

Blackrock College Newsletter



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- Pastoral Care Programme
- Guidance and Counselling
- Science Department
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CHRISTMAS 2014

Dear Parents

Fr. Peter McVerry S.J. has written an excellent article on the meaning of Christmas in December's issue of the Redemptorist magazine 'Reality'. **"Christmas changes everything ... because of Christmas, we Christians believe that we encounter God, not in sacred places, but in other human beings - we Christians worship God by loving God in each other"**.

Fr. McVerry is a man of action – a doer. He knows that goodwill is not enough – we must act. We must examine our boundaries of comfort, privilege and security and reach out to those who find themselves on the other side, enduring loneliness, discomfort, despair.

Our Christmas St Vincent de Paul Appeal is part of this as our boys in each year group are encouraged to act on behalf of the less fortunate. Giving of self is more important than giving of possessions or money. We urge the boys to take the time to sell the Christmas trees, pack and/or deliver the hampers, play in the Soccer Marathon, bake the Mince Pies, do the 24-Hour Fast, make the Poker Classic and Duck Race possible.

Christmas is a reminder that service to others is central to our lives and the challenge is to do more than is expected. The world is not as just, not as caring, not as merciful as we know it can and should be. Therein lies the challenge in the birth of Jesus. His coming amongst us, His presence as one of us, gives us reason to live in hope that we can be liberated from our fears and prejudices. Christmas encourages us to look into our hearts and find what is authentic in ourselves.

And, of course, this spirit, to think truthfully and act passionately, is not just a seasonal step but one that should remain constant in our minds and hearts throughout the year.

There are so many opportunities to give of ourselves at Blackrock. The musical 'Romeo and Juliet', B.C.R., the Mass of Remembrance, Pastoral Placements, Carol Service, 3rd Year Family Mass and Soup Kitchen visits, M.U.N., Scifest, Games and, of course, classroom activity provide evidence of an appreciation of others, a sharing of ourselves.

The dedication of so many make this possible. The educationalists are in the front line and rightly are acknowledged but such a breadth of activity, of opportunity would not be possible without those behind the scenes.

Noel McMahon has been the College Accountant and Financial Controller since 1979. His attention to detail has quite simply allowed us on the academic side to aspire to more, confident that the budgets and the financial projections will stand up and deliver. Noel has been an integral part of 'Team Blackrock' for 35 years. His stewardship has contributed hugely to our campus development. The Senior Wing in the College, the new Willow Park Junior School, the Sports Hall, refurbishment of the St Patrick's and St Joseph's Halls and the Junior Wing are part of his legacy. Blackrock is in good shape not just financially but also from a physical and structural perspective due to Noel's faultless commitment. We are deeply indebted to him for his years of dedicated service and wish him, and his wife Maighread, happiness and good health in retirement.

Finally, I thank the Spiritan Community, my colleagues, the College Union, Parents' Council and Year Committees and, of course, our boys for keeping the Christmas message alive at Blackrock.

Yours sincerely

ALAN MacGINTY
Principal



Second Year



2nd Year Rugby
Blitz Trophy

Our Second Year group has had a busy half term since Halloween. The **House Competitions** continued with the results of the Swimming Gala being announced. McQuaid House came out on top, not just for wins but for level of participation. Congratulations also to Rhys Rowlands who broke the 25m Backstroke Record with a time of 15.48 seconds, the old record having stood since 1992! The House Rugby Blitz was held and turned out to be a fantastic competition played in a great spirit, the boys giving their all for their respective Houses. The winners were McQuaid House with De Valera being runner-up. Edward McKenna won the House Cross Country Competition that was held this half term with a field that had a record turn-out of students. Harry Sharpe came second with Tim D'Arcy third. The House Table Tennis and Chess Competitions are coming to a conclusion and next term will start off with the House Art Competition.

The variety of **extra-curricular activities** available in Second Year are proving very popular. The sports are of course prominent but the clubs are successful as well. The Art, Chess, Debating and Public Speaking clubs are all active and we particularly congratulate the Science Club for their success in the National Sci-Fest Competition 2014. Only 25 projects out of 6,095 entrants nationally made it to the Finals. And for an open-age competition it was a tremendous success for Ben W. Brown, Cian Dunne and Sean Hannon, guided by their teacher Mr Rowsome, to achieve an 'Excellence Award' for their E-Receipts project, which focused on the design of a mobile app that would scan and store receipts on a smart phone: watch out for these budding Steve Jobs!



Cian Dunne, Sean Hannon &
Ben W. Brown

The boys witnessed a great school tradition, the **College Musical**, which this year was a production of *Romeo & Juliet*. Second Year students turned out in large numbers to enjoy the show on the opening night. Some of them were involved, through the College orchestra and the College Choir, in the Carol Service in early December, an event that was attended by the whole school. We look forward to the Leman Concert in the National Concert Hall for more boys to show their musical ability.

Each year group in the school is required to fund-raise for the **St Vincent de Paul Society** at Christmas, to show concern for those less fortunate. The Second Year boys raised over €2,250 through their getting sponsors for the Duck Race, a fantastic achievement with the vast majority of boys returning a full card! The Feast of the Immaculate Conception fell on a school day this year and in Second Year we celebrated with Mass in the College Chapel led by Fr Tom McDonald CSSp.

As 2015 begins we ask parents to make a New Year's Resolution: check your son's weekly **Application Card** every Monday. The boys put such effort in to gaining the Principal's List, and a majority of them achieve it each week, that they deserve the reward of being congratulated for that effort by their parents each Monday. This will contribute to a **Happy New Year** for all.

Third Year



It's great to see that a Third Year Choir has been formed this term, practice takes place every Friday at 12:55pm in the College Chapel. It has been a very good start and we would encourage more boys to avail of the opportunity to participate on our return after Christmas. Indeed debating is another wonderful activity and parental encouragement would be welcomed to increase numbers participating on Tuesdays at 4pm in the History Room. Public speaking is also an option on Wednesdays at 1pm, as is the Art Club at 1:15pm. We strongly encourage school based extra-curricular activities. Notwithstanding this we are aware that some boys are very involved outside school, which is great to see. However, if any parents are concerned about a lack of in-school involvement they should not hesitate to contact the Dean. Best of luck to all boys who will be representing the college in the various competitions over the coming months and to those who have made it to the Leman Concert which will surely be another great night on Sunday 18th of January.

