

NEWSLETTER

Sutton Park School



September 2008

Message from Michael Moretta, Head of School

Three weeks into the new school year I am writing to update you on some of the issues that inevitably raise themselves at the beginning of any new term. I have also included one or two pieces of information contained in the August newsletter, just in case you missed that communication. I know that many of you prefer having a hard copy of the newsletter so from now on I will ensure that we distribute all communications through the children in the school and issue a text message just in case it is left at home.

Leaving Cert Results

Congratulations to the class of 2008.

Not all aspects of a Principal's role are enjoyable or fulfilling, but it is one of the undoubted pleasures of the job to celebrate the publication of the Leaving Certificate results with the students.

August 13th was one of the highlights of my teaching career because I was privileged to be part of celebrating an exceptional set of results with a wonderful group of young men and women. Of course there were nerves and plenty of evidence of anxiety, but the dominating emotion was the sheer joy and well-earned satisfaction that beamed from each face as the results were handed out.

The headline figures will be sufficient to give you a flavour of the depth and extent of the achievement of the Class of 2008:

- Those students who gained 500+ points was 31%. Last year close to 18% achieved the highest grades.
- 46% of students gained 450 + points – last year 36% of students achieved this score.
- Nearly 60% of students scored 400 points or more and 70% achieved a points score of 350 or more.

No student failed Maths or English at any level and Sutton Park averaged 413 points, well above the 397 we achieved last year. It is worth noting that last year's results were a significant improvement from 2006. The national average points is something in the region of 300. What all this data means is that by any measure the students in the class of 2008 have significantly raised the bar of achievement and laid down a marker for future years as to what can and will be expected.

I am confident that these students will have their choice of college courses considerably enhanced. With the press reporting that national results are likely to remain at or close to last year's figures, they are in an extremely enviable position when the first round of CAO choices begin next week. I can already report that Yusuf Bhujwalla has secured his place at Cambridge University and I hope that this bodes well for all those who are looking to access some of the most difficult courses.

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Leaving Cert Results Con't...

I could mention every subject area and applaud the quality of teaching and the level of achievement in each, but you will forgive me if I focus on Maths in this brief summary of our performance. The concern regarding achievement in Maths country-wide was after all the headline in many news reports. The Irish Times ran the headline, "More than 5,000 Leaving Certificate Pupils fail Maths". The article reported that only 6,600 students gained an "honour" [Grade C3 or better] in higher maths and noted that only 17% of Leaving Cert students opted for the Higher Level papers in this subject.

At Sutton Park this year 44% of the year sat Maths at Hons level and 88% of our students gained an A or a B. This can be measured against a national average of 45%. Indeed, 94% of Sutton Park students gained A-C grades at honours Maths while the national average was 78%.

Of course we should not be compared with national averages and I would expect us to perform well above the majority of schools. Nevertheless, the extent and depth of our performance is way above expectations – a point made in our recent Maths Inspection.

I want to thank all the students, their parents and of course all our teachers for the hard work and dedication that has made such results possible. Sutton Park quite rightly enjoys a reputation for producing rounded, well-adjusted and confident young men and women who are not solely interested in the narrow pursuit of points. Nevertheless, I hope these results demolish the myth that we are not an academic school. I do not mean in the sense that we only cater for bright students. We have many very bright students and this year they all performed at or above their potential. No, I mean that we can provide pathways to the best Third Level courses for all our students. Some of the class of 2008 had severe learning difficulties when younger, some were in danger of drifting off the rails and some, on occasions, simply lost self-confidence. To see the tears of joy and sheer delight at overcoming problems and recognising that hard work is rewarded is something I most value about teaching. Anything is possible if you are in the right environment and have the best kind of support. All the students can be proud of their achievements and it gives me enormous pleasure to celebrate their success in these few words.

