



DOMINICAN COLLEGE SION HILL

NEWSLETTER - OCTOBER 2024

Welcome

Welcome to our first Newsletter for the Academic Year 2024/2025. The varied content of this Newsletter offers a glimpse of what a Sion Hill education offers. Our mission statement guides all that we do in our school and the numerous activities outlined here are a testament to this vision being lived daily in our school.

Every school year brings significant change. We congratulate our class of 2024 on their excellent Leaving Certificate results and wish them well in their new adventures. Our current first years have settled into school very well with the support of their tutors and year heads. We look forward to working with them over the coming years.

Student Leadership opportunities are widespread in our school. Our Leadership committees are led by our 6th year Ceannairí and have representatives from 1st to 5th year. The work done by these committees throughout the year plays a huge part in promoting academic success, wellbeing and participation. Although student led, these committees are all mentored, trained and guided by teacher volunteers and we thank these teachers for their invaluable support.

As always, we have a broad range of extra-curricular opportunities available for all students. The variety of activities available means that there is something suited to each pupil. We encourage students to get as involved as possible. Participation in extra-curricular activities develops a wide range of skills and promotes friendships. On your behalf, I thank the very large number of staff who offer their time to make these opportunities available to our students.

At our recent opening mass, Monsignor O'Carroll spoke of the importance and privilege of education. This newsletter highlights the truth of these words. Through numerous activities, our school community continues to support charities and events that promote values of peace, understanding, forgiveness and love. In these troubled times, these values are more important than ever.

Kind regards

Orla Condren

Principal



Academic Awards

Our Academic Awards took place on 10th October. At this event, we acknowledge the students who achieved the highest grades in the Summer Examinations. We congratulate all students who received awards. Particular congratulations to Sophie Dyball (4th year) who achieved the highest marks in the Junior Cycle Examinations and to Sinéad Cullen and Prachi Agrawal (class of 2024) who both scored maximum points in their Leaving Certificate Examinations. We were delighted to welcome Prachi, Sinéad and their parents back to our school for the awards ceremony. Both students delivered inspiring speeches to the gathered audience. Their speeches highlighted the importance of a consistent and balanced approach to studies and acknowledged the invaluable input of their teachers.



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





Alive Club

The ALIVE club is a Global awareness club that raises funds for various charities based in the Developing world whilst educating and informing our students on the inequalities that exist in our world. The club meets bi-weekly, with over forty members from across every year! This term the club is busy prepping for their annual 'Coin Race' which will be held on December 6th. Every student will be collecting copper coins in aid of their class attempt to win the Coin Race Trophy! You can see how much fun we had at the last Coin Race here. All proceeds are in aid of GOAL – an international humanitarian response agency.



Mass

On the 10th of October we celebrated our Opening School Mass in Booterstown Parish Church. All staff and students were welcomed at the Mass and we were delighted also to have past pupils and members of the wider community join us. The mass was entirely student led, with the exception of Monsignor O'Carroll, of course! Sion Hill students acted as readers, gift-bearers, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers and ushers as nearly 600 people squeezed into the pews. There was plenty of music to be heard during the liturgy which was provided by the Junior and Senior Choirs, accompanied by the school orchestra and their music teachers, Ms. O'Keeffe and Ms. Wallace. The students who travelled to Lourdes in September had an opportunity to address the entire school and we also had the commissioning of the committees ceremony.



Personal Development

The students of Sion Hill proudly present the first team of students to lead the area of Personal Development. This team of students volunteer across all 6 years to raise awareness about mental health, sexual and reproductive health, staying safe, bullying and other areas of personal development we all go through! We hope that having student representation in this area, that we can lean on each other and create a safe and social environment for all Sion Hill students. Our first task is to dedicate a space to notify everyone of the work we are doing behind the scenes! Keep an eye out for notice board coming soon!





Leadership Awards

Our leadership awards were held in September. Our 6th year Ceannairí for 2024/25 were presented with their badges. Committee members from 1st to 5th year were announced by the Ceannairí and presented with their badges. We wish

all of our student leaders every success in their roles and we look forward to the positive impact they will have on school life.





School Spirit Day

We had our annual School Spirit Day on September 20th which saw each year group going on a different tour or activity. 1st Years stayed in Blackrock and participated in a number of fun team-building activities. 2nd Years had a 'flipping' great time in Jump zone and Croke Park. 3rd Years played a blinder when they visited Footie in Tallaght and our TY students completed their Gaisce hike. 5th and 6th Years had a rollercoaster of a day in Emerald Park. There were lots of smiling faces getting off the buses when everyone arrived back to school.