We are often asked how much time boys should spend at the weekend on their schoolwork. In the context of their first state examination we feel that it is not unreasonable to expect two and a half hours of revision in addition to completing all assigned homework. Many boys are clearly doing more than this so whilst we are not asking that it dominates the weekend, anything less would be jeopardising the outcome next September. We urge all parents to check the homework diary every weekend, including parents of boys doing night study who are of course expected to take their schoolbags home at weekends.

The week before the annual Family Mass, the celebrant Fr. Daithi Kenneally, a Spiritan from Kimmage Manor, visited the school to get a feel for the atmosphere within the year group and asked Mr. Tom Ryan to get a few questions from the boys around the theme of the Gospel for the first Sunday of Advent. This was put to a couple of RE

classes and he received some very good questions, but given time constraints, focused on just one – "What do I believe in?" Asking this of himself, and acknowledging the scandals that have hit the Church, he had three points. Firstly that Jesus was part of his journey, alive and with him. He did however emphasise that there had been doubts, but looking back it would be very hard to envisage life without him. Secondly, Jesus is his best friend knows all his faults, weaknesses and strengths. Finally, the way Jesus lived his life on earth was an inspiration; his attitude, his integrity, the way he spoke to people and how he went about his business. In wrapping up he had the analogy of the boat in a harbour needing an Anchor, and for him Jesus is this Anchor, helping in some way to keep it all together. A sincere thanks to all who made it a very meaningful celebration and a great start to the Liturgical preparation for Christmas.

Days of Reflection will take place on the return in the New Year. It's a really worthwhile day and we would urge parents to delve a little into the content of the day in order to get a conversation going regarding the many positive things that the boys are exposed to and also the influences out there that are detrimental to long term happiness. Please read the letter enclosed for details.

St. Vincent de Paul Appeal. We would like to extend a sincere thanks to all who supported the Duck Race and Shoebox Appeal. Your response makes a real difference and is very much appreciated in Killinarden.

Parent Teacher Meeting
Tuesday 20th January 4.15 - 6.45pm
Please note change of date

Transition Year



Blackrock College Radio

91% of transition year students were involved in what was a fantastic week of broadcasting. The station was opened by Mary Mitchell O' Connor on Monday 17th and brought us a week of music, chat, news and current affairs, sports and of course the all important traffic updates from the BCR helicopter. Such a wide variety of guests were interviewed over the week. They included Nigel Owens, Bill O' Herlihy, Tom Vaughan Lawlor, Micheál Martin to name but a few. I thank my colleagues who produced such wonderful shows from the music class, to languages and the sciences. I commend the students for the enormous work they put and I particularly thank the management team.

Soccer Marathon

On the 28th of November at 9am the students embarked on the annual 24 hour soccer marathon in aid of Saint Vincent de Paul. 110 transition years took part and raised approximately €12,000 for charity. The weather on the day ensured a great standard of football was played. Perhaps the weather was too good as maybe exhaustion was to blame for the students inability (yet again) to defeat the teachers team at 11pm. However, they soon recovered to devour the mega wagon wheel pizzas in record time. The football was played in great spirit throughout the course of the day and though we tired earlier than expected it proved to be a very successful event.



Transition Year Cont'd

Mince Pie Morning

The transition year mince pie morning took place on Tuesday the 9th of December. The TY economics classes had been very busy on the Monday and baked what turned out to be very tasty mince pies. Approximately €358 was raised for Saint Vincent de Paul. I thank the staff members and the many parents for their support and in particular Ms Karen Marren for making it all possible.



Hampers

Deliveries for the SVP hampers have arrived and the sorting, counting and packing involved in preparing 220 hampers is well under way as I write this. These will then be delivered on Saturday morning where they will be gratefully received. It is a fantastic opportunity for the boys to experience the culmination of the Saint Vincent de Paul fundraising and to make a difference for families this Christmas.

Volunteering

On Saturday the 6th of December a number of students helped out with from what I hear was a very successful Past Pupils Union Children's Christmas Dinner. Then on the Monday we had sixty students out delivering envelopes for SVP. I commend the boys on their willingness to get involved and volunteer their services.

Lecture Series

The transition year lecture series continues and we were delighted to welcome Mr. Alan McIntosh, chief investment strategist with Quilter Cheviot, on the 27th November. Plans are already in place for the New Year with some exciting speakers lined up.

Les Misérables

8 students were involved in what turned out to be a fantastic production of Les Misérables in Loreto Dalkey. The show ran over three nights to sellout crowds. From costumes to singing and acting it really was a great show. Well done to all involved.

Parent Teacher Meeting

The fourth year parent teacher meeting was held on the 4th of December. There was a great turn out for what is an important opportunity to check on progress, particularly in the build up to the Christmas Exams.

Evening Courses

The evening courses will begin again in the New Year, with sign up forms distributed in the first week back. We will offer the same courses, so if anyone missed out or was unable to do a course first time round, they will now have the opportunity in term 2. Again I would encourage all transition years to sign up for a least one evening course.

Work Experience

A quick reminder that all students should now have source a placement for the first week of work experience on the 9th of February

TY Parents' Social

Finally a reminder that the transition year parents' social will take place in the school on Friday the 30th of January – see you all there!



TY rugby development squad with students of RBAI on annual tour to Belfast

Fifth Year



The second half of term one continued to highlight the busy and productive work ethic of Fifth Year students. They continue to make significant contributions to school life through their courteous and cooperative manner and their vast involvement in and contribution to extra-curricular activities.

SVP Fundraiser

Congratulations to fifth students for raising over €2000 for the St. Vincent de Paul's Christmas Appeal. On Wednesday 3rd December, over half the year group was involved in some way with the Poker Classic, FIFA Tournament and Raffle. Fancy dress, good humour and generosity led by our quick-witted compère Mr. Ed O'Farrell (RE Dept.) ensured that all enjoyed a wonderful evening. David Fenn was victorious in the Poker, with Conor Murphy coming second. Richard Mouatt's FIFA skills saw him take victory over Colin Browne. The House Captains once again were superb in their organising of this event. Special thanks is offered to the local businesses and the number of families who donated so generously to the raffle.



