International as a violation of people's human rights. Natasha's own experiences show this. Her mother's special dietary requirements were neglected in the Direct Provision centre where they lived, putting her health at risk. The system only provided €20 per adult and €8.10 per child to live on every week. As a result, her mother had to choose between putting food on the table and buying Natasha a school hoodie to mark her graduation from primary school. It was this incident which made Natasha, then aged 12, become an activist. Natasha recalled to us her frustration and upset that her mother had to make such difficult choices, and at feeling excluded by not having a hoodie like her peers. She expressed her feelings in writing, which her aunt sent to the Department of Justice to highlight the problems within the Direct Provision system. To Natasha's surprise she received a response to her letter. Sometime later Natasha and her close friend Minahil, who grew up with her in Direct Provision, were invited to make a video about their experiences for the Irish Times called "Lives in Limbo". It was through this that a member of UNICEF Ireland made contact with the girls, and both subsequently became UNICEF ambassadors. An RTE radio documentary followed, and from that evolved the television documentary "Leaving Limbo" (aired on RTE 1, available on RTE player <https://www.rte.ie/player/movie/leaving-limbo-s1-e1/120138280034> .) Natasha, who was always a very ambitious student, told us about how challenging it was for her and her best friend Minahil to make the documentary during their Leaving Certificate year. However she said that she kept going in the hope that the documentary would make a difference by raising awareness about Direct Provision. When we asked Natasha if she had any regrets about her time at school, she said it was caring too much about what others thought of her. She recalled how she was nominated to be Head Girl of her school, Our Lady's Bower in Athlone. She had heard that the decision was questioned by some in her year group. As a result she felt she did not deserve the opportunity and even went to her principal to ask to demote her from the position. Luckily her principal reassured her. Natasha highlights a powerful message that you should not let what others think hold you back from achieving your goals.

Despite her very challenging start in life, Natasha has achieved great things in her young life, from becoming a UNICEF ambassador, making documentaries and writing numerous articles to highlight issues facing young refugees in Ireland today. Natasha is now 20 years old and in her final year of studying Law at university. She grew up wanting to inspire others and it is safe to say that she has inspired us all. She is a prime example of how a good attitude and a strong spirit can take someone from dark depths to soaring heights. She reminded us that no matter what challenges we face, we can overcome them if we remain focused and have the right support.

By Riya Blessy Ajit and Keeva Boland, 6A1





Christmas Shoebox Appeal

Team Hope's Christmas Shoebox Appeal is an annual campaign that delivers gifts straight into the hands of children affected by poverty. Often these shoebox gifts are the only gift that a child will receive at Christmas and the joy that they bring is incredible.

This year we fifth years along with Ms. O'Byrne wrapped and packed 10 shoeboxes, full of sweets, toys, clothes, hygiene products and things to write, color and draw with. We went out to buy the things to pack the box with, last weekend, and packed them Monday after-school.

We hope that through the boxes the young children that get these boxes will have a happy Christmas and something to be joyful about.



3rd Year Trip to Epic Museum Friday 1st October 2021.

Zainab Said & Katie Flanagan

The whole year was excited as this was our very first school trip since we started St Dominic's due to the travel restrictions imposed due to Covid. We started our trip to the Epic Museum in Dublin's Docklands with a bus ride from outside the school. As soon as we got off the bus we noticed the Famine memorial beside the River Liffey. The statues that comprise the memorial portray the starving emaciated Irish people making their way towards the emigration ships. These ships became known as 'coffin ships' because of the large number of deaths that happened on board during the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. Just a few steps from the memorial we saw a replica of the Jeanie Johnson, which helped us to visualise the conditions faced by the emigrants.

Inside the actual museum we were met by the lovely welcoming staff who gave us a passport and an interactive pen to guide us around the exhibition. We needed our phones and earphones as we had to download an App as due to Covid restrictions we were doing a self-guided tour. The exhibition was excellent; the figures, displays and pictures helped me to understand the hardship and pain that Irish people suffered during the Famine.

My favourite part of the tour was the section that dealt with life at sea during the voyage. The information available on the interactive devices made learning so much fun. I also had great fun having lunch in the square with friends, taking photos and just catching up.

There was an educational aspect to the trip and when we next had a history class we answered an exam question that dealt with a trip to a museum and how it helped us to better understand the nature of history.

I know that everyone really enjoyed the trip and on their behalf I would like to thank the Principal and all the teachers who helped to make the day such a great success.



