



Newsletter - December 2009

Message from Michael Moretta, Head of School

It is always a great surprise to discover that as we approach the end of the very long Christmas term we are essentially at the half-way point in the academic year. At this time of year I find myself reading reports and reviewing examination grades and generally gauging the performance of the students in all the Year groups. At the same time the school is filled with the sound of beautifully sung carols, amazing music and brightly lit up Christmas trees – we even having a singing tree in the Intermediate School. It's a wonderful time of year and although the school is frenetic and busy, it is also warm and full of seasonal cheer.

I have a great deal to tell you about in this newsletter. I know that for most of us it has been a difficult year, full of uncertainty and anxiety. It has been the same for every School Board in the country. The preparations for Christmas were sometimes blighted by the fearful press reports in the lead up to the budget. Now that The Budget is over I can say that in some respects, for the school anyway, we can breathe a sigh of relief that the pupil/teacher ratio has not been altered – it remains 20:1 and the Government has not introduced further savage cuts to our budget. Nonetheless, we remain in straitened times and we are still subject to difficult operating conditions. I fear a climate of further disruption in the new calendar year and am anxious about increased industrial action. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your support during the first days of industrial action and to remind you all that the staff, the BOM and the BOG are committed to working together in order to minimise disruption to learning as far as possible. Our priority is to support the examination years as much as possible. I will, of course, keep you informed as and when I hear of proposed action in good time.

Exams and Reports

Considering the exams and reports, this is the time for taking stock, setting new targets and, in some cases, making amends and correcting mistakes. Since I am the only person who reads every report and looks closely at every grade in each exam, I do have a wide overview and I can put things in perspective. In all truth, the great majority of the students in the secondary school have performed extremely well and gained grades that both reflect their ability and accurately represent consistent hard work and preparation. These students are building up a substantial platform for future success. For you, as parents, may I make a suggestion about going through the reports with your sons and daughters? As you go through the reports please do not just look only at the negatives. We, as parents and teachers, sometimes are drawn to the C or D or the odd 2 and 3 grades for Effort and we miss the big picture. See the report in the round and praise as much as possible. This is as true for 6th Years as it is for First Years.

In the case of the exam classes [3rd and 6th] remember especially that although half the year has gone by, we still have 5 important months to go. The Christmas exams are merely stepping stones and a snapshot of performance. Moreover, if there are lessons to be learnt, it is better to learn them now before the mocks so that adjustments can be made. For the 6th Years attention must also turn to the CAO and picking appropriate courses. So while there are many lessons to be learned, there is plenty of time to address key issues. The worst response is to ignore some of the messages or to clam up and lose confidence. Talk to us, contact the AAs and keep positive.

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Study Skills

We will be arranging a study skills day in early January for the 3rd, 5th and 6th Years – probably around the 14th January. This will take the form of note-taking techniques, how to revise and how to focus on examination technique. We will focus these sessions in particular areas for students who feel they need it or want support. The programme will, I feel, help re-focus minds and build confidence.

H1N1 Vaccination Programme for All Children

Just a brief update on the H1N1 situation. The HSE has advised the Department for Education and Science that its vaccination programme against this pandemic is moving to prioritise all children from 5 years to 18 years inclusive. The HSE has started vaccinating children in these age boundaries from December and hopes to complete the process early 2010. It has just been confirmed that the vaccination team will visit Sutton Park on Wednesday January 13th. The vaccination process is not compulsory, it is just a service that you can choose to use if you so wish. I will remind everyone early next term, but if you wish to avail of the service, write the date in your diary.