Conor Murphy and David Fenn (5th Years,) who came 2nd and 1st in Poker Classic

Remembrance Mass

A number of fifth year boarders contributed meaningfully as cantors and servers to this year's Remembrance Mass for those in our community who have passed away in the past year. We thank and commend them for their much appreciated involvement.

Carol Service

In full voice the fifth year group provided strong leadership at the recent whole school Carol Service. Whilst all participated commendably, the fifth year members of the choir and the orchestra are of particular note for their remarkable leadership of the year group and performances.

Cross Country

Fifth year's enthusiasm for cross country racing continues to grow. This term the senior squad led by Luke McCann and Christian McKenna, placed in 2nd and 3rd place respectively, won the team event of the Blackrock College Cross Country Open. This success was followed by the senior squad placing 3rd at a race in Dunboyne. Both Matthew McKenna and Brian McGlone were delighted with their placing and we commend Brian for being the individual winner of his race on the day.

Golf

As the active term draws to a close we wish Rory Murphy-Rogers, Conor Cowhey and Glenn Fry well as they compete in the Leinster semi-final of the All Ireland Stroke Play competition in Castlewarden this December.

Basketball

Building on their commitment to training, 5th year Basketball players were delighted with their U19 squad's first victory this term captained by Andrew Keenan, however they were heart-broken to lose in the quarter final at the end of term. We commend their good spirits and wish them continued success as they continue to grow in numbers and strength.

Rowing

Conor McShane was delighted with his team of fourth year's four kilometre time trial which took place recently in Blessington.

House Rugby

The House 5th's have had a promising start to the season but are not without a number of injuries. Their score sheets have been mixed and all are looking forward to upcoming games. The House 4th's are building a strong team from high numbers. Unbeaten to date, all are looking forward to their league in the New Year. The House 3rd's are training lots and are continuing their good form. They have had a mixed season so far, with some very good performances. Their successful and enjoyable trip to and victory in Armagh this term has further prompted continuous improvement.



Fifth Year Cont'd



The House 2nd's stand undefeated so far this year and they are enjoying good levels of integration with 4th year players. All House players are commended for their good attitude and commitment. 5th year is strongly represented on the Senior Teams and all thoroughly enjoyed their successful trip to Ivybridge Community College, Devon and the Clongowes Festival this term. All are looking forward to meeting Terenure in the upcoming first round.

Soccer

As their league continues we congratulate our fifth year soccer players for their victory that secured them a place in the semi-final. We wish them well as they prepare to meet Clonkeen College in the New Year.

Swimming

Following on from the drama of the College Swimming Gala where large numbers were present to see Matthew Long win the President's Trophy in a fingertip finish with Seán Hassett, we wish Seán all the best as he travels to Lisburn this December to compete in the Irish National Short Course swimming competition.

Model UN /Debating

Following their brilliant successes at home and abroad, fifth MUN members are growing in determination and passion weekly. Stephen Rooney's outstanding success in achieving an individual Distinguished Delegate Award representing Estonia at the four-day MUN conference at the Royal Russel School in Croyden is still being celebrated. This is an exceptional achievement. Many continue to develop their public speaking skills through debating challenging topics at weekly debate meetings and are looking forward to the next round of the L&H debates as well having a strong presence at upcoming Mace debates as both debaters and adjudicators.

Gael Linn Debating

Following their weekly sessions the fifth year senior Irish language debaters, James Huggard and Bernard O'Sullivan participated in their first round of the Gael Linn Debates debating the motion "Ireland is changing for the better." This has been an excellent opportunity for the students and more are encouraged to join them.

Chess

After a challenging start to the chess league, Pengbo Wu was delighted with the Senior Team's recent victory. We wish him and the team well as they progress.

Musical

Fifth years presence in this year's musical, Romeo and Juliet, was remarkable. Crew cuts and multi-coloured hair dyes as well as Rory Patterson's hair raising gymnastics added significantly to the vibrancy and energy of the production. The contribution of Ben Jordan and Shane O'Connell to the various music numbers is of note as is the efficient and professional work of the crew members who ensured all ran smoothly.

Leman Auditions

Fresh off the back of their Romeo and Juliet performance many fifth years were eagerly auditioning for this year's Leman Festival concert and we look forward to seeing those successful in securing a highly coveted slot perform in the National Concert Hall on Sunday 18 January next.

History

Fifth year history students have had wonderful opportunities this term to see history come to life. On Armistice Day, many explored the History Department's Great War Trail recalling many aspect of the First World War including the impact on the daily lives of women, children and animals as well uncovering archival details of the fifty-three past students of the College who lost their lives during the war. Students subsequently met with author Nicola Pierce who spoke about historical research and writing. Many have begun using this inspiration in their classes to develop unique and interesting research studies.

Gaisce Awards

Following much hard work and commitment last year, over seventy students were awarded their Bronze Gaisce Awards at a recent assembly with the Principal and Ms. C. Nulty. Well done to all and it is great to see the lapel pins being worn with pride.

Young Scientist

Following on from last year's success in the Young Scientist exhibition, Declan Norton has been working diligently all term on his latest project investigating wind energy harvesting from sails. We commend Declan for his commitment to this and wish him well as he qualifies for this year's BT Young Scientist Competition.

John Paul II Award

We congratulate Ross O'Reilly on receiving the John Paul II award recently from the Bishop of Kilmore in his Cavan parish. As well as submitting a two thousand word project, Ross completed regular community pastoral work and contributed regularly to Masses his church through delivering liturgical readings.

As term one draws to a close, we commend fifth year students for their participation and contribution to school life. We wish them well for a happy and healthy Christmas break and look forward to the New Year with high hopes of continued excellence.

Dates for your Diary 2015

- **Thursday 05 January:** 5th Year Parent Teacher Meeting
- **Sunday 01 March:** 5th Year Family Mass
- **Saturday 10 January:** 5th/6th Year Student Career Talks I
- **Saturday 24 January:** 5th/6th Year Student Career Talks II

Sixth Year



The run-in to Christmas has been a very busy time for everyone in Sixth Year. This is a brief summary of events and achievements that took place over the half-term.

CAO Talk for parents

On November 4th Ms McGee gave a very detailed and informative talk to the sixth year parents on the CAO process. The presentation used during the talk is available on the college website.

Since the midterm some of the boys availed of a variety of career talks on topics covering areas of Business, Law, Chinese and Computer Sciences.

