

NEWSLETTER

Sutton Park School



December 2007



Message from Michael Moretta, Head of School

This Newsletter will arrive home with the reports for the senior school. If you find some time over, what I know for many of you is an extremely busy Christmas period, I hope that you read at least sections of this and that you find the information contained inside useful. You will see that it has been another extremely full term and it is simply frightening to consider that we have already completed one half of the academic year. You may have noticed that we have been demolishing the wall at the front of the school and that we have finally taken down the last of the blue gates. We hope to complete the reconstruction of the entrance by mid January.

League Tables: I want to spend a little time talking about the exams and especially how best to interpret results at this halfway stage of the year. Before I do however, I have spent the last few days devouring the many and varied league tables that have appeared in the press. The most useful, from our point of view, is the table that appeared in the Irish Times on Monday 17th December.

Firstly this table appears to represent last year's intake of 6th Years and therefore is the most up to date and secondly it includes data from students who chose English and Northern Irish universities as well as Irish institutions, so is a more accurate reflection of our status as a university feeder school.

Our percentage success rate was quoted as 100% and we were placed 14th in the top 25 Fee-paying feeder schools in Ireland and 14th in the top feeder schools of Dublin City and county. Indeed, it is worth noting that the other 13 schools were extremely close to us in performance – often a matter of 2 or 3 percentage points. Schools achieving over 100% were credited for past pupils who entered 3rd Level this year.

I am not sure how useful such data is, but it certainly suggests that our students are competing with the very best schools in Dublin and indeed the entire country. It is well worth a close look, so I refer you the full list in The Irish Times on Monday – I am sure it is on their website.

Reports and Examination Results

I try to avoid using jargon and “teacher speak” but on this occasion I will break the rule. Exam results in December are “formative” and not “summative”. This means that all our students are still learning and these results are merely a snapshot of their performance after completing 17 weeks of study. They are not therefore an accurate summary of their final result and we would all expect to see some improvement in the coming weeks and months.

I hope that the few sessions of exam feedback that took place this week are seen as helpful in this regard. I certainly know that I found it useful to deconstruct questions and explain exactly where students went wrong and explain strategies for improvement. This is how we all learn. I certainly observed many students discussing their papers and those I asked were really quite articulate about how to improve. It is vital that this happens soon after the exams, since exams quickly disappear from the short term memory. So when you are looking at the results, please be aware there is still a long way to go.

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Michael Moretta

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Reports and Examination Results Con't...

I also want to remind you that I have set aside time on January 7th – the Staff Day and the following Saturday for retakes. This is again to make the entire experience of examinations constructive and useful. Some students have been given the opportunity to retake papers they performed particularly badly in. You can all probably remember what it is like taking examinations in a large number of subjects. Inevitably, some students are unable to sustain revision in all their subjects and under pressure of time all gaps in knowledge are cruelly exposed. If your son or daughter find themselves in this position could you please re-enforce that this is part of the formative process and not a punishment. I think everyone should be given every opportunity to improve and find positives in what, superficially, can seem gloomy data. In my experience students always look to the lowest marks and miss out the encouraging elements of their performance.

Mrs Dowling, Mr Russell and I will go through all the results and analyse the outcomes in order to set targets for those students who underperformed or who need support.

Evening Study

For some time now I have been asked by 6th Years in particular to extend the number of places open for evening study. I am happy to announce that we can offer evening study to another 30 students next term. For those who do not know about evening study, at Sutton Park we offer the opportunity for students to work under supervision of a teacher for nearly three hours every evening. I am afraid that I cannot offer this service as part of this existing fee since the school have to pay for a teacher to stay behind after a full day's teaching. That said some students clearly find it useful to use this facility and I want to make it as widely available as possible without increasing what is already an expensive fee. If you want to take advantage of Evening Study we can offer the service for the following rate:

Five days @ 700 Euro from January 8th until the end of the second week in June inclusive and 3 Days @ 400 Euro from 8th January until the end of the second week in June inclusive. The three best days are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and it is on these days that I expect to run the second class.

This price works out considerably less than 10 Euro per night. I am afraid I cannot offer evening study on an individual nightly basis because the administration involved would render the collection of money prohibitively difficult and unwieldy. I will have to offer this on a first come first served basis, so if you are interested could I ask you to contact the business office early in January – the office will be open from Monday 7th January and we can put in place the necessary arrangements.

Important Examination Dates

The mock examinations take place in February. These exams are important for all 3rd and 6th Years since they are a full trial run of their respective summer papers. We try to replicate as fully as possible the experience of the summer in these exams and the papers represent another important stepping stone in the journey towards Third Level progression. Once again they are formative not summative and last year a considerable number of students significantly improved on their mock performance when they sat the real exams in June. Yet they are important and it is vital to be fully prepared so students can set themselves clear targets for the rest of the academic year.

