

CNI NEWSLETTER

January 2016



A Chairde

I hope this newsletter finds you all well and rested after the Nollaig period as we enter the year of centenaries 2016. Indeed it is hard to believe that in under 2 years CNI will be celebrating its 10th birthday,

“How time fled and paced upon a mountain overhead and hid his head among a crowd of stars” ... (W.B. Yeats).

I am delighted to be back in the house and Ma. Gardiner and myself are working extremely well together even though he has a Drogheda accent something I am hoping to sort out over time!! .

Our 1st year group of 180 daltaí are well settled in and all identified the one day full timetable on their own in the building in August as a great support to helping them feel their way around. We plan to have the same next year for incoming first year pupils. I am also very impressed with the 1st year comments re. senior students who they credit with helping them if they get lost or drop equipment etc. This Clann family ethos is immensely precious as it is the perfect setting for advancing a culture of kindness and tolerance. Indeed this Clann ethos was specifically referred to by the whole school inspection team as of immense value in **ensuring** students are learning in a supportive and encouraging environment from the ‘bottom-up’. I. Noonan and the Caomhnoiri are currently doing some focused work with the 1st Year daltaí around the area of this Clann Culture to ensure they fully benefit from the school’s ideals.

Since August the school has been busy with impressive Leaving Certificate points progression, excellent Junior Certificate results, preparing for the introduction of the new Junior Cycle including involvement in Building Learning Power, a cutting edge education theory that focus on building students learning capacities to become independent learners a skill that universities and third level institutions are crying out for. As we are committed to developing Restorative Practice as a school discipline system we have invested in teacher training in this area also. In November a Whole School Evaluation by the Department of Education was announced. Though naturally stressful the process was very welcomed. The lead inspector confirmed to the BOM after delivering formal feedback to them on 11th January ***“This is a very good report”***. The official written report will be published in the coming weeks and we will make it available to all.

The list below is a detail of some of the academic and extra-curricular events since September:

Academic:

- Developed and introduced a **‘Wellbeing’** programme ahead of the new JC (see www.colaistenahisne.ie News TED Talks (Prof. Ratley)
- Further developed a culture of staidéir in the school with three after school study programmes and another starting on Saturday mornings (demand dependant)
- Béarla Díospóraíocht (English Debating) success continues with three teams in the Junior Debating Semi Finals already. CNI is seeded first place nationally in junior debating and 8th place nationally at senior level. Some achievement for a school with only 8 year’s tradition especially against the context of schools with generations of investment in public speaking.
- Science Olympian Freya Martin represented Ireland in South Korea. 5 of our daltaí were placed in the top 200 at JC Science examination and were invited to trials for the Olympian. Freya has made us very proud indeed.
- Sophia Lyons won 4th place nationally in JC Adhmadóireacht (Woodwork)
- Cassisa McArevy achieving in the top 1% in Ireland in Béarla (English) at higher Leaving Certificate level.
- Dean O’Reilly Idirbhliain(Transition Year) won the national Goal **‘Write the Future’** Competition. His very impressive winning letter is at the end of this Newsletter.

- Faith Keegan and Caleigh Reddin won first place in Ireland in the LCAP Michael Sweetman Trust competition and will now represent Ireland in Strassburg in January.
- Very successful Teaching and Learning Seachtain with active learning hubs used as a means of teaching learning styles and methods to daltaí.
- Career Clinics running at lunch times to facilitate students researching career options
- Parents run An Leabharlann four days a week at lunch time to support student reading opportunities. The leabharlann is open for any donations.
- Accelerated Reader programme (computer programme that all CNI 1st year students engage in via an Leabharlann) to promote reading ages and skills. Please check your son/daughters reading reports and that they are doing their recommended reading per week to develop their language and comprehension skills.
- Faith Keegan, 6 Kelly has achieved full marks in her Session 2 results. This is a huge achievement and she is continuing realise her Réalt Eolais (potential). These are outstanding results nationally.
- Club Ríomhaire (computer club) for students to have extra supervised access to computers for research, homework etc)
- Díospóraíocht (Gaeilge) (Irish Debating)
- Seachatain Gnó (Business Week) was held from Monday 14th December - with student Enterprise and Mini-Companies on show in An Grainán showcasing their products and services to all of the school community. Also, for senior daltaí, we had local and international businesses speaking to them about their firms and how they started their companies. Local entrepreneurs from Relish Café Group, Grand Designs Kitchens and Gerry Moan were involved alongside international firms such as Deloitte Accountancy and Coca Cola in presenting to the students.

