

1836



2021

# Sion Hill Newsletter

DECEMBER 2021

*Dominican College Sion Hill aims to help each student achieve their full potential academically, spiritually, physically, emotionally and socially in a happy secure environment.*

## Welcome

A very warm welcome to our Newsletter for the first term.

This term has been a busy one in Sion Hill. I hope that this Newsletter will give you a sense of the wide range of activities that are offered in our school. The vast majority of pupils in our school are taking part in at least one school activity. These activities provide important opportunities for students to develop a wide range of skills and it is most satisfying to see these skills develop as the year progresses. As a school, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the large number of staff who generously offer their free time to facilitate many of these activities. Without their generous support, it would not be possible to offer such a broad curriculum.

As a school community, we have continued to learn to work within the numerous new Covid-19 safety guidelines. Teachers and students continue to show enormous adaptability and creativity as they devise new ways to deliver the curriculum. Overall, compliance with school safety guidelines is very high and we thank everyone who has worked to make our school as safe as possible.

Our online parent tutor meetings have all taken place. Despite some technical difficulties for a small minority of meetings, they seem to have been very effective. The pastoral care teams welcomed the opportunity to discuss each student's individual progress across a wide range of areas. As always, we continue to encourage any parents/guardians with any questions to contact the school.

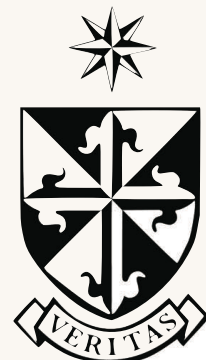
As we approach Christmas, public health advice is again changing. We appeal to everyone to take all steps they can to protect each other. We think of our frontline workers who do so much to keep us all safe and we thank them for their dedication and commitment.

We wish you all a safe, happy and peaceful Christmas.

With kind regards

*Orla Condren.*

Orla Condren  
Principal



# From the Head Girl

Welcome to the Sion Hill newsletter for the first term of the 2021-2022 academic year. My name is Isabella Fagan and I am the Head Girl of Sion Hill this year. My role consists of chairing the Student Council and representing my peers in all aspects of student life.

It is an honour to be able to work alongside such diligent and hardworking students, with the help of the remarkable Deputy Head Girls; Brooke Dwyer and Ailbhe Quinlan.

This year, we strive to get back as much as possible from the past few years by encouraging the sense of community and belonging that our school is renowned for. It is our mission to construct an inclusive and accepting environment for all students and to provide a "home away from home" where everyone feels safe and welcome.

I hope that you will enjoy hearing from our students and committees about all the progress we have made so far. I hope you all have a festive and relaxing holiday break.

# From the Student Council

This year, the Student Council has been an intrinsic part of bringing even more school spirit back to Sion Hill after a turbulent two years. With every aspect of school life being impacted by the pandemic, this year we aim to uplift and support the whole school community in every way possible by promoting a message of inclusivity, positivity and hope.

We kicked off the year in October by electing our class representatives from first to sixth year. We are delighted to be collaborating with such a wonderful group of dedicated and diligent students. Each individual is an asset to our team and is doing a brilliant job at communicating ideas between their tutor groups, the student council and staff. We commend them on their hard work thus far!

In November, our first all-school activity was a prideful celebration of the LGBTQ+ community for National Stand Up Awareness Week. Run by *BelongTo* youth services, Stand Up week encourages schools across Ireland to fight back against homophobic and transphobic bullying and discrimination. As part of this, our first DiversiTEA discussion group was held, headed by the Library and MBS committees. Here, students attending were encouraged to analyse and deconstruct "Queer Representaion in Media". As a student council, we gathered hundreds of slips of rainbow paper filled with positive affirmations and quotes from the student body speaking about the LGBTQ+ community, which we will make into a permanent rainbow art feature to celebrate the community in our school. We showed educational videos, provided resources to students and played the music of some fabulous LGBTQ+ artists at lunch. To end the week, every year group accessorised with a different colour of the rainbow to showcase our pride! It was a tremendous week which was greatly enjoyed by all!

Six members of the Student Council attended the Comhairle na nÓg AGM in November and fed back all the information to the Student Council. It was a great experience for all involved. Since then Prachi Agrawal has been elected to the National Executive of Comhairle na nÓg. We congratulate her on this and wish her all the best as she takes up this role.

Following up in December, the Student Council held Anti-Bullying week. Although this was disrupted by Storm Barra, we continued to raise awareness about this important topic. Most notably, every class was presented with an in-depth explanation of the types of bullying, as well as ways to report related events.