Carol Concerts and Carol Service

It is sometimes said to me, usually by people who do not know the school at all, what is your ethos? This is a complex question and this is not the time to answer it fully except to say that Sutton Park stands for many things and fosters in my view truly exceptional, articulate, well-balanced and confident young men and women. If you want to see at first hand the powerful forces that bind this school together there is no better opportunity than to attend one of the Christmas Performances on Friday 18th December. Most of the whole school community are involved. Teachers, children and students have been working closely together to produce quite amazing productions. It is not just the quality that inspires and instructs, it's the way everyone works together in such a supportive and constructive way. The hours of rehearsal and work that go into every 5 minute slot should not be underestimated and I know that everyone who attends appreciates this aspect of the school's work.

If you were unable to attend the Evening Service in Howth Church this year we have arranged for the programme to be put on a DVD. It will cost only 15 Euro and will make a delightful present or just a record of a beautiful event that you will treasure for many years. You will be able to purchase these at Reception in the new year.

Charity Events

One area of the school that strikes me especially at this time is the culture of giving and the awareness of the needs of others that exists at the heart of our community. In a recent assembly, for instance, we announced the following charity initiatives: A Collection for the Jack and Jill Foundation, The annual SVP appeal and a 6th Year appeal for an orphanage in South Africa. Here is a brief word on all three.

Jack & Jill Foundation

A mobile phone collection for the Jack and Jill Foundation set up to support the children and families of terminally ill children has so far encouraged children in the Primary Schools to donate 300 old mobile phones. If you have old mobile phones at home or the children and students in your house receive new ones over Christmas, can I urge you to bring them into school in January. We want to reach the 500 mark by early January.

SVP Collection

Mr Walsh wants me to thank you all for your generosity and support for the SVP collection. The bags have been stacked up in a number of areas throughout the school and the volume is amazing.

Suitcase for South Africa

Olga Gargon, our Head Girl, has carried on a tradition started by Lara Taylor [last year's 6th Year] of collecting a suitcase of presents to take to South Africa and give to children in an orphanage. This initiative, entirely run and championed by the stu-

dents, is testimony not only to a wide awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged in the world, but a reflection of an urge to act rather than stand passively by.

There is one further event I should mention. Suttonians Rugby Club have organised a “Charity Walk with Rugby Legends” to take place on the 28th December. The walk starts at 11 am at Suttonians RFC, goes up to the Summit Inn and then down to Findlaters Pub, before finishing again at Suttonians RFC. The club have agreed that 25% of the proceeds raised by Sutton Park students will go into the school’s fundraising account so can I urge you all to support this fun day if you are around Howth over the holiday period. For further details and the latest news and information consult www.thefatturkeywalk.com

PTA NEWS

Undoubtedly it is a distinctive feature of our school that we have a committed, energetic and dynamic PTA. Most of you will have seen the wonderful hampers displayed in the Reception Area. Some of the proceeds will go towards the Red Cross Relief Fund and some will go towards PTA funds in general. To get an idea of the kinds of projects supported by the PTA you will see a significant project come to fruition in early January.

The Playground resurfacing at the front of the property has now started and will be completed early in January. This project had been held up due to technical difficulties and the increased expense of developing that particular site. I am delighted to announce that due to the considerable generosity of one family we have been able to progress the project well ahead of schedule. When I think of the support we have had in recent years from individual families in developing our science labs, improving our computer infrastructure in all areas of the school, contributing to the library and now this, I am both extremely grateful and moved. On behalf of the Governors and all the staff, I want to pass on our thanks to everyone who contributed to a much needed and much appreciated project.

On January 28th the PTA have booked the Hallelujah Gospel Choir to perform in the School Hall. If you have not had a chance to see this magnificent choir this is really an opportunity to experience something really special. Tickets will be available from Reception on January 11th. Look out for signs around the school for further information. Prices are:

20 Euro for an adult ticket

10 Euro for a child

50 Euro for a Family Ticket.

Art and Photography/ Photomontage Competition & Exhibition

Timed to coincide around the Hallelujah Gospel Choir’s visit, the PTA have also sponsored a Whole School Art and Photography/ Photomontage Competition & Exhibition taking place on the 26th January until the 29th January. All students and children in the school have been invited to take a photograph or paint a picture on a theme determined by Mr Timmons and Miss Houlihan. If you want to encourage the creative spirit over the holiday here are the themes for the Secondary School students:

Natural Wonders

Belonging/ Cherish

Doors

Try to encourage your sons and daughters to get involved. All entries should be submitted by January 20th. We would prefer A4 size and no more than 3 prints. All the work must be the students’ own.

