

# Midterm Newsletter from the Principal's Desk



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope everyone is enjoying a well deserved rest over the Midterm Break. It has been an incredibly busy nine weeks and I write to give you a glimpse into life in DLSC and all that has been happening during the first half of this term.

## **Opening of the School Year Liturgical Celebration**

In September we were delighted to welcome back past pupil Fr Brian Edwards for the Liturgical Celebration of the Opening of the School Year 2018/2019.

## **School Building**

The year commenced with the good news that we had received a grant from the DES of over €60000 for machines, tools and furniture to upgrade the Woodwork Room so our students will have the best opportunity to do well in their Projects, Practical Exams and State Exams. Work is currently underway during the Midterm Break, thanks to the hard work of our Technology Teachers Mr Kinsella and Mr Broderick!

The painters have also been in and we have managed to give the Assembly Hall and Stage a much needed face lift thanks to funds raised from our Christmas Fair and De La Salle Day Draw. The Music Practice Rooms have also been sound proofed to allow for more than one band to practice at a time. We have also invested in a new DLSC drum kit so we are looking forward to a return on our investment and hoping that we will have a great evening of musical entertainment, perhaps a Talent Show before the Easter Holidays next year.

The Conference Room is next on the list and it is currently under renovation. Roofers and electricians are also in this week as part of our ongoing plan to improve the buildings in order to provide the best possible educational environment for your sons.

## **ICT**

This year there are new computers in all classrooms and we are currently working on a Digital Strategy to improve the use of ICT in the teaching and learning classroom environment. At this stage all parents/guardians should have usernames and passwords to access the school administration platform VSware. Midterm Reports are now available but we hope that by the end of this academic year you will also be able to access records on Attendance, Behaviour and Extra- Curricular Participation. Please inform the school if you are having difficulty accessing VSware. I would like to congratulate Mr Byrne on his APII appointment as the new ICT Coordinator in the College.

### **Academic Tracking Programme**

We are in the process of developing a comprehensive Academic Tracking Programme for DLSC. The primary goal of this programme is to ensure that every student in our care reaches his full potential academically. Students will undergo ability testing at key stages in their progression throughout their years in DLSC. The main tests currently in use are summarised below. All tests will be delivered in an online format and results will be made available on request to parents. These tests will give teachers an insight into students' abilities and will be used to inform teaching and to develop individual learning plans for students. By a closer tracking of performance in classroom and term exams, teachers will be able to identify if a student is meeting expectations, exceeding expectations or below expectations and support plans can be put in place. This year our Year Heads will be working closely with the Additional Educational Needs Department (AEN ) to develop this important initiative to improve the academic performance of all our students. We will keep you informed of developments as the year progresses. I would like to congratulate Ms Lowry on her APII appointment as AEN Coordinator in the College.

#### **Current DLSC Tests:**

- **CAT4 (Cognitive Abilities Test 4), 1<sup>st</sup> Year**  
This test is designed to support Post-Primary schools in understanding pupils' developed abilities, likely academic potential and learning preferences. It measures the four principal areas of reasoning – verbal, non-verbal, quantitative and spatial.
- **New Group Reading Test (NGRT), 1<sup>st</sup> Year**  
This test is used in groups to assess and monitor reading and comprehension – and if necessary, phonemic awareness. This can help identify, for instance, competent readers with weak comprehension skills who would benefit from a follow-up individual assessment and learning support.
- **Drumcondra Post Primary Test – Reading (DPPT-Read), 2<sup>nd</sup> Year**  
The DPPT-Read draws on international best practice in reading assessment to provide a test that is suitable for an Irish context. The test aims to complement a teacher's observations and assessments of a student's performance. It gives guidance on strengths, and on the types of difficulties experienced by students. This information can feed into effective planning and learning.
- **Drumcondra Post Primary Test – Mathematics (DPPT-Maths), 2<sup>nd</sup> Year**  
The DPPT-Maths was developed in response to a need for such a test identified by the DES in the 'National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy 2011-2020'. The DPPT-Maths is based on the Project Maths syllabus for Junior Cycle, and draws on international best practice in assessment to provide a test that is suitable for an Irish context. The test aims to complement a teacher's observations and assessments of a student's performance. It gives guidance on strengths, and on the types of difficulties experienced by students. This information can feed into effective planning and learning.