## From the Arts Committee

The Arts Committee has always played a vital role in Sion Hill. In a strong start to the year, the Arts Committee collaborated with the Mind, Body and Soul Committee to make a rainbow wall of quotes and drawings to celebrate stand up week.



Although being famous for our annual Xmas Factor and other talent shows, unfortunately due to Covid we were unable to go forward with them this year. However that won't stop us from embracing this Christmas season! This year we are holding our first ever Recycled Christmas Decoration Competition, in collaboration with the Environment Committee. This contest is a great opportunity to showcase the immense artistic talent in the school while raising awareness for our planet.

We will also be hosting our Christmas Colouring session, in a covid safe environment, where people can come together and relax to share their Christmas spirit.

The Arts Committee have plenty more planned for the New Year, and we hope you are just as excited for the year as we are!

## From the Sports Committee

This year the sports committee is delighted to be able to plan events for the school to enjoy again. We have organised for each year to have their own day to use the pitch at lunch, where everyone can bring the equipment from the gym out onto the pitch and have a good run around. We all really enjoyed this last year and couldn't wait to bring it back this year.

We have also introduced sport of the month, each year will compete against other classes in their year in a different sport every month. The sport of the month for December was rounders. TYs started the week on Monday, followed by a great turn out by the second years on Tuesday. There was great competition between the fifth and sixth years on Wednesday while on Thursday the first years enjoyed their round. Finally the third years finished the week off on Friday full of enthusiasm. There was a great atmosphere all week on the pitch with rounders in full swing. We can't wait to see all you next month for football.



We are also in the middle of planning our annual fundraiser for the Irish guide dogs which will hopefully take place in the new year.

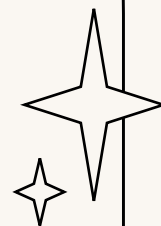


## From the Library Committee

This year the library committee is committed to making our events as open to everyone as possible. For starters we run three separate book clubs dividing years into groups of two. In total, close to 100 students attend these meetings. We also help with the Junior and Senior Film Clubs. Most recently, we have been discussing the films 'Heathers' and 'Jawbreaker'.

DiversiTEA is another event hosted by us in collaboration with the MBS. This is a group discussion that anyone can join in on, with diverse monthly themes to get everyone thinking together. In the coming month we have many events planned, including "A Blind Date with a Book", where people will choose a book by their genre and not their cover. This event will use books already on our library.

Finally, we were delighted to welcome our new librarian, Mr Justin Aylward, to the school. The librarian will be there every lunchtime to allow students borrow and return books.



## From the STEM Committee

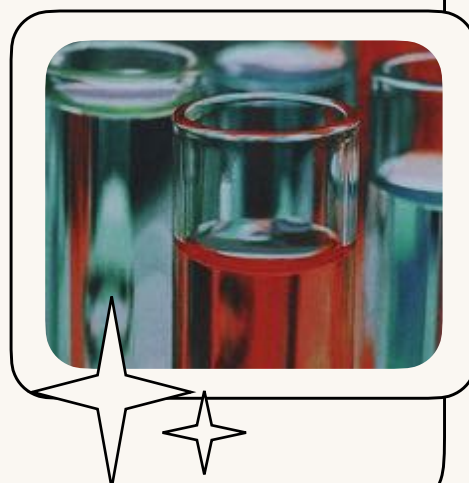
As a new committee, we are extremely excited to spread our love for STEM across the school this year! At the start of October, we commenced by celebrating World Space Week (October 4th-10th). We were buzzing for this as it was our first event - ever! At lunch, we showed videos about the importance of space research and how subjects, like physics and maths, heavily contribute to these studies. We also sent out emails and put up posters around the school, throughout the week, full of space facts and information to hopefully garner more interest in this field!

Maths Week was on the 16th-24th of October which unfortunately ran through our October exams. But, as a mini event for the 6th years, we raffled off 6 sets of Maths ReviseWise revision books in an intense lottery. Congrats to all the winners! From the 8th to 12th of November, the highly anticipated Science Week was celebrated where we honoured all branches of science. We had events every day at lunch, to ensure there was something for everyone!

On Monday, we were able to chat with many scientists online from all over the world to get an insight of what they study - for example; biochemistry, genetics and neuroscience. On Tuesday, videos on genetics were shown in our Biology lab at lunch. On Thursday, flame tests were conducted with the help of our Chemistry teacher and on Friday, we held a paper plane competition in honour of Physics!

Just recently, a computer science event was held for Computer Science Week (6th-10th December). Some volunteers from our 6th Year Computer Science class explained and demonstrated how to create really fun mini-games with micro-bits, which they do as part of the Leaving Cert course. We're hoping many TYs take up Computer Science next year because as we all know, the future is technology!