There are two categories 1st, 2nd and 3rd Year and 4th, 5th and 6th Year.

The pictures and photographs will be displayed around the school and all parents and interested parties will be able to purchase them at the end of the weekend. All proceeds will go to the PTA funds. Primary School staff will determine the themes for the Junior and Intermediate schools. Again we will provide further information early next term, and please look out for notices around the school.

Celebration of Success this Term

It always gives me real pleasure to celebrate the outstanding successes that take place every term at Sutton Park. This term has been no exception and in every sphere of school life some of our students have again performed at the highest levels.

Junior Spider Awards Best Web Application 2009

I have just received notice that Connor Scully and Adam Keilthy have won the Best Web Application category of the Eircom Junior Science Awards. The award ceremony took place at the Eircom HQ in Dublin on the 18th December. These two students initially entered the project in the Young Scientist Competition in January 2007, but the project has been winning top awards ever since.

Opening of The Samuel Beckett Bridge

If you have not already seen the pictures capturing this magnificent event please look at the website. Our Design and Technical Graphics 5th Year students were the only students to be invited to this prestigious opening ceremony by the Lord Mayor of Dublin. They were given VIP treatment throughout the day and shown around the new National Concert Hall in Dublin. I understand from Mr Timmons that they were selected because of the impression they made during an earlier visit to the bridge. They had a wonderful time – well done to everyone involved.

High Achiever Awards at the Royal Irish Academy

On the very same day of the opening of the new bridge in Dublin, I was lucky enough to be invited to The National Gallery of Ireland to hear a concert performed by the highest Achievers throughout Ireland in Music, Speech and Drama. Christopher Ellis 1S was chosen to perform at the entrance to the Concert, playing before Mary McAleese and a host of other dignitaries. It was a wonderful evening and a real showcase for the depth of musical talent in this country. What struck me was the enormous dedication and commitment it takes to be a high achiever in any field.

Winner of Design a Logo for Tidy Towns 2009

Emma Ryan in 5th Year won First Prize in this competition. Her entry was chosen above the submissions for all local schools and will be the logo you see on the signs in this area over the next few months.

French Debates

For many years now Madame Bardel has been organising French Debating Teams from Sutton Park who achieve extraordinary success in competitions with local schools. The Alliance Francaise, the cultural service of the French Embassy, sponsor these events and they offer our students the opportunity to develop their French to a high level. Here is Madame's report on this team's performance.

Our French debaters argued remarkably well this Autumn. They spoke to a variety of motions including: The Education system does not prepare us for life and opposing a motion supporting wearing school uniform. Congratulations to Paul Hughes, Adrianna Piedrafita and particularly our dear twins Laura and Chris Hayes who, on separate nights, won prizes for being the best speakers in the contest. Special thanks go to our Captain Chris Hayes who co-ordinated the team so well.

Excellence in Sport

We have a number of High Achieving Sportsmen and Women in the school at the moment and while most of the achievements are mentioned in the sports report, I feel I should mention one or two here.

Sarah Taaffe 3H is in the elite National Swimming Squad. Here the words dedication and commitment are scarcely appropriate. Rising very early each morning [4am] and training late into the night, it is a wonder that this young lady is able to keep awake in school let alone achieve a string of grade As in her report. Whenever anyone tells me that they are "Tired and Exhausted", I think of this young lady ready to swim at 4:30 am and still keeping up to date with all her work. Extraordinary.