- **The Differential Aptitude Tests for Guidance (DATs),TY**

These tests are taken by Transition Year students and are used as a supplementary tool in helping them make their subject choices for Senior Cycle. The rationale behind these tests is that since different kinds of abilities are useful in different jobs and in different school subjects, a compliment of tests giving measures of several abilities is likely to be more useful than a test giving a single general ability score. Scores on these tests can be used to produce a profile showing a student's strengths and weaknesses. This information can be used in subject choice selection, course and career choice. The DATs consist of seven subtests: Verbal Reasoning /Numerical Reasoning/Abstract Reasoning/ Mechanical Reasoning/Perceptual Speed and Accuracy/Spelling/Language Usage. It is important to note that whilst the DATs measure a wide variety of skills and abilities, they are not exhaustive and do not provide information on areas such as musical, sporting or inter-personal aptitudes.

### **Homework Clubs and After School Study**

Homework Clubs are being held after school in the School Library. I would like to thank all the teachers ( Ms Mc Carthy, Ms Mc Dermott, Mr Byrne, Mr Chambers, Ms. Lynch, Mr Kilroy and Ms Jordan, Mr Brennan, Ms Plunkett, Ms O Dwyer and Ms Mazzucato) and our 5<sup>th</sup> Year Mentors who give up their free time after school to help Junior Cycle students having difficulties in certain subjects. Help is available in Maths, Irish, French, and with homework in general.

The After School Study Programme is up and running in the Study Hall, thanks to Ms Jordan, Mr Forde, Mr Brennan and Mr Chambers. Students are provided an opportunity to complete two hours supervised study each evening after school. I urge all students particularly those in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year to avail of this service. High academic results will only be achieved with consistent hard work and revision. This year 3 hour study sessions are on offer to facilitate students involved with school sports and teams.

### **Debating Club**

Another important DLSC Club which is growing in strength and numbers this year is the Debating Club. Students meet during lunchtime to plan, prepare and practice writing speeches and debates. Decades of academic research have proven the benefits that accrue as a result of engaging in debate are numerous. Students gain confidence and learn to work as part of a team. It improves their ability to form balanced, informed arguments, to use reasoning and evidence. It gives students the opportunity to develop effective speech composition and delivery. Please encourage your son to consider joining up if he has not already done so. We look forward to developing a strong DLSC Debating Team and entering Inter -Schools Competitions into the future. I would also like to thank Ms Lowry, Ms Mc Dermott, Ms Plunkett and Mr Kilroy who give up their lunchtimes to organise and run this club.

## **Library News**

You have been receiving regular updates regarding our Accelerated Reading Programme which has got off to a great start this term thanks to the trojan work of Mr Boyd and the English Department teachers in the College. Since September over 7 MILLION WORDS have been read by our students. This initiative is all about giving our students a love of books and reading as well as improving reading ages and literacy levels, which should in turn impact on academic success! The library refurbishment has been a real success and a true partnership effort. There is no way we would have been able to refurbish the room, electronically tag all books and introduce the Accelerated Reading Programme without the fund raising efforts of our staff, students and you the parents/ guardians. Our Library Wall and notice board has just been designed and we are hoping it will be ready on our return after Mid Term. I would also like to sincerely thank St Vincent De Paul (Good Shepherd Branch) who kindly gave us a donation to buy some new books for our library. It will certainly be appreciated and of great benefit to our students. Loraine our Assistant Librarian does a great job running the library for us. She is kept very busy as the library is packed every break and lunch time these days not only with avid readers but also with students who play in Chess and Scrabble Tournaments. Please continue to support our literacy initiatives and encourage your son to leave his phone aside and read a book for at least twenty minutes every day. It will have tremendous long term benefits. No doubt about that!

## **Sport News**

All sports are back in action, thanks to our teachers and staff who help out and coach teams.

This year Mr O' Reilly and Mr Broderick are looking after 1<sup>st</sup> year Rugby. Mr Cronin, Mr Declan O' Neill and Mr Matt Curran are coaching Junior Rugby while Mr Leigh and Mr Boyd are working with the Senior Rugby Team.

Coach Cariltos is back with us this year to continue working with our Basketball Teams. He is eager to recruit and welcome new members to the Basketball Club.