Congratulations to Shona Gogarty 3 Crocus who has just become one of the national award winners of the MFL Digital Media Storytelling competition 2021. Shona, who also won an award in this competition in 2020, created a wonderful cartoon story in German using her modern language and IT skills. This very creative and excellent digital story will be available to all schools to use in the classroom through the PPL and JCT websites. Congratulations to Shona on this achievement and to her German teacher Ms. McCarthy, Included in our photos are Shona, her parents, our Principal Ms. Cameron and Ms. McCarty.



My name is Shona, I'm in third year, and I found out that I won the national Modern Foreign Languages Digital Story Award for my entry to the competition last year. This is a national competition run by Junior Cycle for Teacher and Post Primary Languages Ireland, where students studying languages like German and French, have the opportunity to create a digital story (cartoon, video, etc) through the language they are studying. I entered and won this competition in first year, and I decided to try again in second year. I created an animation in German using an online coding platform called Scratch. An online awards ceremony will take place on 3rd of November, and after that a link to my story will be posted on the school website. I'd like to thank my German teacher Ms McCarthy who gave me lots of help with the German in my story, and to encourage other students to get involved in great opportunities like this one when they come along.

Shona Gogarty



Student Leadership

With our ever increasing emphasis on Student Leadership we are happy to announce the appointment of four of our 6th year students, Ifunanya Ogochukwu and Robyn King to the new positions of senior school head girls and Clodagh Mulvaney and Rochanaa Beeson to the positions of junior school head girls. Well done on your appointments. Each girl gave a speech to the 6th year students and both the students and teachers democratically elected the girls. Ifunanya, Robyn, Clodagh and Rochanaa are working closely with the students, tutors and year heads. In tandem with Sarah Boland, Chairperson of the Student Council, they work hard for the school community.

TY Update

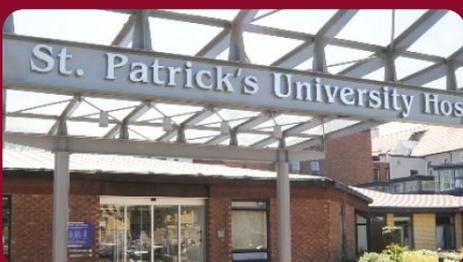
So far Transition Year 2021 has been a very busy year! In September we headed to Carlingford Adventure Centre for our team-building trip. This gave everyone the opportunity to step outside the familiar class groupings of the Junior Cycle. Everyone got to meet new classmates and make new friends while learning new skills of teamwork in Lazar, balancing at the high ropes course in Sky-Park and canoeing (and for some, swimming!) in freezing waters! Although we all came back very tired, we really enjoyed our time together.



Since then a number of events have got people up and going. A coffee morning to raise money for Hospice was a very successful fundraiser event all TY students got involved in. All the students did an Orienteering outdoor event, succeeding in mapping our local park, John Paul Park. Many of the TY students have been actively involved in helping organise and run our Maths Week, with Maths Competitions and games involving all the classes. For Maths Week, all the TY students took part in our William Hamilton Walk, which proved really enjoyable.



The first term is in full swing providing students with an excellent opportunity to experience many different modules. This year we have a number of new modules in our programme, including an Introduction to Chess, Horticulture and Young Social Innovators. The first term group are presently learning to play a musical instrument, the ukulele, which is a great accomplishment. Many of the students have signed up for the Gaisce challenge and are getting started with their 3 challenges, developing a personal skill, a physical skill and a community involvement. A number of students have applied and been accepted into St Patrick's TY Programme Walk in My Shoes and the Royal College of Surgeons TY Course. We are now looking forward to our Community Care Work Experience in November, where the students will work with a charity of their choice for a full week. Transition Year has indeed proven to be a very productive year with a number of opportunities and events included.



Gemma Branigan
Ty Coordinator





Rainbows Ireland provides peer group support to children and young people who have been impacted following a bereavement or parental separation or a divorce.

When significant change and loss happens in a family, the entire family can be affected, including children and young people. Children and young people can generally find it difficult to understand their feelings and often do not have the words to express how they feel.

Rainbows provides group support for children of a similar age and loss experience. Meeting others in a similar situation can be very supportive for children and young people.

Rainbows is not a counselling group or professional therapy.
It is a free service.



The Rainbows programmes will start in St. Dominic's College in the new year.

The Rainbows Programmes provide

- a 10-week listening, group support programme for children and young people following a bereavement or parental separation.
- Children of a similar age and loss experience are in separate groups.
- Rainbows is not counselling or professional therapy.

For further enquiries or to enrol your daughter please contact rainbows@stdominics.ie



Some photos from
our
school community