Lastly, we'd just like to say that we are extremely looking forward to sharing our love for science again next year with many more exciting events, so stay tuned!



## From the Social Awareness Committee

In November we held a Breast cancer awareness day. This was in order to provide support for a charity that we know, like many others, have suffered big losses throughout the pandemic. They provide very important services for thousands of women in Ireland every year. We sold badges, ribbons and key chains from Breast cancer Ireland and with amazing kindness from the whole school, managed to raise €478. There was a great atmosphere throughout the school as many wore something pink to show their support.

In December we organised our annual shoe box appeal. We encouraged students to fill a shoe box with lots of goodies to send away to a child who may not be receiving any presents this year due to poverty. Many students took part and contributed what they could. The shoe boxes are currently on their way to children in need.

Throughout this month our 4th year committee reps also organised a collection for St.Vincent De Paul. They sold lovely Sion Hill scarfs within the school and all proceeds went to SVP in order to help families struggling this Christmas.



## From the Mind, Body and Soul Committee

The MBS committee have had a very positive start to this year! (Spreading cheer is not just a Christmas event! )

Stand-Up week was widely celebrated in the school in November. A huge thank you to the 6th year Politics and Society group who decided to play music at lunch for the whole week in conjunction with MBS. A PositiviTEA group and kicked off stand up week with the topic "Queer Representation in Media". There was a great turnout and the MBS committee are looking forward to attending PositivTEA events in the future.

The MBS Committee also placed notes with encouraging and positive messages on students' lockers to inspire kindness and support in the school during Anti-Bullying week. The MBS Committee are keen to keep these positive vibes going throughout the year and organize plenty more events for the students of Sion Hill !





## From the Environment Committee

This year the environment committee is working hard and has held a number of meetings with great participation and enthusiasm shown by its members. We started the year off with a highly successful COW/WOW day in which students were encouraged to walk, cycle, or scoot to school. Since then we have continued to plan events and have met our lovely committee members who brought great ideas to the table.

Compost bins have been distributed to all the eating areas for the different year groups and the staff room. Members have designed new posters to clarify what goes in to each bin.

Having already been awarded eight flags, (Litter & Waste, Energy, Water, Travel, Biodiversity, Global Citizenship Litter & Waste, Global Citizenship Energy, Global Citizenship Marine Environment), the committee is currently working to secure the Green Schools Global Citizenship Travel flag.

We also have five students who have been chosen to be ambassadors for the “#andshecycles” campaign run by Green Schools. They have already attended two training sessions via zoom and are very enthusiastic about their role.



## Cookery Club

Cooking club takes place on Tuesday after school in the Home Economics kitchen. So far, we have cooked a range of sweet and savoury dishes. We baked chocolate chip cookies, chocolate brownies, and muffins. Furthermore, we prepared and cooked pasta dishes, sausage rolls and cheese stuffed burgers. It is a great opportunity to learn new life skills and have some fun along the way! Among the skills being developed are: organisational skills; time management skills; chopping skills; creativity skills and health and safety procedures while working in the kitchen.



# Transition Year

Transition Year's have had a busy year so far. In September they started the year with a day trip to Causey Farm. They did a variety of activities including baking brown bread, ceili dancing, a bog walk and feeding farm animals.

During Spirit Week TY's had an activity day where they played team games and did an orienteering treasure hunt around Blackrock.



Think Languages in November was another great day for TY's – it was a day to celebrate different cultures and learn new languages. We welcomed Rikako and her team to teach our students about Japanese culture. Students learned a traditional Japanese dance and had the chance to try on traditional Japanese clothing including Yukata and Kimono.

Workshops that the Transition Years have enjoyed so far this year include making bodhrans with "Handcrafted Bodhrans", investigating the JFK assassination with "Forensic Fun" and hair styling with "Routine Hair".

Guest speakers have included Olivia Carpenter from Breast Cancer Ireland and Dr Niamh Shaw who spoke about space exploration. Another speaker was author Stephen Kiernan who spoke about his book Brilliant Mondays, How Ordinary People Achieve Extraordinary Things.

Nearly all students have been working to complete the Bronze Gaisce Award. Students must complete 13 weeks of community work, personal skill and physical recreation. They must also hike 25km over 2 days.

In September students received their Junior Cert Profile of Achievement Certificates. It was great to celebrate all the hard work they put into the studies from 1st to 3rd Year. Students were treated to a 99 from Teddy's ice cream.