Ms Lynn Mc Crave plans to build on her great success last year when we won the title of Badminton School of the Year.

Mr Mick Conroy Jnr. and Mr Mc Donald will continue to coach our Squash Players. Ms Lowry will run the Athletics Club. Mr Cronin will organise all the Golfing Events and Ms Plunkett is organising Table-Tennis for students.

First Year parents have already received correspondence to explain the new structure and timetable of Sport Activities. We are a Health Promoting School and are keenly aware of the physical, social and mental health benefits for teenage boys who take part in regular physical activity and who are engaged in team sports. This year in addition to offering Rugby, Badminton, Basketball, Squash, Athletics, Golf, and Tabletennis we are going to pilot the introduction of Soccer as a sport. Soccer will be offered to JC students in the Second Term from March to June when the Rugby Season is over. We will work in

conjunction with the Student Council to pilot the introduction of Soccer for Senior Cycle students on our return after Mid-Term.

### **Health Promotion School and Wellbeing**

We are currently working on achieving our Health Promotion Flag. The HPS Committee met recently with the Regional Health Promotion Officer and we are well on the way to achieving our goal. Part of the initiative involves improving the wellbeing of all in the school. A thank you to Mr O' Neill, Mr Mc Cann, Ms Kelleher, Ms Franklin, Mr Conail Boyd, Ms Jordan and Mr Forde, the new Wellbeing Team who are working on designing a relevant and effective Wellbeing Programme and Policy for the school. We want all our students to be intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically healthy. We want to empower students to make healthy choices and to improve their fitness levels by encouraging all students to take part in a team sport in the College. We also want to educate and encourage students to have a healthy, balanced diet. I would ask all parents/ guardians to support us as we ban the consumption of fizzy drinks and high sugar energy drinks in the school. These drinks are detrimental to wellbeing in school as students are buzzing from an artificial sugar high only to crash to a low before the end of the school day. A big thank you to our SPHE teacher Ms Sharon Kelleher for leading this Health Promoting School initiative!

### **Pastoral Care**

The DLSC Care Team led by Ms Franklin, have met weekly since the beginning of the school year. The aim of this team is to identify student needs, access appropriate supports and to put individual care plans in place.

Our excellent SNA team also meet weekly with the AEN Team to devise support plans and to discuss the best strategies to help students with learning difficulties.

### **Junior Cycle Year Groups – First Year**

Congratulations to Mr Cronin on his APII appointment as Year Head to First Years. He will work closely with the First Year Tutors, Ms Tully, Mr Leigh and Ms Carey. The new group of First Years completed the DLSC Induction Welcome Week in late August, where they were given an opportunity to become more familiar with the school, teachers and their class groups. Lockers, books and timetables were also sorted. During this Induction Week they were introduced to their 5th Year Mentors and Buddies who will look after and be there for the First Years throughout the year. This group of Mentors accompanied the First Years with their Class Tutors and some of the De La Salle Brothers on a Bonding Day to Glendalough. A great day was had by all as they were given an overview of the history of the early Christian monastic settlement which was founded by St. Kevin in the 6th century and one of the most important monastic sites in Ireland.

At the end of the first month there was an Information and Social evening for First Year Parents and Students. This provided an opportunity for parents to meet teachers and learn more about the Academic Programme, the Pastoral Supports and the wide variety

of Extra Curricular Activities and Sports on offer in DLSC. I would like to thank the members of the Parent Association for providing refreshments on the night.

First Years have also had the opportunity to try their four Option Subjects. Choices have been made and classes will commence after the break. Students should be well settled in by now and familiar with the rules and routines. Please check the Student Journals on a weekly basis.

### **Junior Cycle Groups - Second Year**

Congratulations also to Ms Jordan on her APII appointment as Year Head of Second Years. She will be working with parents and Class Tutor Mr Forde to ensure that Second Years keep on track and make progress in their second year in the College. This term Second Years had a very enjoyable ecology trip to Tayto Park with their Science teachers Ms Normile, Ms Tully and Ms Carey and SNA John Murray.