You can see the full Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate summer timetables on the Education Department website on www.education.ie

For 6th Year parents : CAO applications also need to be completed early in January. If you have any concern in this area or want further advice please do not hesitate to make an appointment to see Miss Ryan. We want to have all the applications loaded well before the official deadlines. Last year the CAO site crashed due to the volume of applications.

New Kiln for Art Room

I am happy to announce that we have ordered a new kiln for the Art Department. Thanks to the support of the PTA who have contributed half the cost of this essential piece of equipment, we can now significantly enhance the quality and range of activities in the Art department. I am not entirely sure when the kiln will arrive in school, but we are all looking forward to its arrival with anticipation and excitement. I have to say the purchase of the kiln shows how well the PTA support the learning that goes on in the school. I am very grateful to Eileen Ryan and the rest of the committee for their consistent help and willingness to provide important equipment to the school.

BT Young Scientist Competition 2008

We are delighted to say that 2 groups have made it through to the finals of the BT Young Scientist Competition to be held in the RDS from Jan 8th –12th. Every year it gets harder and harder to make it through the screening procedures into the finals. We would like to congratulate the following students for the hard work put into their projects and to the two second year groups who will be presenting their Scientific Research to the Judges at the RDS in January.

Adam Keilthy & Conor Scully (2nd Year) – ‘A Web Browser for the Colour Blind’

Niamh Lowney & Shreya Ahluwalia (2nd Year) – ‘Does Cerebral Dominance affect Your Perception?’

Alex Newman & James Montague (4th Year) – ‘A Solar Powered Clothes Dryer’ - Despite the good idea and all the work that Alex and James had done they were unfortunately outranked for limited places in the Intermediate Technology section and did not make it through to the finals. There is a great deal of competition in this category from schools from N. Ireland which do GCSE Technology where students are working on projects in class time for long periods. They may go on and develop their idea for Sci Fest Ireland.

We would like to encourage students and their families in SPS to visit the exhibition in January and support our students by visiting them at their stands. It is open to the public on (Fri/Sat) 11th / 12th January. We expect to take all the first years to the Exhibition on Friday 11th Jan – details to be announced.

Dance Classes

Those of you lucky enough to see High School Musical will appreciate this item. I have been able to secure the services of Gill Gruber – the choreographer for the production- who is willing to run a dance club on Wednesdays in the Senior School. She is also willing to offer a variety of other classes from tap, ballet to contemporary dance and drama to students throughout the school – senior and junior divisions. We both thought an Open Evening on the 10th January starting at 5 pm would allow as many of you as possible to talk to Gill and see exactly what can be offered. I think there is a huge potential interest in dance at Sutton Park [some 66 senior school students expressed their interest to me just after the musical in the senior school] Gill is extremely talented and we could offer an extensive range of activities after school quite easily. If you are interested please come along on the 10th of January. The Open Evening will take place in the Resource Room in the Junior School.

Final word on 50th Anniversary

I know Geraldine McGuire has made mention of this magnificent occasion in her section of the newsletter. You have by now received a pictorial record of the occasion and I know you would want to join with me in praising Michelle Lynam and her wonderful committee in pulling off such a splendid celebration of the school’s enduring spirit. People still approach me in the street openly expressing their enjoyment of the events and it certainly seems that we have built up a groundswell of supporters and friends of the school who wish to hold other reunions and events. We are now working on developing our data base of past students, so please watch this space for further information.

Mr Keilthy’s Companies Project in 4th Year

On Wednesday one of Mr Keilthy’s 4th year business companies endured the indignity of being taken to court for evasion of taxes. Watched by the entire senior school, this group’s accounts, records of trade and business practices were systematically analysed and dissected.

The prosecution, brilliantly conducted by David Murphy and Harry Guinness, mercilessly exposed the position of the company who, although ably defended by Louise Moore and Anne Marie O’Driscoll, were found guilty by the judges. And what expert judges they were. Mrs Crowley, Mrs Fitzgerald and Miss Hanratty delivered their collective verdict with authority and not a little moral condemnation.

The verdict – they were fined 140 Euro and had to pay up their taxes to Mr Keilthy or have their assets seized. Since these were Christmas trees the whole occasion had a distinct seasonal flavour. The experience gave the students a good insight into the procedures of the law and emphasised important elements of good business practice. It was also great fun. It was a wonderful way to end a week of intense study for the exams. Many thanks to Mr Keilthy who orchestrated the event. By the way Mr Finucane proved to be a most effective bailiff and court official and kept the court very much in order.