The **National CIMA Business Quiz** was held in Tallaght IT in November where 2 teams from 3ú bhliain Gnó classes entered representing The Coláiste. Huge congratulations to one of our teams who came 4th in this very prestigious competition. Well done to all involved!

- Building Learning Power in-service with Graham Powell Tuesday 12th January. The morning session was dedicated to Roinn Béarla (English Dept.) as they are the first ábhair (subject) to be assessed by the new Junior Cert. As you can see we are very proactive in welcoming and planning for the new Junior Cycle programme.

Extra-Curricular and Social:

- Friends For Life programme-up and running
- Rainbows Programme-supporting students experiencing loss\
- Variety of sports inc. Cisphéil, Sacar, Gaelic, school after-school fitness for girl and boys, chess
- Buddy link between 1st and 6th year daltaí very successful
- Guidance and Counselling
- Student advocacy programme
- Lunch Club for first years
- Stand Up Week promoted understanding respect and equality for all
- Lá Dearfachas a wonderful day out for the clann
- Three Good Notes Comortas (competitions)
- Nollaig Gradam (awards) and celebration of
- 3 Réalta na Míosa (student Star of the Month Awards)



Comparing Ourselves to The Best Internationally

If I thought the Drogheda accent was hard to de-code I learned it's not so difficult after all as I was invited on a study trip to Scotland for two days to visit other innovating schools and learn from best international practice. I found it most beneficial and it has given me an extra dimension to view CNI through. It is only by comparing ourselves to the best and most innovative schools that we can meet the dynamic needs of the 21st Century. Perhaps the importance of developing education and ensuring our schools are as dynamic as the world around us is best seen in the presentation titled 21st Century website (under recommend you no doubt it will as frighten you. point of view it clear that we and adapt to students can of universities, institutions and work.



Learning on our News Tab). I view as I have inspire as well From a school makes it very must develop ensure our meet the needs third level the world of

Again a very positive feedback from the inspection was an acknowledgement of CNI staff's commitment to professional development and training. The inspectors praised the very strong culture of teachers doing courses after school and sharing their training with others in an organised way with their departments. In this way they are developing their professional competencies and the teaching capacities of the entire staff. They highlighted this as being key to best teaching and it also ensures the school is flexible and ready to lead change rather than reluctantly react to change and all the intractability that brings with it.

TED Talks

Our website is managed in-house by Ma. Ciaran McCabe who also keeps the Meath Coaster and local papers updated with the CNI news. We are very grateful to him for all his work in the area. This year we added a section to the webpage under the NEWS TAB that is very exciting. It is a TED Talks section where we have three key talks that teachers and parents alike will find very interesting. I would encourage all parents to take the time to view these three talks:

- Rita Pearson-Every Child Needs Champion
- Professor Carol Dweck- The Growth Mindset
- Dr. Ratley- Physical Education's role in the school as a means of promoting academic learning.

All three are central to what we are striving to achieve in CNI and we will add to the section as we research more material relevant to our work here. Of particular importance is Professor Carol Dweck's 'Growth Mindset' especially as you receive tuarascail (reports). I recommend that you look at this talk (even the first 10minutes) as a means of developing your knowledge of the science of learning.

Evaluations With Partners

The Whole School Inspection Team identified that the school had a very strong reflection culture and good practices of asking the partners, including parents, about school issues. However there is scope for improvement on this area and we are committed to developing this further. This year we have used the mechanisms of Cruinniú Caomhnóra and the Parent-Teacher meetings to survey parents on key issues. The feedback has highlighted key areas for development:

When asked whether your children were happy with the education they were receiving at school we were delighted with the feedback (98% said they were happy with the education). Of course of most interest were the comments and suggestions for improvement. Across the board a canteen was requested. We are delighted to welcome Get Fresh an Irish company as our catering partners in CNI. Get Fresh are offering full hot dinners made on site. A team of múinteoirí including I. Rooney, Ma. Reilly in association with the Parents Association have put a lot of time into reviewing menus and ensuring the meals provided are in line with our Healthy Eating Policy.