I have mentioned David Tobin – also in our third year and preparing for external exams- many times before in the context of his outstanding musical performances. In fact he has always had two passions –Liverpool Football Club and playing Soccer and playing the Violin. Well, David has recently been selected to play for the National Team at U16 level – a very impressive achievement. He goes to Qatar in the Middle East over Christmas to undertake intensive training and to play in a tournament. This means he will not be available to play in our Christmas Service. I am sure you will all join me in wishing him very success during his trip.

The connecting thread between all of these students is their ability to juggle an enormous workload, find time to practise and perfect their chosen area of interest or talent and finally their determination and self-motivated drive. They are an example to us all.

Sports Report

Girls Hockey Update 2009

Minor Girls' Hockey

Our Minor Squad are competing in The Minor B league in Leinster. They were narrowly beaten 0-1 by Kings Hospital in their first league match. They suffered a heavy defeat to St. Andrews on Fri 27th Nov. They were beaten 0-2 by Loreto Foxrock away on Wed. 2nd December. We play Teresians at home at 2pm on Wed. 9th Dec.

In the Northside League which will commence after Christmas our Minors have been drawn against, Holy Faith Clontarf, Santa Sabina & St Wolstan's. We will also be entering a team into The First Year Section of this league. The team will comprise our First Year girls and a number of girls from Grade 6. Our First Years have been drawn against Santa Sabina & Mount Temple.

Junior Girls' Hockey

In the Leinster B League SPS had a good 2-0 win against St Mary's Naas. Sutton Park have been competitive in all their fixtures but have been unable to secure any other points to date. They have played, Santa Sabina, Muckross & Wesley College in their other fixtures.

Senior Girls' Hockey

Our Senior Girls' team are competing in the top league in Leinster. Our Girls were a little over-whelmed by the step up in standard in the Premier League at the start of the season. In spite of gutsy performances against Loreto Beaufort, Alexander College, Mount Anville they were unable to compete at that level. Our first points of the season came against the King's Hospital School with a credible 1-1 draw. The girls were extremely unlucky in their next two matches against Holy Child Killiney & Loreto Foxrock. A thrilling game against Killiney saw Sutton Park concede a late goal to be beaten 4-3. We had to endure a similar fate against Loreto Foxrock where a last minute goal sealed victory for the Foxrock side. Sutton Park School's performances in these most recent matches have been very encouraging and auger well for the Northside League which will begin in earnest after Christmas.

Minor Squad

Ysabel Pheifer (capt)
Sophie Gorman
Laura Rathjens
Dawn O'Donovan
Laura Carberry
Marina Flynn
Christina Maldonado
Zoe-Purser Doyle
Hazel Rogers
Phoebe Tyrrell
Alice Ward
Emma Doherty
Cheyanne El Khoully
Caoimhe Mc Namara
Sarah Parker
Meghann Smyth

Junior Squad

Sarah Twaddell (capt)
Sofie Lawless
Niamh Lowney
Madeline Christian
Ciara Kummert
Clodagh Gale
Aisling Kinsella
Dearbhla Lynch
Emma Reynolds
Ysabel Pheifer
Phoebe Tyrrell
Alice Ward
Emma Doherty
Meghann Smyth
Laura Carberry
Caoimhe Mc Namara
Sarah Parker
Sofie Lawless
Nicola Hurley
Hazel Rogers

Senior Squad

Lauren Mc Sweeney(capt)
Laura White (capt)
Kerrie O'Leary
Sile Stafford
Laura Hayes
Emma White
Rebecca Cull
Shannen Price
Lucy Burns
Nicola Hurley
Sarah Twaddell
Niamh Lowney
Ysabel Pheifer
Aisling Kinsella
Clodagh Gale

Boys' Hockey Report

As we move towards the Christmas Break, the Sutton Park School Boys' Hockey section are having a positive 09/10 season. The U13 team have been defeated by King's Hospital and drawn with Wesley. They are improving with every match. The U.14 team have had great wins over Mount Temple and St Columba's College. The Junior Squad have had tight matches with St. Andrew's and Wesley College. Our Senior Team have performed brilliantly with superb wins against Mount Temple and Kilkenny College. They shared the points with St. Andrew's College in a thrilling match.