Carol Service

On Tuesday 9th the whole school assembled in the sports hall for the annual Carol service. This event is one of the highlights in the school year and it was fantastic to see the congregation of students join in the festive pieces. The choir, led by Mr Eunan McDonald and the Orchestra, led by Ms Una O'Kane and Mr Andre Kavanagh, were just simply exceptional. Well done to Andrew McLaughlin who sang a wonderful rendition of 'O Holy Night'.

SVDP 24hr FAST

Fifty nine sixth years took part in the annual 24 hour sponsored fast in aid of SVDP. All of the boys taking part in the FAST, along with those who sponsored the Dean, were entered into the sixth year raffle. The fast finished on Friday 28th November at 1:30pm when the boys all had a meal in the school canteen, and importantly the raffle took place. Sean O'Dowd won a weekend away in Sligo, Aaron Fitzgerald won a €200 voucher for Dundrum shopping centre, Jeff Kirwan won a €50 voucher to Pebble Spa, David Walsh won two six nation tickets to Ireland v France, Ronan Holohan won a case of wine and finally Cathal Kinirons won a €200 voucher for CA designs. A

special thanks to the Parents Committee for their help in organising the prizes for the raffle and to Catherine and Albert in the catering department. Very importantly, €3,485 was raised through the sponsored fast and the raffle. Well done to all involved.

Musical

A fantastic Toirleac O'Brien production of *Romeo and Juliet* was this year's senior musical. Between cast, crew and musicians a total of 20 sixth years were involved. Mark Godfrey (Romeo) deserves a special mention, as his compelling and energetic performance captivated the audience. Well done to all involved.

Leman Auditions

The leman concert will be held on Sunday January 18th in the National Concert hall. We congratulate, Austin Dodd, Greg Crowley, Richard Grainger, Michael Fuller, Sam Hardiman, Loose Threads and Ordinary Man on being selected to perform. We look forward to another visit to the NCH to witness the musical talents of our students.

Castle Rugby

The Castle rugby squad continues to gather steam ahead of the league campaign. The Castle thirds have had fine wins over St. Michaels, St Marys, Templeogue and Gonzaga. We hope that the level of commitment and fine form transfers into the league campaign. Mark Godfrey was elected Captain of the Castle 3rds with Andrew Carroll as Vice-Captain. Also, Lars Jager was given the armband for the fourths with Ben Coghlan as vice-captain. We wish both teams every success for the 2015 league.

SCT

On the back of a fine showing in the Clongowes Wood tournament the SCT continue





Sixth Year Cont'd



to train hard and prepare themselves for the 2015 Senior Cup. Notable performances against St Michaels, Ivybridge and Belvedere have given the squad a sound building block from which they can mount the defence of the Senior Cup. The first round draw pits the SCT against Terenure, which I'm sure will be a closely fought encounter. We wish Hugo Kean, the squad and the coaches the best of luck for the 2015 campaign.

Cheerleading

Donncha Crowley has been chosen as the Head Cheerleader for 2015. Evan Kenny, Henry Spillane, Finbar Crowley, Ryan E Murphy and Lars Jager have been chosen to complete the cheerleading committee for 2015. A further 24 cheerleaders will be chosen from fifth and sixth year after Christmas. We wish Donncha and all the cheerleaders well for the season.

Chess

There is a chess boom in sixth year! Such is the demand that Santa will have to deliver some new chess boards this Christmas. The school chess team including Andrew Ryan, Peter McKenna and Brian McMahon helped the senior chess team to victory over Presentation Bray in the senior league.

Rowing

Congratulations to the boys who competed in the Provincial Indoor Championships on Saturday, 22nd November 2014. Well done to all the parents for getting them to the school for 5.30am! On an individual note Jack Brennan finished 15th out of 41 competitors in the J18 2km, well done Jack.

Soccer

We congratulate Sean O'Dowd and the Senior Soccer team on reaching the semi-final of the Metropolitan cup. The match is scheduled to be played in the first week back after the Christmas break. A highlight of the year for the Soccer team will be the trip over to St Bede's in the second term. We wish Sean and the team every success for the rest of their season.

Science Quiz

Well done to our senior science teams that competed in the ISTA schools science table quiz held in Trinity College on the 13th November. The team of Joshua Gorman-Climax, Rory McCluskey and Andrew Ryan finished second while the team of Sammy Al-Mukhaizeem, James Quinn and William O'Flaherty finished in sixth place. Both teams qualified for the All Ireland science table quiz where they performed admirably in finishing 5th and 11th respectively.

Important Date for the Diary

The Sixth year Parent Teacher meeting will be held from 4:15pm until 6:45pm on Thursday 8th of January. We look forward to seeing you there.



Christmas Jumper Day

Photo courtesy of Orna Cassidy

Halls of Residence



The Boarding School has had a very busy term in all aspects of school life as a boarder. It has been a very positive and enjoyable experience for all concerned and we are all looking forward to returning to our families to celebrate Christmas, but also to recharge the batteries for the next term.

The following activities are taking place throughout each week/term: TEFL class for foreign students; public speaking; Tuesday evening Mass in the Oratory; Boarders' Choir and Boarders' Book Club. Thanks to all the adults who help organise and oversee the continued success of these activities.



The Boarders Liturgical Choir have put in a tremendous effort over the first term under the expert tutelage of Fr. O'Brolchain. They perform at our weekly Sunday 10am Mass (to which everyone in the College is invited). The Spiritan Community has been a great support in their celebration of the Eucharist over the past term, with guest celebrants such as Fr. Marc Whelan (Provincial) and Bishop Ellison. We are very grateful for their continued support and encouragement of the Boarders throughout this term.



Congratulations to Jay Dolan, Patrick Brophy, David Bolger and Andrew Kilmartin who were commissioned Eucharistic Ministers at the Annual Boarders' Family Mass.

We must also congratulate Matthew Long on winning the President's Prize in the recent College swimming gala.

Weekend activities have seen the boys visit numerous museums throughout Dublin. They attended the cinema and the bowling alley, Funderland, Leinster Rugby matches, enjoyed a film and pizza night in the Lecture room, went Ice Skating and even had time to do a spot of shopping for Christmas.

The Boarders' Parents had a social night at the College Musical. 'Romeo and Juliet' was truly a great show and appealed to all ages. Mr. O'Brien directed yet another superb show in which there was a strong boarder representation and it was very well received by the parents who travelled from all over the country to attend.

