



# Newsletter

## A Warm Welcome...

December 2017 Volume 6 - Issue 02

Welcome to the Christmas newsletter of December 2017 and the final newsletter of the year. As the year draws to a close I feel it's important I keep you up to date with developments within the school since our last newsletter.

Firstly thank you for your patience and understanding around the recent school closures. Storm Ophelia was an unprecedented event and I am thankful to the Department of Education for allowing common sense prevail so as to protect the safety of our students and staff. I can assure you that teaching staff will be working very hard to ensure that there are no adverse effects on our students and the lost tuition time is made up. That said, we are in no way through the winter season and more School closures are possible. In such an event, I draw your attention to the article later in this newsletter titled 'Red means stop' that outlines School Policy to adverse weather. I ask you to read it carefully please.

The new Junior Certificate has also gathered momentum this term and staff training continues apace, to ensure our students will be well prepared when the new syllabi roll out. To this end a second whole school staff training day is scheduled for February 27th 2018. On this day students will remain at home as staff continue their up skilling with colleagues from nearby schools.

Finally I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your support and co-operation with the school in 2017. On behalf of the entire School community I wish you and your family a safe, peaceful and happy Christmas - I look forward to working with you in 2018.

*Is mise le meas,*  
**Richard Prendiville - Principal**

## Remaining Parent Teacher Meetings

**1st Year & TY Thursday 11th Jan. 2018**

**LC1 & LCA1 PT Meeting Monday 29th Jan. 2018**

Parent teacher meetings continue to be a very valuable method of communication between home and school. By now the LC2, 3rd Year and 2nd Year parent teacher meetings have been completed. However I want to remind parents those teachers are still contactable either through the journal or by telephone should you have any concerns or queries regarding your child's academic progress. Teachers will get back to you as soon as possible.

Ideally separated parents are asked to come to an agreement on which one of them attends a parent teacher meeting. Where both parents may wish to attend then we would ask that they would do so together or divide the teachers/subjects amongst themselves.

Unfortunately it is not possible to accommodate both parents attending separately as it duplicates work and time at parent teacher meetings is already limited."

## Year Heads/Co-Ordinators

**1st Years Ms G. O'Callaghan**

**2nd Years Mr K. O' Keeffe**

**3rd Years Ms E Fitzgerald**

**LC1 Mr J. Dore**

**LC2 Ms R. O' Donoghue**

**LCA Co-ordinator Mr Denis O'Shea**

**TY Co-ordinator Ms. M. Hogan**

**LCVP Co-ordinator Mr. P. McElligott**

You may contact any of the above by telephoning the school in the first instance. Naturally all staff have formal timetabled classes and so may not be in a position to speak to you instantly but they will get back to you at their earliest convenience. Please also note that it is vital appointments are made through the office should you wish to meet any of the above in person.

## Pre Exams 2018

Mock exams for **Junior and Leaving Cert** students begin on 30th January, 2018. They will cost **€110 per student** and capped at €110 if you have more than one child doing pre exams this year. The money is being collected by the secretaries in the main office whereby a receipt will be issued and is due before Friday January 26th 2018.

Please be aware that the actual cost of pre exams is higher than €110 per student. However the school book grant will be used to subsidise this exam fee for all parents and for those parents who are medical card holders or currently unemployed and in receipt of social welfare. If you are in this situation, you will need to fill out a form, and return it to the school with your **medical card and the reduced fee of €30**. The medical card will be copied and returned to you. Please note, a GP visit card is not acceptable either for these exams or for the State Examinations.

The Pre Exam form will be given to students of exam classes in early January with full details. As with all matters financial, please feel free to contact myself or Ms Moloney around any concerns or difficulties you may have and the matter will be dealt with the upmost of sensitivity and discretion.

## Red Means Stop!

The possibility of school closure due to bad weather (in affected areas).

Any decision, by the Board of Management, to close the school is not taken lightly. In recent years this has mainly occurred as a consequence of severe winter weather conditions or power loss.

All potential hazardous scenarios are weighed up carefully, by the school authorities, in light of the available information at the time and through continuous communication with the bus operators and school staff.

The school tries to strike a balance between, on the one hand, ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of both students and staff to the best of its ability while on the other hand, preventing the unnecessary disruption to teaching and learning of its students.

As with last winter, Bus Éireann has indicated that as a precaution against severe weather and in the interest of child safety, to introduce a policy applicable to all school transport services that it provides under the Department of Education and Skills School Transport Scheme nationwide - for **ALL** Met Éireann Status **Red weather events**.