### **Junior Cycle Year Groups - Third Year**

I would like to thank Mr Cryan for organising the Book Rental Scheme this year and for the time and effort he invests as Year Head to Third Years. This year he is working closely with Class Tutors Ms Mc Dermot, Mr Boyd and Mr Chambers in order to encourage and support students throughout this important exam year. It is a busy time for the Third Years as they complete Junior Cycle Projects, complete Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) and study for their Christmas Exams, Mocks and Junior Cycle Exams in June.

### **Junior Cycle Staff Training**

Congratulations to Mr Chambers on his APII appointment as the new Junior Cycle Coordinator in the College. All teachers have had training from the DES JCT Support Service in their second subjects this term and there is a JCT Inservice on Wellbeing for all Staff scheduled for **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November**. There will be no school for students but please encourage your son to use that day to revise for his upcoming Christmas Exams.

**We are also planning to have an information night on the New Junior Cycle for all second and third year parents and students before Christmas. Date and time will follow.**

### **Transition Year**

Transition is also in full swing thanks to the hard work and planning of the TY Coordination Team – Mr Brennan, Mr O’ Reilly and Mr Cronin. Students are well settled into their Friday Social Work Placement and keeping fit as they take part in Thursday Afternoon Activities - Judo, Swimming or Rock Climbing. Students have just completed their first week of Work Experience which we hope will help them to begin to consider career and course choices they will have to make in the coming years.

A number of trips have been organised for the year. This term students have been given the opportunity to attend the Ploughing Championships, a History Cinema Trip and go

on their first TY Hike. Many students also had a fantastic time in the West of Ireland when they went for a few days to Killary Adventure Centre. TY Students have also been busy in school participating in new modules and getting tasters of different subjects to help them in making the right subject choices for the Leaving Certificate. They participated in the Fighting Words Creative Writing Workshop to help them with their writing skills. It is important that TY students complete projects/ homework and continue to work throughout the year in their academic subjects particularly those they would like to sit in the Leaving Certificate.

TY have also had the opportunity to listen to some inspiring and interesting guest speakers. Dublin footballer Kevin Mc Manamon spoke on behalf of Aware and the importance of nourishing and looking after our mental health. The TYs also fund raised over €1000 for the Irish Society for Autism after a talk by Dennis Sexton.

### **Senior Cycle- Fifth Year**

Ms O Dwyer continues her excellent work as Year Head of Fifth Years. She has been working closely with our newly appointed 5<sup>th</sup> Year Mentors. They were a great help during the First Year Induction Week and will remain as 'Buddies' to First Year students throughout the year. I would also like to thank them for all the work they do at Parent Evening Meetings and Parent Teacher Meetings. Certainly great leaders in the making!

This term in the company of Mr Forde a group of Fifth Year students joined with Lasallian students from all over Ireland to attend a Student Leadership Training Programme in Castletown, Co. Laois with the De La Salle Brothers. A very worthwhile and interesting day was had by all as they participated in workshops about Leadership, Wellbeing and the worldwide work of the Lasallian Brothers. I would like to congratulate Mr Forde on his recent APII appointment as Coordinator of the School Self Evaluation Process and School Improvement Planning.

### **Senior Cycle – Sixth Year**

Congratulations also to Ms Mazzucato on her recent API appointment as Year Head to Sixth Years with particular responsibility for working with the Sixth Year Prefects. The role of Prefect has been redefined. They will play a central role in the life of the school and must embody the core values of courtesy, respect and responsibility. They will carry out a number of important tasks within the school:

- Act as role models for younger students
- Represent the student body
- Represent the school externally
- Act in a manner befitting the school's tradition and good name
- Be available to attend meetings and carry out duties during lunch break
- Assist in the maintenance of discipline within the school by taking part in a rota of Senior Prefects to patrol the grounds/school at lunch time
- Report important issues and any matters of student concern to the attention of the Year Head
- Communicate on a regular basis with the Principal and Deputy Principal
- Promote good behaviour and a happy, positive atmosphere in the school

- Represent the school and provide assistance at school functions e.g Parent/Teacher meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Year), Open Nights, 6<sup>th</sup> Year mass, Prize-Giving ceremonies...
- Help to keep the school environment free of litter
- Promote leadership and represent the school on important occasions (e.g functions, funerals...)

This is a prestigious and important Student Leadership Role in the school and I wish the fourteen Sixth Year Prefects well with their new role and responsibilities.