The Carol Service for the boarding school on Sunday 7th December was very well attended by parents, colleagues, community and of course the boys. The night was a very peaceful, reflective and enjoyable evening for all as they were entertained by the boarders' choir. Thank you to everyone who helped in the organisation of the night.



We decided this year to take the First Years to the Gaiety Christmas Pantomime "Peter Pan" on Tuesday 9th December. It was a great show and one of the best in recent years.

The boys Christmas dinner took place on Monday 15th December in the dining hall. The boys were given the annual feast of food which was prepared by the wonderful catering staff. Catherine Scott and Albert Beattie's catering team ensured the dining hall looked particularly festive and enhanced the atmosphere of the dinner. The boys and the housemasters enjoyed the singing and all exchanged presents during the evening.



Thank you to all the staff in the Castle for all their hard work over the 1st term, their encouragement, care and thoughtfulness towards all the students.

We would like to wish everyone a Joyful and Peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in the New Year. The Boarding School will reopen at 7pm on Sunday 4th January 2015.

Pastoral Care Programme



In November We Remember

Our return from mid-term at the start of November, the month beginning with All Saints' and All Souls' Days, saw students offered the opportunity by their RE teachers to remember the dead within their families and communities, both through class prayer services and by adding the names of loved ones to our November List of the Dead. On Wednesday 26th November, this list of names was placed on the altar during the annual Mass of Remembrance when bereaved families associated with the College were invited by the Spiritan Community to the College Chapel to give thanks to God for the lives of their loved ones and to find comfort and support in the celebration of the Eucharist. Fr. Tom Nash who works tirelessly in the background to ensure a very prayerful occasion, presided on the night and in the context of Christian hope, Mr. Sean Goan delivered a moving homily on the many dimensions to loss and grief. We thank also the TY and Fifth Year Boarders for their contribution in service both during and after the Mass, to this prayerful and appropriate event. *'Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard but always near. Still loved, still missed.'*

Camino

42 Transition Year students applied to participate in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from May 2nd to 9th, 2015. Unfortunately, only twenty places were available and so disappointment for a number of students was inevitable. It is hoped that those not travelling in May 2015 will consider organising their own pilgrimage with family or friends at some future date. For those travelling, flights will be booked before Christmas and the New Year will bring both spiritual and physical preparations for the pilgrimage group.

Soup Run

Before the issue of homelessness in Dublin became front page headlines with the death of Jonathan Corrie in a doorway in Molesworth Street, our Soup Run had recommenced its weekly trips to the city centre. 5th and 6th Year students have continued their commitment to this project and are working alongside Ms. McMahon and Mr. Walsh in introducing members of RE48 to this outreach ministry. We thank the Legion of Mary for their assistance with this soup run which will continue after Christmas.

Pastoral Placement

On 24th November, RE41 formed the majority of students who headed out on the fourth Pastoral Placement to the 12 centres which cater for the needs of people with disabilities and particular needs. We are delighted to note that this group of young men maintained the extremely high standards of care, assistance and engagement with residents and staff that had been set before mid-term. Feedback from the directors of the placements included the following: *'Many thanks for your students' involvement in this area, over the past year. I feel it has been very much a mutually fulfilling experience and, to quote many staff and visitors to our centre, "It gives us all hope for the future to see these young people with all their enthusiasm" & "Both were both exemplary students and I do hope they gained some insight into the care of the older person and some of the work we try to do here...They both shared and seem to have enjoyed and gained some valuable insight into what old age is all about."*

3rd Year Family Mass

The First Sunday of Advent was marked in the College with the celebration of the 3rd Year Family Mass. The main celebrant was Fr. Daithi Kenneally, the Community leader in the Spiritan mother house in Kimmage Manor. A large number of third year families were present to hear Fr. Daithi outline why he still has faith in Jesus today and how we can welcome Jesus into our lives and families this Christmas. The Tarrant family prayed the family faith prayer on behalf of all and a copy of this prayer was presented to each family at the end of the Mass. Many thanks to all students who performed their liturgical ministries with such reverence and dignity, making this Sunday morning, a memorable occasion on the Third Year calendar.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception – Dec 8th

December 8th, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception was a school day this year, so Fr. Hyacinth and the RE department arranged Masses for each year group. We thank each of the celebrants; Fr. Tom McDonald (2nd Year), Fr. Hyacinth (3rd Year), Fr. Paddy Dundon (TY), Fr. Tom Nash (5th Year) and Fr. O'Brolchain (6th Year) for their presence and words of encouragement and hope for our students preparing for examinations as well as Christmas! A day like this emphasises the valued connection that exists between the Spiritan Community and the College.

Carol Service – Una, Killian and Eunan

Our annual Carol Service took place on December 9th. Once again the 1st Years from Willow Park joined us in the Des Places Sports Hall, where the Class of 2015 led the student body most wonderfully in word, music and song. A particular highlight this year was the centenary commemoration of World War I, with the singing of 'Silent Night' in English and German, accompanied by the reading of the poem 'Christmas Truce' by Curtis D. Bennett. This event also highlighted the talent and work of Ms. O'Kane, Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Grumley-Taylor, a team that has contributed so much to the Liturgical life of the College since September. St. Augustine was absolutely correct when he noted that, 'a person who sings prays twice'!

Acts of Kindness and of Love

In the poem 'Tintern Abbey' William Wordsworth wrote about a person's 'little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love'! At this time of year, however, it is important to 'name' some people on the 'outside' whose acts of kindness and of love have contributed to the Pastoral Programme this term. To Andrew Hickey who came from the Jubilee Hall lighting rig, to create mood lighting for our November place of prayer; to Irene Dunne, our sacristan, whose creative vision and organisational skills benefits all our liturgies; to J.P. Tanner of Arbour Blooms in Balbriggan who generously supplies all the flowers for our Family Masses and to John Carlin who guides and accompanies our teachers and students on the Soup Run each week; many, many thanks!

A happy and holy Christmas to All

Creative Arts & Digital Learning Centre



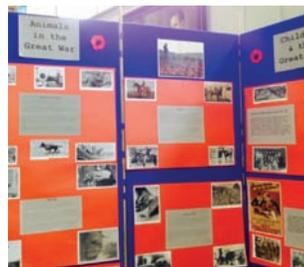
The 'Great War' Trail.