Sports Reports

Boys Hockey

Leading into the Christmas break the Sutton Park School Boys Hockey Section are progressing well in all leagues and preparing for the cup runs post Christmas. All age groups are playing in the Leinster A division leagues with some notable results. One of the best was a 4-0 victory over Mt Temple by the U14 team. The minor teams had two great wins over Kilkenny and Kings Hospital. They share top position in the league so far.

Both the Junior and Senior Teams are playing superb hockey in their league matches. The senior team defeated Kilkenny and went on in the All Irelands to be placed in the top 10 schools in the island of Ireland.

Lastly, a special mention to Mark Ryan who played and scored goals for the Leinster U 16 inter-provincial team. Mark has been invited to train on the Irish under 16 panel – a very special achievement indeed.

Girls Hockey

The girls hockey teams are just finishing the group stages of their Leinster League campaigns. The Senior girls, competing for the first time in the Leinster Premier League, lost their fixtures narrowly to The King's Hospital, Loreto Foxrock, and Mount Anville. They have been drawn at home against St. Gerard's, Bray in the Leinster Senior Cup on the 17th of January.

The Juniors have brilliantly qualified from their group - having lost to Mount Temple they gained wins against Loreto Balbriggan and Mount Sackville before beating Loreto, Dalkey in extra time. In the Junior Cup we have been handed a daunting trip to face Muckross Park.

The Minors, with only 3 second years playing, claimed their first win against Tullamore, but defeats against Loreto Beaufort and Mount Anville mean we will not progress even if we win our last match.

The North Dublin League begins after Christmas.

Badminton

This year we have five teams playing in division 1 in the Leinster League at U 19/16/14. We also have teams entered in division 2 and division 3.

All our teams are doing very well and we have had fixtures with Mt Anville, Wesley College, Gormanston College, Terenure College, St Fintan's High, Holy Faith Glasnevin, Clontarf and Skerries CS. Mrs Spence is delighted to report that we have more than held our own in all these matches. The U19 girls will qualify for the semi-final stage of their competition and the U16 girls will also qualify for the semi-final stage of their competition.

The U14 Boys [A & B teams] entered division 1 and division 3. They defeated Skerries CC 6-0 in their first match – an excellent start.

Luke Moore is currently playing for Ireland and we have a number of Leinster squad players in our teams. For a small school this represents a magnificent achievement and we are looking forward to another good season.

I am sure you will join me in congratulating all our teams and in thanking all the PE staff for their hard work and dedication.

Lunch Menus & Canteen

At Sutton Park School, we understand that food provides the fuel we all need to be able to concentrate and learn, especially in the education environment. In 2007, we carried out a food survey, the results of which provided us with valuable information regarding our customers needs and enabled us to provide a variety of food to suit. Over the next term and for 2008, through our Healthy eating program 'Intelligent Dining', we will continue to focus on providing information about dietary needs and food types, allowing our customers to make informed decisions about the food they choose.

The Intelligent Dining program has been approved by the Irish Heart Foundation and provides information so that our customers are given the opportunity to take a balanced diet approach to good health.

From January until March, we will be focusing on the following aspects—'Thinking about Vegetables', Breads, Cereals and Potatoes' and 'Thinking about Fruit'.

May we take this opportunity to wish you all Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Prosperous New Year.

From Deborah & The Food Team
ARAMARK/Campbell Catering

We have decided to publish weekly lunch menus on the website. Since it is you, the parents, who stump up the money for school lunches, it seems only fair that you get to see what is offered in our canteen every week. The publication of menus on our website begins in the first week in January and will continue throughout the year.

Christmas Carol Service

Many thanks to all who attended or took part in the Carol Service on Thursday. It was such a beautiful evening and a fitting beginning to this festive season. The students sang like angels and the dancers added grace to the occasion. Special thanks to Ms Fionnuala Howard, Ms Fiona Foley and Mr Ronan Walsh for making the whole evening possible. It was a wonderful way to start the festive season.

Conclusion

Well it has been a long, but extremely satisfying term. I am about to reach the point when I am completing my first full year of service as Head of School at Sutton Park. I am sure I have said this before, but I have to repeat it, Sutton Park is really one of the most extraordinary schools to work in. My enduring and abiding emotion is one of gratitude for being given the opportunity to lead such a vibrant and dynamic school community. You have all made me feel very welcome and I have been particularly impressed by your willingness to be open to new ideas. We end the old year with what I am sure will be a lovely carol service.

I hope you all have a restful and enjoyable holiday and I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year. One last thing. On St Stephen's Day UTV are screening a new production of The Old Curiosity Shop by Charles Dickens. The film was shot in Ireland over the summer, and, if you get a chance to watch the production, one of the scenes near the end was filmed in our swimming pool mimicking the Thames river involving one of the main characters called Quilp played by actor Toby Jones.

Just thought you might be interested. Have a very good holiday.