With all the boys' teams playing Leinster "A" Division League hockey, The Intermediate School team starting their defence of The Leinster League Title & all the Cups still to play, 2010 promises to be a very exciting year.

Badminton

This year all our teams are playing in Division 1 of The School League after last season's unprecedented success. Clearly, such a step up in class takes time to adjust. Mrs Spence has asked me to single out two teams for special consideration in this report: the U19 Girls are up to the play off stage in their League and the U16 Boys are approaching the semi-final stage of their competition. This team have won all their matches so far.

Congratulations to our 6th Year Girls': Alex Horgan, Laura White, Kerrie O'Leary, Marsha Ivory & Lily Spain on completing The 5k Jingle Bells Run in the Phoenix Park on Sat. 5th December. All funds raised went to The Debra Charity.

Dates for your Diary

Monday 11th January 1st and 4th Year Parents' Meeting 1:30—3:30pm

Thursday 28th January Hallelujah Gospel Choir Performance. Starts at 7:30 pm

February 24th –5th March Senior School Mock Exams for 3rd and 6th Years

Monday 22nd March 3rd and 6th Year Parent Teacher Meetings 1:30—3:30 pm

Intermediate School



Message from Liam Burns, Intermediate School Principal

Christmas is traditionally a very busy and exciting time in school and this year is no exception. All children are in the throes of preparation for the Christmas play, many are involved in practices for the Carol Service and generally there is a great buzz about the place. May I draw some important matters to your attention.

Primary Science Fair 2010

I must start by looking forward to a major event for Intermediate School in January. As you are aware we have tried to give Science a prominent position in our curriculum and, with that in mind, we submitted an application for inclusion in the Primary School version of the BT Young Scientist exhibition in the RDS. I am delighted to report that our proposal has been accepted and we will be exhibiting our project on "Lighthouses" on Thursday 14th January at what is known as the "Primary Science Fair". The Science element of our display will be conducted by our Grade 6 class while both Grades 4 and 5 are being asked to produce stories, poems and historical research on this topic. Mr. Timmons has been working with the Grade 6 class on 3D graphics of lighthouses, while Mr. Bohan has been working on poetry based on our theme. I have been working on the electrical circuitry and physical structure of the lighthouse, with the assistance of Ms. Hanratty and Mr. Scully. This work will contribute to our display at the exhibition and I encourage you to get your child involved at home in making a contribution by way of writing, pictures, photographs or perhaps even a model lighthouse. This has been a real team effort in school and we would really appreciate your support in this and also hope to see you at the exhibition to view our children's work.

Christmas Pantomime

This year's play "Sleeping Beauty's Dream" is much anticipated by the boys and girls. They are rehearsing feverishly and it never ceases to amaze me how comfortable, confident and competent they are in public performance. I look forward to your attendance and enthusiastic participation in our pantomime.

Carol Service

The annual carol service takes place on the evening of Friday 18th December in Howth church. Those children participating are to attend the church for a final practice in the afternoon of Friday 18th. This means that, on completion of their play, they should remain in school and bring a packed lunch. They will then be transported to the church on the school bus. Children should be collected at the church at 2.45pm.

Christmas Collections

A sincere thank you to all who contributed to the many good causes promoted by school approaching the Christmas period. Your generosity in supporting St. Mary's Hospital Baldoyle, St. Vincent de Paul's annual collection and the PTA hampers is very much appreciated.