On 11th November at 11am Mr MacGinty officially launched our World War I exhibition. The exhibition consisted of a trail leading from the Learning Centre to the history room, and down to St. Patrick's corridor and incorporated international, national and local information.

Head of history, Ms Harlowe along with Learning Centre Coordinator Lorraine Marrey lead a team of 4th year students in the research and display of both text and images for the Trail. With the local Blackrock College information provided by our Archivist, Caroline Mullin.

The subjects covered ranged from the role of women and children in the war, life in the trenches, and propaganda posters.

Ms O' Connor's class contributed a number of pieces on 'Animals in the Great War' and Head of English, Mr Sheil provided us with some WWI poetry which was displayed in the Learning Centre. We also highlighted a number of our print resources available for students to borrow.



The exhibition was a great success and over the two weeks with all of our students able to view it during the school day, as well as just under 250 students complete the trail questionnaires in their classes.

Writers@Rock

Nicola Pierce, the second author in our writers@Rock series visited the Learning Centre on Thursday 27th November to talk about her writing to our 5th year history students. Nicola gave a passionate talk (accompanied by a photographic slide-show) on two of her



novels *The Spirit of the Titanic* (The O' Brien Press, 2011) and *City of Fate* (The O' Brien Press, 2014) and also discussed how she researched the topics.

We hope to have Nicola back again once she publishes her next novel.

Borrow a Book this Christmas

At the beginning of December we launched our Christmas campaign to encourage more of our students to borrow a book and 'get 'Rock reading'. 'Borrow a book this Christmas' was

supported by the English department who kindly allowed their students to come to the Learning Centre during class time to choose a book to borrow.

Nearly 150 extra titles were borrowed over the course of two weeks ranging in subject areas such as Sports Biographies, Literature, Science, History and a favourite with many of our students Graphic Novels. 95 new accounts were opened in these two weeks – so we hope those students enjoy relaxing and reading over their Christmas holidays.





Guidance and Counselling

The current 6th years are seriously researching their CAO options and in particular their order of preferences. Students are encouraged to use www.qualifax.ie and www.careersportal.ie to aid them with their course exploration. Each 6th year has received a CAO handbook and a talk from Ms McGee detailing the application process. A CAO information talk was also held for parents in early November where CAO and UCAS applications were explained. The majority of students will apply online at www.cao.ie. It is important to remind all 6th years that a reduced fee of ?25 applies to all who make their application online before January 20th 2015. The regular fee of ?40 applies to applications made between January 20th and February 1st. If any student has a learning disability or a medical condition it is important to tick the appropriate box on the CAO application and if a DARE/HEAR application is appropriate then apply as soon as possible. Students can find out more regarding the DARE/HEAR schemes on www.accesscollege.ie. Students with Irish and Third Language exemptions must also take necessary action to notify the relevant Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) of their exemption(s) and to submit any supporting documentation the HEIs require. Please refer to the relevant individual HEI websites for further information.

Furthermore, it is necessary for students applying for entry to medicine in 2015 to register for CAO to receive their CAO number so that they then can register for the HPAT-Ireland examination. HPAT-Ireland registration will close on January 20th 2015 with the actual test taking place in various centres on February 28th 2015. 6th year students have been taking part in a HPAT preparation course on Saturday mornings in the school and have had the option of sitting a practice test. RCSI are holding an open day on January 6th 2015; any student wishing to attend must register online via the RCSI website.

A number of 6th years have completed their UCAS and CUKAS applications for a range of universities including Oxford and Cambridge as well as for some of the Music Conservatoires. Some have already attended for interview and received offers while others are currently making preparations. Any other 6th year who is considering making a UCAS application should indicate this to Ms McGee as soon as possible as January 15th 2015 is the final deadline for applications. Also any student considering making an Ad Astra Scholarship application (UCD) should do so by January 31st, applications can be made online via the UCD website from now.

6th year students will have the opportunity to partake in Career Interviews/Coaching which will be held in the College on Wednesday 28th January 2015 at 7.30 p.m. These interviews will be conducted by professionals (many past students), in specific career areas chosen by the students. In addition to facilitating individual interviews, these professionals will also give feedback to students immediately after the interview. Students are encouraged to participate in the interview programme as it has proved in previous years to be a very valuable experience. 5th and 6th year students will also have the opportunity to attend a range of career talks offered over two Saturday mornings in January. The talks

will cover the following areas; Business, Law, Technology, Entrepreneurship, Science, Agriculture, Medicine and Engineering. It is a chance for 5th year students to start considering what they would like to do after school and gives 6th years the clarity necessary to finalise their CAO choices.

Since September a number of guest speakers, professors and lecturers from UCD and TCD have visited the school and given talks to the 6th years regarding courses offered in their third level institutions and careers. Students attended talks in the areas of Business, Law, Chinese Studies and Computer Science. Students have also attended the Higher Options event as well as other open days at UCD, TCD, DCU, NUIM, DIT, IADT and NCAD.

Fifth year students have now settled well into their studies after their creative involvement in the transition year programme. 5th year students, as well as 6th years, will have the opportunity to partake in the All Ireland Linguistic Olympiad, of which the first round takes place in February. This contest invites students to develop their own strategies for solving problems in fascinating real languages from around the globe. The contest introduces students to linguistics and to the application of logic to problems of language understanding and translation. The goal is to develop students' problem solving skills and to inspire them to consider the range of careers at the intersection of language, linguistics and computing. Blackrock won the team event of this competition back in 2013.

Fourth year students have received the results of their EIRQUEST and Cambridge profiles and are reflecting on these at present. Third and second year students are engaging well with their academic subjects as well as partaking in a range of extra-curricular activities.

A number of students from second to sixth year will attend the Cycle Against Suicide Student Leaders Congress at the RDS next January, an initiative started by Irish entrepreneur, Jim Breen, as a result of his appearance on RTE's The Secret Millionaire programme. The theme for the 2015 Student Leaders' Congress is 'Appreciate Your Mind'. The conference aims to promote positive mental health, help-seeking behaviour in young people and the message that 'it's ok not to feel ok and it's absolutely ok to ask for help'. The Congress is run/delivered by the Cycle Against Suicide Charity and is endorsed by the Institute of Guidance Counsellors (IGC). All 4,000 places have now been filled for the Conference, it is hoped that our own students who attend will become leaders at promoting mental awareness in the college on their return.