Junior Cert Results

The Junior Certificate results were released on Wednesday 10th September and once again the students performed to an exceptional level. Across all subjects the quality of performance was outstanding and everyone who sat these papers in June should be commended for their achievement. The following table illustrates just how good the results were. I would like to especially highlight the number of A grades as well as the % of AB grades when measured against previous years. These statistics reveal the depth of talent in the year. That said, it is worth noting that the students scored the highest % of A-C for four years as well as the lowest gaining E grades.

The Junior Certificate results represent the first experience of sitting external examinations and this level of performance suggests that the current 4th Years have passed this educational milestone confidently and successfully. Well done everyone.

Grade	2005	2006	2007	2008
A -C	87%	91%	81.9%	94%
AB	54%	55.8%	49%	67.6%
A	16.7%	16%	11.3%	25%
E	0.06%	0.5%	2.4%	0.03%

The new role of Form Teachers from 1st to 3rd Yrs

The form teachers in these year groups have an enhanced role this year and should very much be the first point of contact when you wish to speak to someone regarding your son or daughter. We have timetabled a weekly Form Teachers Period with each class and this will give all form teachers the opportunity to spend quality time with the students, examining HW diaries and chasing up problems or concerns. Form teachers will also continue to hold individual meetings with the students and will monitor their academic progress throughout the year.

A particular focus of interest will be organisation of lockers, uniform and equipment checks and reviewing academic progress. I hope that this new system will enable us to address problems quickly. We have also introduced a reward system to encourage group responsibility and to encourage positive behaviour in the students.

Clubs

This Wednesday will be the third week of our Clubs in the Secondary School. All students in First to Third years have been assigned a Club and it is important that they attend. I know that when the Hockey and Badminton matches begin it can be quite disruptive to Clubs and for those who are regularly committed to their teams I am more than happy if their Club is their Hockey or Badminton team. Many matches involve long journeys and so, if you are happy to allow it, I will let these students have the afternoon off on the occasions when they are not playing. If you cannot pick them up from school, they are welcome to attend supervised study at school.

Afternoon Prep

Prep takes place from 3:45 – 4:45 Monday – Thursday. All students are expected to attend and can only be excused if you write a note. Please note that Friday is optional, but the students must provide us with written permission to be excused.

School Production

Rehearsals have already begun for Grease and it is very good to see so many older students volunteering to take part. I would ask you to urge all some of the younger students and especially the First years to get involved. I understand that the prospect may appear daunting at the beginning of the year, yet it is a real opportunity to be involved in an exciting and thoroughly fulfilling experience. Ms Howard still has vacancies for large numbers of dancers and singers – so hurry up and sign your name with the production team. You really won't regret it.

Buses

I know that many of you have experienced considerable difficulties with the CIE/Dublin bus service from Malahide to Sutton Park. The school unfortunately have absolutely no control over this route, but Ms Crowley, our Business Manager, has managed to gain the ear of the decision makers at the top of this organisation and we are making some progress in getting our voice heard.

It appears that the company do have another bus on the route from Seabury to Sutton Park. This second bus, [in addition to the Moyclare bus] leaves Seabury at 7:40 am and is scheduled to arrive at Sutton Park at 8:15. If you wish to be guaranteed a place on the bus I would advise as many as possible to catch this earlier bus. As you are aware, regulations governing buses have tightened up considerably over recent years and the drivers are under strict instructions to ensure their buses are not overcrowded.

I have sent a letter to the bus company explaining how unsatisfactory it is to leave First Years standing at bus stops and I know that some children have long journeys involving connecting trains etc. I will communicate any updates on the situation as soon as I hear of them.

Traffic Issues

In the first few weeks of the new school year, the traffic on our small drive way is usually intense and I have already seen signs of fraying tempers and frustration when the roundabout is blocked by one carelessly parked car. Please ensure that the car park and the roundabout are kept clear at all times. Indeed, I can see no reason why secondary school children cannot be dropped right outside the main entrance to the school. It would ease the pressure on the driveway if older children were dropped outside the gates.

I know that the BOM are keeping an eye on the situation and would urge all parents to be mindful of their fellow drivers over the next few weeks. Please note that **NO** cars are permitted to park on the premises belonging to 6th Year Students.