It has been a busy start to the year for our final year students. A group of Sixth Years were outstanding ambassadors for the school as they went as helpers on the Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes in early September. Later in September our Guidance Counsellor Ms Ann Franklin organised for all Sixth Years to attend the Higher Options Expo in the RDS. This is such an important time for them as they make decisions about third level courses and career choices. Ms Carey and the Science Department brought the Biology students to Dublin Zoo as part of the Senior Biology Programme.

This is a vitally important year for your sons. Achieving high points in the Leaving Certificate will only happen with full attendance at school and consistent hard work. A positive attitude, a healthy diet, exercise, sleep and a good study routine are all ingredients for success. Encourage your son to turn off his phone and make the small short term sacrifices for long term gain and success!

### **Open Day 2018**

Open Day was held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October. The school was looking great and we managed to get two new flag poles erected on time to proudly display our hard earned and well deserved Green Flag and Amber Flag ( for Mental Health Promotion). Most impressive on the day were the students themselves who gave up the opportunity to have a half day to help out in school. Our Senior Student Leadership team of Prefects and Mentors teamed up with the Junior Students to take families on the tour around the school. Other students helped teachers in classrooms to showcase the variety of subjects and activities we offer in the school. The feedback from our visitors was very positive. In particular they were impressed with how mannerly, helpful and articulate the students were throughout the day. Again our dedicated team from the Parents Association were at hand to welcome families and talk about the role of the PA in the school. I would like to thank all the students, staff, coaches and parents who helped out on the day.

### **Student Council**

Mr Chambers is the new Student Council Staff Liaison. All elections took place before Midterm and the Council will have its first meeting of the year when school reopens after the holidays. The student voice is strong and valued in DLSC and we look forward to working with this new council to continue in our efforts to make DLSC a great school for all our students.

## **Parents Association**

The AGM was held on 16<sup>th</sup> October. Ms Niamh Carberry was re-elected as Chairperson, Ms Eilis Balfe as Treasurer and Ms Pauline Mc Tague as Secretary.

This hard working Parents' Association meet once a month. Already this term they have provided refreshments at the First Year Information and Social Evening as well as organising in conjunction with the school, a Debs Reception for last years' Sixth Years. They helped out on Open Day and are current working with teachers and management on planning and preparing for the Christmas Fair. The PA is looking for new members who are willing to give a small amount of time to attend meetings or help out with the Christmas Fair.

## **Dates for your Diary**

- **Friday 16<sup>th</sup> November. JCT Training Day for Staff ( School Closed for students)**
- **Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November @ 9am -1pm Assessment Test For Incoming Students 2019/2020**
- **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 4.15pm -6.45pm 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Parent Teacher Meeting**
- **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December @ 3pm- Fund Raising Festive Orchestral Performance in The Church of the Good Shepherd. (Details to Follow)**
- **Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December @ 11am -3pm De La Salle College Churchtown Christmas Fair**
- **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> - Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December Christmas Exams**

## **Reminders**

Please remind your son to be respectful at all times in school uniform, particularly in the local Churchtown area. Students are not permitted to loiter or litter outside Supervalu or any other shops in the locality. Students are forbidden to smoke in school uniform. It is a serious breach of school rules to bring the school into disrepute. We are working very hard to improve the school in every possible way and we do not want the careless actions of a few students to undo all the great work being done by staff, students and parents. We want the community to see and experience the goodness, potential and greatness in all our students.

Please ensure that the School Rules in the Student Journal are signed. These rules help us to create the very best learning environment for your son. No one in DLSC has the right to disrupt the learning of others in the classroom. Respect must be maintained at all times – respect for self, for others and the environment. In order for your son to reach his potential he needs to attend school, in full uniform, on time every day. He needs to be positive, focused and determined. He needs to listen and work consistently

in all his classes. He needs to complete all his homework to the best of his ability and revise/study consistently throughout the year.

We will continue to do our very best to educate and care for your son and to support you and your son in every way possible.

I could not complete my first newsletter as Principal without saying a special thank you to my dedicated and hard working Deputy Principal Mr Michael Kirwan. He is a fantastic support and works alongside me each day as we endeavour to do our utmost to be the best Senior Management Team we can be for all in DLSC!

Enjoy the rest of the holiday!

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan Foster

Principal.