Parents Association (PA):

One piece of feedback from the inspection questionnaires was that parents did not feel they were getting enough information on the work of the Parents Association and Board of Management. This is something we are working on with the Parents Association.

CNI's Parents Association is a very active group and meet once a month in CNI on the first Tuesday of every month at 7.30pm pm. Two múinteoirí are also on the PA and either Principal or Deputy Principal attend meetings. Notice of meetings are text to all parents in advance.

This year they have focused on developing pitches for the daltaí. It is a shame that a school of almost 1,000 daltaí has no formal pitch to play games on resulting in all matches and field games having to be away games. This impacts in terms of costs of buses as well as increased supervision required to cover the teacher that are with teams as every match and field event is effectively an 'away' event. The PA held a very successful Style Night in November which was very well attended and raised over €5,000 for the pitch development. It is important to note that the PA is not about fundraising primarily but about working with the school partnership of students, teachers and school leadership to ensure the best outcome for students and this community in general.



The Chair of the Parents Association is Ms. Grainne Cronin. If you wish to communicate with her please send a letter to CNI marked for her attention and we will pass it on to her. Alternatively please attend meetings as they are an open forum for all parents.

Contact for Parents Association is Grainne Cronin on cnipa@gmail.com

**"I SHALL PARTICIPATE, I SHALL CONTRIBUTE,
AND IN SO DOING, I WILL BE THE GAINER."**

WALTER ANNENBERG

© LIneback Quotes



Board of Management:

The new BOM of CNI came into being in May 2015. Cllr. Wayne Harding is the Chairperson of the Board. Indeed he and Cllr. Sharon Tolan have been working at local government level to support the completion of the spine road and we are delighted that some positive movement is occurring in relation to this. This board are a group of committed and interested local people. They are charged with the overall running of the school as a sub-committee of the LMETB. This year in conjunction with the school leadership they have identified the following focus:

- **Caighdeán (Standards):** This refers to standards across the school as it is ingrained in the schools mission policy. From the 'little things that matter' i.e. school uniform, standard of interactions and manners, to standards of teaching and learning the board promote Árd Caighdeán (Highest expectations of all partners). We see this as professionalising CNI as a learning organisation. This month we are focusing on punctuality to school.

We are also committed to developing Restorative Practice as a discipline model. Many schools are trying to move to this approach while we are fortunate to have being invested in it since our inception and now we hope to invest in formal training with students to make it an embedded reality for all.

- **Teaching and Learning:** Promoting the Continued Professional Development (CPD) of teachers and ancillary staff to ensure they have relevant current knowledge and methodologies to appropriately impart knowledge, habits and skills. In particular we are focused on embedding Assessment for Learning (AfL). We are also examining Building Learning Power (BLP) as a learning methodology. It important to note that the science of learning and how people learn has made great advances over the past 30 years and we examine teaching and learning on a research based model i.e. we implement what can be proven to be good teaching and learning. As such CPD for teachers as mentioned earlier is a key fundamental principle that underpins our approach to educating your children. It is also key that we empower students to take responsibility for their own work and build independent rather than dependant learners. This aim is part of our School Improvement Plan including reading for pleasure.
- **Timpellacht:** Maintaining the building for the future and developing facilities including pitches, canteen. The inspection team highlighted the traffic issues on the campus including inside the CNI gate. Please be very cautious entering the campus and driving around the grounds as students are very vulnerable on these dark and wet mornings.