Uniform Policy

The Prefects have agreed the following uniform statement. These rules seem vary fair to me and if anyone transgresses what are extremely liberal uniform regulations then I will certainly have no hesitation in sending them home. Uniform rules never please everyone, but the school council, the teachers and the students have all had a hand in designing these, so they carry the support of the vast majority of the school community. We will review these rules at the end of the year.

School Uniform from First to Fifth Year Students

- Dress and appearance must always be neat and tidy.
- Students should come to school dressed in a manner appropriate to an atmosphere of work and study.
- Any student who is not dressed in accordance with the dress code may be sent home or offered clearly marked lost property to wear for the day.
- The only logo allowed on clothes worn to School is the SPS logo.

School Uniform is Compulsory for students in First to Fifth Year

- **Top:** Students must wear a School crested top at all times. Plain (white, School blue or red) shirts, blouses and polo shirts are acceptable when worn under a School crested sweatshirt.
- **Trousers or skirt:** Navy trousers or skirt (not above knee height), or plain respectable* regular cut, single shade (of mid to dark blue) denim jeans may be worn.

* No torn hems, or waists below the hips, no logos or patches are permitted.

- **Shoes and socks:** Plain black or navy low heeled shoes, worn with socks. The shoe should not come above the ankle. No runners or runner-like shoes may be worn except during PE classes or sporting activities.
- **Jewellery:** Only discreet ear piercings may be displayed by all students, male and female. Other piercings, such as lip or nose piercings are not part of school uniform and must be covered. In regards to eyebrow piercings, taking consideration of the face that the piercing may close up if not allowed in school, a see-through bar may be worn.
- **Hair:** must be neat and clean, and may not fall in front of the eyes. "Raw" and "Blade 1" haircuts are not permitted. Hair colouring and highlighting should be as close as possible to the student's natural hair colour.
- **Jackets:** must be dark blue - both the School jacket and the school PE jacket are acceptable.
- **Makeup:** must be appropriate to school environment.
- The Hoodies produced as part of our 50th Anniversary last year may remain school uniform.

Dress Code for Sixth Year Students

Sixth Year students are not required to wear the school uniform. However, as the most senior members of the school community, Sixth Year students must set a good example by wearing clothes that are clean, neat and appropriate for a learning environment.

- Ripped clothing and clothes that expose the midriff or inappropriate amounts of flesh are not acceptable.
- Skirts worn without tights must be knee-length
- Casual shorts may be worn but they must be respectable
- Any form of beach/swim wear is not allowed.
- Flip Flops are not allowed as part of the dress code. However smart, appropriate sandals may be worn.
- The same hair and jewellery rules for 1st -5th Year apply to 6th Years.

This Policy is a Sixth Year privilege. Any violation of it may result in the student being required to wear official School uniform for a minimum period of one week. They may also be sent home or offered clearly marked lost property to wear for the day instead of the inappropriate clothing.

Conclusion

I really feel we have started the new year extremely well considering the number of changes. I would particularly like to congratulate the First years [51 students in this year] and indeed, all the new students who seem to have settle into school remarkably quickly. I would also like to thank our prefects who have been very helpful so far.

Intermediate School

Message from Liam Burns, Intermediate School Principal

It is with great delight that I write to you in my new role as Principal of the newly established Intermediate School. My association with Sutton Park goes back to 1998 when my daughter joined as a Senior Infant. The building was not as impressive as it is today but I couldn't help but be impressed by the warmth of the welcome extended by Geraldine McGuire and the ethos that permeated every aspect of the school. Having returned "North" in 1999 I came back to Dublin in 2004 when I was fortunate enough to teach Grade 6 in SPS for two years. After a further two years away I find myself back on this familiar territory and enjoying the many challenges presented. I am grateful to my teaching colleagues, you the parents and your children for the support I have received to date and I look forward to a long and fruitful partnership with all.