Regular counselling continues for all students from second to sixth year and preparations for the school's second Bullying Awareness Day in January are well under way.

As a department we would like to wish all students and their families a pleasant, restful and safe Christmas.



Science Department

SciFest All-Ireland

Having won the SciFest regional competition which was held in the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown last May, our team of Second Year science students progressed to the SciFest 2014 national final which was held in the Marino Conference Centre in Dublin on the 7th November. Team members Ben Brown, Cian Dunne, Sean Hannon are to be congratulated for winning the SciFest@SFI Discover Excellence in STEM Award with their project entitled '**E-Receipts**'.

Second Year Tour to Science Centre in Valencia, Spain.

Forty students went on the tour, accompanied by four teachers Mr Aylward, Mr Rowsome, Mr Mulligan and Mr O' Donoghue. Highlights included: Two fascinating lecture demonstrations on Electricity & Magnetism and sub-zero science; Spending a night in the aquarium and sleeping under the shark tank; Swimming in the Med; touring the city of Valencia; Wall climbing, zip lining, kayaking and hill walking at the adventure centre. It was a very enjoyable trip for everyone involved.

Science Week

The following events were organised during Science Week 10th November to 14th November:

- Lecture on Science given by past pupil Sean Duke on Wednesday to all Transition Years.
- A Staff Science table quiz was held in the staff room on Thursday during lunchtime.
- Science table quizzes were organised for Third years in the afternoon on Thursday and Friday.

Results of the 3rd Year Science Table Quiz

Thursday:

First: Hugh O'Leary Ewan McMahon Eoin O'Meara Conor O'Sullivan
Second: Conor Halpin Patrick Fahy Luke DeMichel Euan Kennedy
Third: Neil Holohan Daniel Foley Tom Gibson Gavin Kildea

Friday:

First: Jack Spain Rory Gallagher
Joint Second: Johnny Kavanagh, James Lunt, Cillian Cummins
Joint Second: Robert Kent, Conor Lynch, Harry Donnelly

• Three teams of 6th Years represented the College at the Senior Science Table Quiz which was held in TCD on Thursday evening and organised by the Dublin Branch of the Irish Science Teachers' Association. Our 'A' Team comprising Joshua Gordon Climax, Rory McCluskey and Andrew Ryan came second and won ?40 each. Team B comprising James Quinn, William O'Flaherty and Sammy Al-Mukhaizeem came 6th. Team C comprising Ivan O'Keeffe, Ronan Doherty and Tomás Beecham came further down the rankings. Teams A & B qualified for the All-Ireland Senior Science Table quiz.

All Ireland Science Table Quiz

The ISTA All-Ireland Science Table quiz was held in TCD on Saturday 22nd November. Our Team A (comprising Joshua Gordon Climax, Rory McCluskey and Andrew Ryan) were in 3rd place for the first 6 rounds, but fell back after rounds 7 & 8. They eventually came fifth and each team member won ?50. Team B (comprising James Quinn, William O'Flaherty and Sammy Al-Mukhaizeem) came 11th. The standard was very high as this was an ALL IRELAND quiz, so congratulations to our teams for reaching the final and competing so well.

SciFest @ School

This year a total of 123 SciFest projects were entered by our Second Year students into our internal SciFest@School competition. Four external judges Sheila Porter, Cynthia Ceillier, Siobhán Sweeney and Peter Aylward interviewed our students about their findings during periods 2 & 3 on Tues 25th November. The judges all remarked on the high standard of presentation achieved by the boys.

The results were as follows:

	Winners of the SCIFEST @ School Competition
	PHYSICAL SCIENCES
	PROJECT
FIRST	Sail Ireland Drummond McGinn
SECOND	Does the position of the sun in the sky affect the amount of energy collected by a solar cell? Cianan Quinn Ryan O'Connell
THIRD	The Leidenfrost effect Theo-Stephens-Keogh
	LIFE SCIENCES
FIRST	Mould Matthew Rockett
SECOND	Does coldwater swimming affect your cognitive functioning? Robert Kelly
THIRD	Ben White
THIRD	The Power of Colour William Spain David Kearney

Young Scientist Competition 2015

Two out of seven projects entered by our students have been accepted into the Young Scientist competition 2015.

They are:

'An Analysis of Teenagers' Knowledge of the Ebola Virus and Current Crisis'

- Scott Donohoe (Transition Year)

'Energy on Sail' - Declan Norton (Fifth Year).

We wish Declan and Scott the very best of luck with their projects.

Sport



Badminton

Both the U16 and U19 Badminton seasons commenced in October with Blackrock being drawn in challenging groups in each age group. The U16s fresh from winning their division at U14 level were raised into a higher section. They went on to gain victories against The High School and Gonzaga and fought hard to come away with a draw against St Benildus College. It remains to be seen if the team will proceed any further in the competition as this will depend on other results.

The U19 season was mixed as there were a number of scheduling and team fielding issues but it is hoped that they may get some further matches after the Christmas break. All players have demonstrated a great level of commitment throughout the season and improvement is very evident. It is hoped that there will be a coach available on Tuesday evenings after the Christmas break so that students will be able to develop their skills and techniques further.

The U14 Badminton season commences in January. We look forward to watching the second and third years in action after they have spent the last number of months training.

Basketball

Under-19: It has been a busy schedule for the U-19's since the October midterm. The group stage finished with a 44-21 win against Drimnagh Castle which was the first win of the season. The East Leinster Shield game against Old Bawn was next. A good performance by Blackrock secured them a comprehensive 42-19 victory.

This qualified the U-19s for an East-Leinster Quarter final against Beneavin College. Beneavin College pulled away in the final quarter after an extremely close fought game and took the victory 44-31. In the last game of the season, the panel was made up entirely of 5th, 4th and 3rd years and they performed fantastically well and will be a team to be reckoned with in next year's competition.

Under-16: The U-16s lost to Drimnagh Castle 33-28 in our last group game in a hard fought game, a tall very physical forward making the difference for Drimnagh. In the East-Leinster Shield Quarter Final Blackrock came up against Tallaght CS. This was a tough, tight game against a hard working Tallaght side who worked extremely hard defensively. Blackrock persevered and kept patient, eventually coming through on a 17-4 score line. The East-Leinster Semi-Final saw the Under 16s come up against an excellent Pobail Scoil Neasain side who were just too good for us on the day, winning on a score line on 50-24. Similar to the U-19s with a number of second year players on the panel this is a young squad that if they stick together and maintain the commitment they are going to go from strength to strength.