Administration - School Oifig



As you may know there is an embargo on recruitment in the public sector. However we are fortunate to have growing numbers of students and we are allowed appoint teachers. However in the secretarial area we are allowed one full-time secretary. I can assure you for the administrative needs of a school office not to mention helping the almost 1,000 pupils and 77 staff one secretary is not enough. This full-time secretarial position is divided in CNI into two half time roles with I. Kelly and I. Walsh-Smyth making up the full job. This year we have engaged the services of a recruitment company and have hired a receptionist I. Dowling. This means we are not hiring a person but a service and this is on a week by week basis and is dependent on school funds to support it. There is no doubt I. Dowling has made a massive difference to the school and the result is the office is open to meet parents etc. However it is important to note that her role and that of the I. Walsh-Smyth and I.Kelly are very busy and while they do try to facilitate lunch and book etc. drop offs by parents, it cannot become a norm. It is essential that students are fully organised for school every day with all their equipment and lunch. Obviously things happen and once-off incidents occur and the office will facilitate that, however they cannot facilitate drop off every day and there is no guarantee that the students will get the office message etc as use of the inter-com is limited as it disrupts classroom learning. While we pride ourselves on a 'small school clann atmosphere' we are a big building physically and it may not be possible to get materials you leave in to your child. The key is following The Sunday Night Routine in the Cinn Lae and being on site for 8:30am to access the taiscedán (lockers).



In relation to supervision it is important to note that teacher supervision in CNI begins at 8:30am. Hence our official opening time for daltaí is 8:30am.

Whole School Evaluation: Official Feedback

On Monday 15th CNI received full formal feedback from the team of inspectors. In the morning Ma. Gardiner and myself had a two hour feedback followed by the staff 1hr feedback in the afternoon and BOM including Chairperson of the Parents Association in the evening for 1hr 30 min. The feedback has been very positive and reaffirming as well as identifying areas for future focus. The full formal report will be presented in three months and will be on the web-site for viewing by all

partners. In the interim the Parents Association will give a summary report to all via the web-sit in the coming weeks.

Important Events Ahead

3ú and Idirbhliain careers evening for subject choice in the coming weeks. This is an evening where students and parents have the opportunity to view different courses and subject choices, talk to teachers, review recommended entry requirements etc. It is important students and their parents make the right subject choice for them. The key is to pick what you will excel at not what you feel you should do.

Mocks begin: Price of mocks papers are included in Book Rental so those involved will not have to pay and correction is done in-house. It is important to know daltaí will have full days regardless of when their examinations are on and supervised study will be provided for them in CNI in between their scheduled exams.

CNI Presents....Rock of Ages

CNI has built up great capacity over the past four years in developing what can only be described as almost professional musicals. This year sees our final production for a few years and hence this musical is a big punching rocking event as we 'bow out' on a high. I strongly recommend you book your ticket asap for the musical which opens on Wednesday 20th January and closes on Saturday 23rd. For anyone who has lived through the late 1980s this is a must!

Letter to by Dean O'Reilly Idirbhliain

Dean O'Reilly - 6th year - Colaiste na hInse, Bettystown, Co Meath

Letter addressed to 'Fellow Hominids'

I find it sickening to be present in such a jaded generation. In such an entitled society. I am no exception, I too have ignored the refugee crisis for quite some time. Why? You may ask. How can I be so disconnected? Well the answer is simple - because I am privileged to. I have the privilege to concentrate on the disarray of EastEnders rather than the disparaging violence of ISIS. I have the privilege to wake up in shelter rather than the rubble of my broken home. This is why I am writing this letter. My purpose is to shed light on the privilege we have grown accustomed to, I implore you all to reflect on your own. If we cannot dismantle our entitlement, the work of organisations such as GOAL is worthless. The WASH programme will be purely a Band-Aid. How can we fight for change when we don't see anything worth changing?

How may we accept refugees into our country when we view those seeking asylum as less than? How may we offer sanctuary when all we offer is segregation? As a culture we have affixed rose tinted glasses on the public eye. The world is not pretty. It is not perfect, and thus we persecute those that remind us of such imperfections. I do not speak as the enlightened or the divine...I am simply a person unhappy that we have thrown away our brothers and sisters to the wolves of mankind.



Finally:

If you have any ideas or suggestions please write them here and return via your child who will drop them in the Parents Association IDEAS box. Please attach your name and a phone number so they can follow up with you if necessary



For the sake of those who have no access to education we must ensure we participate in our one (education system)

Best wishes for the remainder of the term.....

Anne Marie McCarrick and Ian Gardiner