Ice Skating & Pantomime

A great time was had by all at both these events. It was great to visit Dundalk Ice Bowl with the staff and children from Junior School and a particular "Thank You" to Ms. McGuire for co-ordinating this effort. The Panto was its usual uproarious self, thoroughly enjoyed by all. It is most pleasing to note that, at both of these events, special mention was given about the conduct and maturity of all our children. It is nice to see that others outside of Sutton Park acknowledge these qualities in our children. Well done boys and girls!

Tennis

Our best wishes go to Conor Reilly from Grade 6, who has recently qualified for the Under 12 National Tennis finals to be held in UCD. Conor informs me that this is the last 16 who have qualified from the whole country and obviously will provide him with stiff competition. Conor is a wonderful all round sportsman and I am sure he will perform admirably and give a great account of himself. Good luck Conor!

Dates For Your Diary

- School finishes for Christmas at 11.45am on Tuesday 22nd December
- Second Term commences 7th January 2010
- Primary Science Fair Thursday 14th January 2010
- Visit to National Sea Life Centre, Bray. Wednesday 10th February
- ACCORD group visit for "Relationship Programme." Details and consent form to follow.

Finally, I thank you for your outstanding support, kindness and generosity throughout this year to date. I trust you will have an enjoyable and relaxing Christmas and I look forward to seeing you in 2010.

Best wishes
Liam Burns

Junior School



Message from Geraldine McGuire, Junior School Principal

Extended Day for Junior Infants

When the Junior Infant class returned from the half term break they began their longer school day, no longer finishing at 1.15p.m. but continuing until 2.45p.m. when the other Junior classes finish. The extended day allows time for the children to engage in Montessori activities, spend time in the computer room, visit the library more often and join the rest of the Junior classes in our Wednesday Enrichment Programme.

Wednesday Enrichment Programme

Visits to the Hugh Lane, the National Gallery and the Chester Beatty Library continued and were greatly enjoyed by all the children who are always complimented on their behaviour and the level of interest level which they show.

Emlyn Jones, a past member of staff, has visited India on a number of occasions and returned to the school to share his enthusiasm for the Indian culture with us. The children watched a DVD that he had made of his most recent visit to Kandahar, old Delhi and new Delhi. He brought several items of interest from the areas he had visited and the children had many questions for him! Indian cuisine was prepared by a group of parents and enjoyed by all children and teachers.

The trip to the Dundalk Ice Dome was a great success. I know it seems a very long journey for a few hours ice skating but in fact the journey time is not much longer than a drive into the city. The journey is well worth it, the ice is in fantastic condition the rink is huge and we are the only group on the ice.

There are many activities to look forward to in the new year.

Play Area

A parent has given a donation of €10,000 which will be used with the funding already raised by the PTA to drain, resurface and upgrade the play area at the front of the school. This donation will relieve the PTA of the need to raise the balance of money needed. It is hoped that the work will be carried out during the Christmas holidays.

Old Mobile Phones

There has been a great response to the appeal for old mobile phones and we will continue to collect them in the new year. I will let you know when we reach our target.

Charity Work

Now somewhat of a Christmas tradition, the children of Junior, Senior Infant and Grade 1 each provided a gift for a child. These toys are then distributed by the St Vincent de Paul organisation to families in need.

The children of Grades 2 & 3 made a donation towards the purchase of a variety of household goods and musical instruments for the L'Arche community in Baldoyle. This is a community reliant on donations who care for adults with intellectual and physical disabilities in a family setting.

Christmas Concert

A wonderful concert rounded off the term with Junior & Senior Infants combining their talents to present Fishing for stars, Grade 1 presented Dick Whittington and Grades 2 & 3 presented a musical version of A Christmas Carol.

A DVD of the Junior, Intermediate and Senior School's Christmas presentations is available by order from Veronica in Reception.

New Year Diary

P.T.A Art Exhibition - the end of January

North Dublin Arts Festival - Feb 12th

Global Feast - March 12th to start the St Patrick's Day Celebrations



**Merry Christmas and a
Happy & Peaceful New Year
From the Staff of Sutton Park School**