Senior Soccer

It has been a tough start for our senior soccer team this year as they unfortunately lost out after extra time to Tallaght C.S in the Leinster Cup. The squad have now switched their focus to the Metropolitan League. A tough group to navigate out of is helped with two of our three group games at home. We look forward to upcoming fixtures vs. Oatlands, Coláiste Éanna and St Marks.

Rugby

Senior: The senior squad has had a very busy time since the Halloween break. Five matches in November saw wins against Clongowes Wood College, Presentation Cork, Ivybridge and Belvedere College, with a one point reversal against St Michael's College.

The schools cup draw was held on the 8th of December and pitted the senior side against Terenure College, a fixture to be played in late January. The countdown to the 1st round of the competition has commenced and further matches against St Munchin's, Methody College and CBC Cork will take place prior to the cup fixture. A strenuous two months await the squad with preparations on-going throughout the Christmas break.

Junior: The second term has seen the junior squad continue to develop well. A solid win in Methody was followed the week after by a set-back in the form of an 8-8 draw versus Terenure. Since then though close victories against Clongowes and Belvedere and a strong performance against Millfield School (UK) have left the team in good shape moving into the Christmas break and the hard work that lies ahead.



Aaron Cassidy, Tom Duke and Andrew Carroll in action against Gonzaga

Chess

The chess club meets three times a week after school on a Tuesday and Friday in a class room and on Wednesdays in the Digital Learning Centre. It is open to all years. This year the team has a new coach, Lukasz Goralski. The Junior and Senior team are registered to take part in the Leinster Schools league. The senior team consists of Andrew Ryan, Brian McMahon, Peter McKenna, Pengbo Wu and Patrick Hasset. The junior team consists of Stephen Ryan, Michael Ryan, Patrick O'Connell, Michael McDonald, Fergus Woods, Adam Doyle and Chris O'Flaherty. Both teams have played three league matches this term, losing to Gonzaga and St. Benildus but winning against Pres Bray. We wish both teams the best of luck in their remaining league matches in the New Year.

Cross Country

It has been a good start to the Cross country season. Clonliffe Harriers organised the Brother at Your Side Race which was held in Santry on Wednesday 12th November. The juniors were represented by Michael O Keane from 3rd year and Max McKenna from 2nd year.

The intermediate team came third with Patrick Fahy, Niall Murphy, Conor Halpin, Mark Dignam, Luke Demichel, Conor Hoffman, Shane Holohan, Richard Sheil, Jack Brown and Edward McKenna running.

The senior team also came third and was made up of Christian McKenna, Luke McCann, Aengus Meldon, Brian McGlone, Declan Norton, Bernard O Sullivan, Matthew McKenna, David O Farrell, Neil Stokes, Jack Stokes, Conor Murnane and Ross O'Reilly.

The Blackrock College Cross Country Open went by with considerable success. 11 schools and approximately 400 students braved the elements to compete in all age groups from minor to senior level. Blackrock had considerable success, with Max McKenna of 2nd year coming second in the junior race. Our Intermediate team came third overall, and our senior team won their category, with notable performances from Luke McCann who came second, and Christian McKenna who came third.

The Dunboyne Athletics club open was the next event for the cross country team. With a very large and competitive field. Notable achievement came from Harry Sharpe (2nd year) who placed 15th in The Intermediate field. In the Seniors Brian McGlone had a tremendous race placing 1st with the team finishing with a Bronze medal.



Ivan O'Keeffe makes a break with Andrew Madigan in support

Rowing

Congratulations to the Students who competed in the Provincial Indoor Championships on Saturday 22nd November. It was a great day and an excellent experience for the young rowers. Josh Loughrey (2nd Year) took home Bronze in the J13 3 minute race and Gold in the J13 500m race.

Andrew Ennis (4th Year) dominated the J15 events earning Gold in both the 5 minute and 500 M races. The Leman Team of Andrew Ennis, Charlie Lawless, Conor Byrne and Peter Walsh (3rd Year) won the 4th Year Team event. Impressive scores were gained from the other Blackrock Competitors, notably Sean Hannon, Thomas McCormack and Conal Regan (all 2nd Year) coming 4th, 6th and 12th out of 29 competitors in the J13 3 minute race. The Junior 15 event was dominated by Blackrock College with Charlie Lawless coming 3rd, Peter Walsh 5th, Conor Byrne 7th and Patrick Riordan 13th, out of total of 43 competitors. In the Junior 16 2 KM race Rob Somers, Jack Stacey and Rob Brown (all 4th Year) finished in 19th, 21st and 27th positions out of field of 46 competitors, with Jack Brennan finishing 15th out of 41 competitors in the J18 2 KM. race.

Gaelic Football

Two wins and a defeat leave the Blackrock under 16 Gaelic team in with a great chance of progressing from their group to the knockout stages of the competition after Christmas. In their first game the team defeated local rivals Oatlands College in a tight game with goals from Niall O'Leary and James Moriarty and a brilliant last minute save from Tom Dowdell left only a goal separating the sides at the end.

The team took great confidence from their first victory and maintained their good run of form against Old Bawn. Although Old Bawn raced into a lead early in the second half Blackrock never gave up and after sustained pressure managed to win comfortably through goals from Jerome Doyle, Ross Deegan and James Moriarty.

This run came to an end in the final group game against an impressive St. Colmille's side. The team will be disappointed with their display on the day but will take lots of positives from their campaign to date and can hopefully get back to winning ways after the Christmas break.

Photos courtesy of Orna Cassidy

**LEMAN FESTIVAL
CONCERT XXIX**
**IN THE NATIONAL CONCERT
HALL**
SUNDAY 18TH JANUARY 2015
7.30 PM.
PLEASE NOTE STARTING TIME.
ADMISSION €20
**TICKETS ON SALE FROM
TUES 6TH JANUARY 2015**
**Available from
THE NATIONAL CONCERT HALL
BOX OFFICE**
Telephone: (01) 4170000
Online Bookings: www.nch.ie