***This means that when a Red alert is issued by Met Éireann for the area in which you live – or an area to which your child(ren) are travelling to on a school bus – the services will not operate. This policy is available on [www.buseireann.ie/statusred](http://www.buseireann.ie/statusred).***



All parents should be aware that:

- Bus Éireann has sole responsibility for school transport and NOT school personnel
- A Status Red weather warning automatically means all school transport services provided by Bus Éireann under the School Transport Schemes are cancelled – in the affected areas – while the warning is in effect.
- Weather warnings are carried on all national and local news bulletins.
- Those families using private bus operators should contact their bus operators directly for up to date information about transport availability.
- ***While Bus Éireann may not be providing school transport services because of this new policy, it understands that when any severe weather is forecast, it remains for each individual school to decide whether that school should close or not. Therefore the school may open as normal, if it so decides.***
- In the event that the school authorities decide to officially close the school for poor weather or indeed for any reason – a text message will be sent to all parents regarding the closure – every attempt will be made to do this as early as possible, keeping in mind that as Principal, I often rely on many others for information/ recommendations before a decision is made and conditions can change rapidly in the early mornings.
- Parents should only accept text messages with the '**TarbertCS**' username.

## Digital Textbooks for Junior Cycle Pupils

A reminder to parents that all Junior Cycle pupils can access **FREE** Digital Versions of their Textbooks On-Line and at home on PC, Mobile or Tablet by using their School Gmail Account and selecting the email from "Text Books".

It is hoped that through this initiative the weight of school bags will be reduced as now heavy textbooks can be stored in School whilst Digital Versions are accessed at Home for Study and Homework.

New Texts are continually being added so please check in. Any queries can be directed to the School or email "textbooks@tarbertcs.ie"

## Attendance

I wish to remind parents that Tarbert Comprehensive School this year began its 3 year strategy (2017 – 2020) to increase levels of attendance and reduce absence rates. While School statistics are better than national figures, I still feel there is room for improvement.

All stake holders are involved in this strategy. However you as a Parent or Guardian have a central part to play and I wish to highlight the important roles you have:

### **Take responsibility for your child's attendance!**

- Provide feedback on the policy and strategy through the Parents Association.
- Be mindful that Extra Curricular Activities (ECA) must be balanced with overall school progress.
- Keep updated on the importance of attendance at every level of school contact e.g. Newsletters, text messaging, website, app, information meetings etc.
- Monitor VSware as a resource to view attendance (including partial and whole day absences), not just exam results.
- Attend Parent Teacher (PT) meetings to discuss attendance.
- Avoid taking family holidays during term time.
- Comply with school absence procedures.
- Encourage your child to value the entire school curriculum not just the academic as it fosters their holistic growth and development.

It should be noted that attendance can have just as much impact on student exam performance as their work rate or levels of study. In fact there is a direct correlation between under performance in school and poor attendance rates.

## Sickness

We are approaching that time of year when illness, bugs and flues become common and I want parents to be aware of a few points.

When a child indicates to a teacher that they are unwell, they are sent to the office area. In many cases the illness is minor and the student can resume classes later. On occasion students will be allowed to ring home (usually from a school mobile number) where they may have to be collected by a parent/guardian and taken home. Students are under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** allowed use their own phones to ring or text about being collected by a parent/guardian.

If you are collecting your child, for any reason, you must sign them out on the 'Departures Book' at the school reception area.

## Christmas Exams, school reports & VS Ware



Christmas/Autumn Exams ran from **Tuesday, November 28th** to **Friday, December 1st**. Students have been reminded about the importance of these Christmas exams as a key stepping stone in their State Exams preparation and as an indicator on their progress in school to date. I wish to remind parents that **exam results will not be posted home** – instead they can be retrieved online through VSware. By now all parents have been issued their VSware login details. VSware is the schools computerised administration system. All school reports are available to view online on VSware for your child or your children. Please feel free to contact the school if there are any issues concerning access or viewing these reports. Naturally the onus is on parents to keep their login details secure. In no way should login or password details be shared with others. The school will text home all parents to alert them as to the availability of the results online. It is my hope results will be available to view from mid-December 2017.

If you have difficulty going online or have internet problems at home and cannot view these results – then please contact the School and we will make alternative arrangements for you.

## Sports Capital Grant

The School has been informed that it has been successful in its Sports Capital Grant application 2017 to the tune of €29,000. The application was made so as to purchase much needed equipment for the fitness suite. I wish to especially thank Mr. Trench for pursuing the application and also want to thank Cllr Jim Finucane (Board of Management) and Cllr Mike Kennelly as well as Minister Brendan Griffin for their support.

It is hoped that the grant will be spent in the coming months as per the Grant application and with approval of the Board of Management.

## Give Racism the Red Card Day

Friday November 24th was the target date for a feast of events at Tarbert Comprehensive School as we set out to understand and to combat racism. Part of a nationwide campaign, Transition Year Group One with teacher Ms. Carrig, planned and co-ordinated a range of activities.

First Years were invited to design a poster. Prizes were awarded for best entries and displayed in the Assembly Hall. Ms. Maloney gave permission to Transition Years to wear red tops to school, the symbolic colour associated with the theme of the day. Teachers donned red too, turning corridors and classrooms bright and festive.