JUNIOR SCHOOL

Parental Involvement

All classes had cookery lessons from Mrs Economos, ably assisted by Mrs Brown, Mrs de Vries and Mrs Buckner.

The cookery book organised by Mrs Economos and available from the school contains photographs of the children engaged in cooking a variety of dishes and many recipes provided by parents and staff. Mrs Banks and Mrs de Vries gave their professional help with the production of this book.

The same group with the help of Mrs Kretels were responsible for organising the tea towels with self portraits by all pupils. Mrs McKeon worked with Grade 1 making models.

Another generous gift from parents who wish to remain anonymous allowed us to purchase an interactive whiteboard for Grade 3. We now have six interactive whiteboards in the Junior School being used to great effect each day.

Mr Farrelly organised the visit of Charlie, the young eagle owl, to the school. We had the opportunity of learning all about him from close range!

Trips & Educational Tours

Junior & Senior Infants visited Dublin Zoo to see the baby elephant in the new enclosure. Senior Infants visited Poppy Barron's house to see a swallow's nest in their outbuildings. Grade 1, 2 & 3 visited Baldoyle library to meet the author, Liam Farrell.

A Halloween trip, in full costume, to Waterstones bookshop to meet the author, Brendan O'Brien.

Junior & Senior Infants, Grades 1 & 2 - Trip to the Helix to see a fantastic production of 'Alice in Wonderland'. Grade 3 enjoyed a trip to Newgrange to further their knowledge of the Stone Age. Grade 4 visited Collins Barracks to inspect the recently arrived Viking longship. Grade 5 had a day out with Ms. Hoy, making and glazing objects at the Pottery Barn, enjoying a pizza in Malahide and bowling in Coolock. Grade 6 spent two days in Carlingford Adventure Centre engaging a variety of outdoor pursuits.

The whole school visited the R.D.S. ice rink for a morning of fun on the ice.

Celebrating 50 Years of Sutton Park School

A sense of the history of the school was provided for all classes by the visit of two past pupils and one past member of staff. Madge O'Neill a former teacher who spent 20 years teaching Junior Infants spoke to the children of Junior & Senior Infants, Grade 1 & 2.

Mark Andrews, a former student spoke to the pupils of Grades 3 & 4. Mark now has two children in the school. Clive Lucas, now a member of the B.O.G. and the B.O.M. spoke to the pupils of Grades 5 & 6.

A group of students from Grades 5 & 6 researched the history of the last 50 years and provided us all with some very interesting facts about world events, Irish events and Sutton Park School events over the last 50 years.

Every class enjoyed the birthday celebrations on Thursday, 22 November; The cutting of the cake was performed by the youngest and oldest pupils, Rebecca Dwyer and Sebastian Egan. The cake was then cut by the catering staff and delivered to the classrooms where it was later consumed after a nice slice of pizza and a drink. All teachers organised party games in the classrooms, some with karaoke machines. The magician, Billy Bubbles entertained the younger children and a scientist, Randal Henly entertained the pupils of Grades 4, 5 & 6.

Helping Others

On International Day many children dressed in the national costumes of other countries and many parents provided delicious foods representative of other cuisines to raise over €1,000 euro for charity. All had a great time visiting the Language department of the Senior School to buy the goodies on offer and the money raised will be used by a Past Pupil, Sinead Walsh to fund an ongoing project in India.

A small group of children in Grade 2 read avidly to raise €1,104 for M.S. Ireland. As with previous years all pupils have helped local causes at Christmas time. Each pupil from Junior & Senior Infants and Grade 1 bought and wrapped a gift for a specified child which will be delivered along with donated foodstuffs to needy families by the St Vincent de Paul Society.

The pupils of Grades 2, 3 & 4 donated over €700 to purchase a special keyboard and other specialised classroom equipment for use in St. Mary's Hospital, Baldoyle. The pupils of Grades 5 & 6 donated over €500 which was used to fund the 'wish list' of the residents of the L'Arche community in Baldoyle. The residents asked for two bird houses, two standard lamps and a selection of Craft kits

Presentations

In November Grade 4 presented a wonderful assembly entitled, 'The Vikings, vicious or simply misunderstood'. This musical and dramatic presentation taught all in the audience so much about the history of the Vikings in Ireland.

Christmas plays were presented by Junior & Senior Infants, Grades 1, 2 & 3.

Junior & Senior Infants presented the Wiggly Nativity, Grade 1 presented Hansel and Gretel, Grade 2 presented Scarecrows Christmas and Grade 3 presented How The Grinch stole Christmas.

The Carol Service was presented this year by the pupils of Grades 4, 5 & 6.

Geraldine McGuire
PRINCIPAL OF JUNIOR SCHOOL



**Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year**



From all the Staff at Sutton Park School