Staffing

We are delighted to welcome Miss Elizabeth Noone to the staff of Sutton Park. She will be teaching Grade 4 this year and is already proving to be a valuable asset to our team. Ms. Cliona O'Brien is teaching our Grade 5's while Ms. Lesley Reynolds again teaches our Grade 6 class. The teachers have shown a tremendous commitment to our children and to what we are trying to achieve in the Intermediate School and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly express my gratitude for all they have done to date.

Homework Club

The homework club is now up and running and is proving to be exceptionally popular. The children have really set the tone for the club, demonstrating a conscientious thoughtful approach to their work. I am most impressed by the independence they demonstrate during this period, something we actively encourage at all times. If you wish your child to avail of this service please feel free to return the permission slip previously provided.

Wednesday Club

Clubs have just started and I am pleased to announce the provision of Taekwondo as part of our schedule. Watching the children take part in their session this week I was most impressed by the quality of tuition and the joy the children gleaned from this experience. There shall be opportunities for others to get involved later in the year as we rotate the Wednesday clubs. Other clubs on offer are Cookery, Chess/board games, Drama, Art & Craft, Guitar, Computers, Basketball and Book Club.

We are also actively seeking specialist teachers of Dance and Gaelic Football so that we can further widen the programme offered. Sailing at Sutton Dinghy Club is proving more difficult to arrange, as it would appear that Senior Schools block book this for their transition year students. If you know of any other practical means as to how we might overcome this problem please feel free to bring it to my attention. Otherwise we will pursue the possibility of booking it early in the next academic year.

Football

Football now forms part of our weekly sports curriculum in Intermediate School. Many thanks for your support in terms of providing the necessary attire. As the year progresses we shall arrange matches for those who wish to experience the competitive side of the game. There is obviously great excitement about this!

Parents Meeting

A reminder that you have the opportunity to meet your child's teacher on Wednesday 1st October as previously notified. Should you be unable to attend, a written summary of the points outlined will be available on request.

The School Days

Classes commence at the normal time of 8.45am and they finish as noted below.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Last Class Finishes	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	2.45
Homework Club (optional) Finishes	4.45	4.45	4.45	4.45	2.45

It is our intention to eventually hold staff meetings during the normal school day thus removing the need to close the Intermediate school on the first Wednesday of every month. This requires a little shuffling of the Club arrangements and I shall confirm when these alternative arrangements are in place. Until then please refer to the web site where the existing arrangements are outlined.

Junior School

Message from Geraldine McGuire, Junior School Principal

I am happy to report that all children are very settled in their new classes and seem very happy to be back in school.

The Junior School is delighted to welcome Ms Deirdre Hurley to the school as class teacher to Grade 2 and to welcome back Ms Sweeney, Ms Sherlock, Ms Cullen and Ms Ellickson.

An exciting development is the provision of an extended school day on Wednesdays. Each week, apart from the first Wednesday of every month, the children will participate in an 'Enrichment programme' with a variety of activities which support an already rich curriculum. This programme began last Wednesday with 3 classes travelling to the Museum, Collins Barracks and the National Gallery and those who stayed in school engaging in a Cookery Class. I have organised a very balanced programme which involves tours, interesting visitors, interesting activities and cookery classes. You will find the detailed programme for the rest of the Autumn term on the school website. I would like to invite any parent who would like to accompany us on any of our tours to contact any of the class teachers.

If you have any concerns regarding any aspect of school life do not hesitate to contact me.

Sutton School of Dance

18TH SEP - 11TH DEC

Sutton Park School
St Fintan's Road
Sutton

Thursdays

4 - 7 yrs 3:00 General

8 - 12 yrs 3:45 Ballet

8 - 12 yrs 4:30 Jazz

Fridays

2:45 - 3:30 Boys Only



Classes welcome 4 -12 yrs.
Beginners to advanced dancers,
Encouraging great co ordination,
Posture and creativity of skills
Working towards choreographed
Dance routines.

Register Now

Contact

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suttonschoolofdance@gmail.com