With delicious and generous donations of homemade cakes, buns and biscuits from staff and students, the Bake Sale was a tasty success and raised 359 euros. The students donated this money to a registered charity who create anti-racism resources for Irish schools.

In what was a fun filled class period 5, Marta and Carla, both Spanish students attending our school for this academic year, wheeled their way through the school to create a short film of their teachers and fellow students in ***The Comp Gives Racism the Red Card!***

It was the turn of Second Years after lunch to show their colours in a Fun Soccer Tournament. Second Years against Racism was super fun and involved 18 games, 9 for boys and 9 for girls, followed by 2 finals, one which went to extra time and the other that went to penalties! It was high excitement. The sporting attitude of all the second year students, the management skills of the Transition Years along with the skilled coordinators and referees drawn from 5th year made it a great sporting occasion. Did the students get their message across? They certainly did! Tarbert Comp said it loud and clear, a resounding NO to racism!



Pictured above are of the winning girls team and the Fifth Years who helped run the event.

# Guidance Department

LC2 Students should apply to the CAO in the next few weeks. They should fully research all their options (check entry requirements, course content, possible careers etc) and always ensure they have a "Plan B". Students can avail of the "change of mind" facility at a later stage so the only courses that have to be applied for before February 1st are the "RESTRICTED" courses.

**PLC** applications open from **February** onwards and the **SUSI Maintenance Grant** may be applied for in **April 2018**.

Highlighted on the next page are key dates and very useful websites to assist students and parents.

**Happy Christmas and best of luck - Jeanelle Griffin.**

## Important Closing Dates

NAME	DATE	DEADLINE
UCAS	15th January 2018	All Courses Close
CAO Application Deadline	20th Jan. 2018	Early Application Online Discount €30
	1st Feb. 2018	Normal Application Online/Paper €45
		Change of Mind facility opens 4th May 2018
		Change of Mind facility closes 1st July 2018
HEAR & DARE Schemes	1st Feb. 2018	Apply ONLINE as part of your CAO application
Higher Education Access Route ("HEAR") and Disability Access Route to Education ("DARE")		
	1st Apr. 2018	HEAR & DARE Supporting Documents
Post Leaving Cert Courses		Apply Mid Feb. to August 2018
SUSI Maintenance Grant		Apply April - July 2018

## Important Websites

[www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie) (Essential Course Search Engine)

[www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie) (CAO Information & Application)

[www.accesscollege.ie](http://www.accesscollege.ie) (Hear & Dare Schemes)

[www.careersportal.ie](http://www.careersportal.ie) (Essential Course & Career Portal)

[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) (Study in England)

[www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie) (SUSI Grant Information)

All College Websites for Ireland - [www.name.ie](http://www.name.ie)

e.g. [www.ucc.ie](http://www.ucc.ie), [www.ul.ie](http://www.ul.ie), [www.dcu.ie](http://www.dcu.ie)



## Board of Management

The members of the school Board of management are:

- **Mrs. Mary McGillicuddy (Chairperson)**
- **Ms. Ann Flavin**
- **Ms. Ann O'Dwyer, Kerry RTB**
- **Ms. Niamh Wall**
- **Ms. Anne O'Sullivan**
- **Mr. Andrew McNamara**
- **Cllr. Jim Finucane**
- **Mr. Ted O'Connor**
- **Mr. Richard Prendiville (Secretary)**

Should you wish to communicate with the Board of Management you may do so by writing to the Secretary of the Board at the school address, or contacting either of the parent's nominees, again using the school address. All correspondence addressed to members of the Board is treated as private and confidential and is not opened in the school.

## Open Night 2017

Tarbert Comprehensive Open Night was held on Thursday 26th of October last. Large crowds attended the event offering primary school pupils from far and wide the opportunity to view the school facilities and mingle with the school staff.

Presentations at the end of the night from Mr. Prendiville, Ms O Connor, Mr McNamara, Leaving Cert. Mentors and Mrs. Griffin highlighted the uniqueness of the Comprehensive School ethos, pastoral care structures as well as the Junior Cycle curriculum on offer in the school.



## Transition Year Trip to France



I wish to congratulate the 41 TY students and 4 teachers who travelled to France during the week of the Autumn exams. Our School enjoys a long standing exchange programme with College Saint Joseph in Mur de Bretagne, Northern France. The trip was a great success and allowed students the opportunity to experience a new culture, the French language and of course enhance friendships along the way.

The attitude, behaviour and participation of the students was exemplary I am told and I congratulate them on a great trip. I also wish to thank the 4 teacher who made it all possible. I particularly want to thank Ms. Anne O'Sullivan for her hard work in organising the trip. The return visit of the French students will occur in 2018.

## Happy Christmas

On behalf of all the Staff and Board of Management at Tarbert Comprehensive I would like to take this opportunity to wish all our students and their families a very happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

I hope you all have a great festive season and look forward to seeing you all in 2018!  
Take care & enjoy the holidays.  
- Richard Prendiville, Principal