All Transition Years completed a week of work experience in November. It was a highlight for many. Students found their own placements and workplaces included primary schools, creches, solicitors, offices, café's, restaurants, retail outlets.

Some other projects that Transition Years have participated in include writing and recording a radio show for Blackrock College Radio. They have been helping primary school children in a Reading Buddy programme with Kinia. The Fashion module spear headed a Christmas Clearout campaign. It was organised to promote and encourage sustainable clothing and was all in aid of a good cause - the St Vincent de Paul. The Religion classes worked together to collect winter accessories and non perishable goods which were donated to Cross Care in Dun Laoghaire. They also hosted a small coffee morning and raised €100.

Every Tuesday afternoon all Transition Years are timetabled for a variety of activities. So far this year they have completed a scavenger hunt, photography competition, and a games afternoon. They relaxed for an afternoon of mindful colouring and even ventured to Dun Laoghaire to walk the east pier. Students did 2 online course – one to prepare for work experience called *Get Safe – Work Safe: Health and Safety in the Workplace for Students Starting Work*. They also completed the Concussion Coach education course.



In the final weeks all student had a chance to try yoga, flower arranging and cookery.

DOMINICAN COLLEGE  
SION HILL'S  
PRODUCTION OF

DISNEY'S  
**THE LITTLE MERMAID**

COMING  
IN 2022

A TRANSITION  
YEAR  
PRODUCTION

MUSIC BY  
ALAN MENKEN

BOOK BY  
DOUG WRIGH

LYRICS BY  
HOWARD ASHMAN  
& GLENN SLATER

BASED ON THE HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN STORY AND THE  
DISNEY FILM PRODUCED BY HOWARD ASHMAN & JOHN  
MUSKER AND WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY JOHN MUSKER AND  
RON CLEMENTS

ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY DISNEY THEATRICAL  
PRODUCTIONS

## Musical

Sion Hill Transition Year students will stage a production of 'The Little Mermaid' in the New Year. Rehearsals began after a month of auditions in September and are well under way. The Musical Team, the teachers co-ordinating different aspects of the show and the students are all working hard to ensure the show will be a big success. Every Transition Year student is involved whether it be on the stage, backstage, in costumes or in marketing. The whole school community is delighted to have music, drama and dance ringing through the corridors once again!



# Sports



First year hockey teams are starting to play some great matches and recently hosted a fun hockey blitz in the school.

The Junior Hockey team is delighted to be back in training. They train once a week after school and have improved lots since September. The matches are very enjoyable and are so important for team building.

Our Senior A team have really enjoyed being back out on the hockey pitch. They have enjoyed some very competitive matches in Leinster League, division 1A. They have played two matches in the league so far, with two great team performances against Loreto Balbriggan and Loreto Dalkey. They have also really enjoyed playing in the Dublin South League, playing their first match in this league and had a great win over Our Ladies Grove.

Our Senior B team is in Leinster League, division 3, this year. They have started off the season extremely well with a tight match against Mount Sackville and with a very impressive win against the High School.

Our Senior 3rd team are entered into the Leinster League, 4th division and have had two league matches this season against Loreto Beaufort and with a great win against Loreto Foxrock.

We also just wanted to say a big thank you to all of our hockey coaches, who have put so much time and effort into getting hockey up and running again this year.

The hockey teams are all doing extremely well in their leagues and have all had great team performances and are looking forward to more competitive matches in the New Year.

Basketball is back! The sounds of squeaky shoes and swishes of the net is music to our ears. The girls are working really hard even though the results have not always gone our way. But we are very upbeat and proud of the effort that everyone has put into this season. The wins will start to come as we become a better and stronger team. Our last result was a 38-32 win versus New Park. It has been a long two years and everyone is happy to be on the court playing competitive basketball again.



*"We have all improved and are more confident with playing basketball thanks to the help of our coaches. We have learned where and what the positions are and how to block players in the opposite team. I want to say thank-you to the coaches for making basketball a fun sport to be involved in"* **Foteini Goulara, 1<sup>st</sup> Year**

Congratulations to our basketball Coach, Jay Fazande, who earlier this term was inducted into Fordham Athletic Hall of Fame.



## Cairde Programme

The 6th years hosted a wonderful party for their CAIRDE in First year. The sun was shining and the hot chocolate was flowing .

The students all enjoyed the Christmas tunes and a fun dance-off was had. Everyone left in high spirits. A big thank you to all involved.

## Christmas Carols

Our choirs were delighted to brave the cold weather to sing Christmas carols for the Dominican Sisters at Sion Hill Convent this week. Many thanks to all involved in organising such a special event.