Lourdes

A number of 6th year students had the opportunity to travel to Lourdes in early September as helpers with the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage. They were accompanied by their wonderful teacher, Ms. Seery and got an opportunity to catch up with two past pupils, who traveled on the pilgrimage last year and returned as 'white shirts'. One of the five students who traveled this year, Ailish Mae Navarro, reflects on her experience here. "Lourdes was a magical experience, helping and serving the pilgrims filled our hearts with joy. Our spirits were lifted and the faith of the volunteers representing Sion Hill on the Dublin Diocese Pilgrimage has never been stronger. Getting to know all the pilgrims, blue shirts and white shirts will always and forever hold special places in our hearts. We would recommend this experience to anyone and we would do it again if we could!"



Art Club

The Red Stairs Art Club, founded in 2002 was initially created for Sion Hill pupils who did not select art as an academic subject, to give them an opportunity to showcase their talents. Art club promoted and inspired students in pursuit of creative arts. Now, over two decades later, the art club welcomes students from all years, including art students. It has become a place where many can relax, chat and indulge in all the art room's variety of facilities and supplies. Every pupil is encouraged to develop their individual artistic talent. The club is run by Sion Hills art teacher, Mr.Glynn, every Wednesday after school and a selection of the Art Works created in the club are displayed prominently and proudly around our school.



From the Arts Committee

The Arts Committee represents and advocates for both the creative and performing arts. In this committee pupils are encouraged to share various ideas for school events. The Arts Committee in Sion Hill promotes creativity across a broad range of disciplines, including but not limited to; poetry, crafting, performance and design. Through-out the years the committee has hosted several art and design competitions during Halloween and other Holiday periods, as well as collaborating a huge amount during school musicals. So far this year's plans include; involvement in Stand Up Awareness week during November, the Christmas x-factor competition in December and many others soon to be revealed!



Open Evening

Sion Hill opened its doors to the community once again for our annual Open Evening on September 24th. We welcomed primary school students along with their families to come see our school, get a taste for the subjects and explore our ever-expanding extracurricular timetable. Our first year students acted as tour guides and did a fantastic job, given that they were still settling in themselves at that point! A huge number of students from all years participated in the event and worked hard to host a very successful Open Evening.



Biology Trip

5th year Biology students carried out their ecology study in Airfield on October 9th. The weather wasn't the best but the rain didn't dampen their spirits. In the words of one 5th year student, Anna Jacob, "Personally, I enjoyed this field trip because I learned about the ecosystems in a more interactive way. This was a fun experience because I did it with my friends and the activities they had prepared for us were engaging. I had fun catching the different insects and seeing them up close. The instructors were very friendly and enthusiastic to help. Overall, it was an enjoyable trip despite the poor weather."





From the Library Committee

Hi, Brooke and Rahmiela from the library committee here!

We elected our new committee members a few weeks ago. We have already had a meeting where we talked about some events the library committee will be holding throughout the school year!

This year the library will be open everyday at lunch time for students to come in and take out a book to read. We also have a new Librarian who can help out with any questions you have. We want to extend a warm welcome to him in Sion Hill!

Over Christmas time we are planning to do a Christmas book swap shop where students can bring in books and swap them around with each other.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our events throughout the year!

Chess Club

The Chess Club made their opening moves this year and meets every Tuesday at lunchtime in S8. All are welcome, both beginners and more seasoned players. There may be opportunities to enter competitions too so watch this space for upcoming chess news. Molly Askins and Abigail Strimbu in 2nd Year have been members of the chess club for a couple of years and praise the club saying "Chess is an amazing experience in multiple ways. It is an opportunity to challenge yourself, have fun with your friends and learn new chess techniques. It is also a chance to let go of your stress and be free from school work. It is a wonderful club to be at during lunchtime."



CARA 'Meet and Greet'

Each year our 6th year students are assigned to first year students as CARAs. They will meet regularly throughout the school year and hold events together. On the 10th of September they met for the first time and were put into groups where they got to know each other and they had lots of fun. 6th Years also organised a spooky surprise halloween treat for their CARAs on October 15th. The 6th years are great role models for our 1st year students and we look forward to the year ahead.





Athletics

The athletics season has got off to a flying start with our athletes braving the conditions and competition of Cross Country. In the lead up to our forthcoming East Leinster Championships, the Athletics team competed in the Clonliffe Harriers Cross Country Open. The minor team finished a very respectable 4th in the team standings, not bad for their first competition! The junior and intermediate teams also had solid races. However, it was the Senior team who topped off a great day by getting Bronze in the team standings.



History Trip

Our third year History students had a great morning when they visited the Irish Famine Memorial and the Jeanie Johnson Famine ship at Custom House Quay on Thursday the 3rd of October. The tour of the ship was very enjoyable but also very moving. The students learned of the kindness and great medical care that the ship's Doctor, Richard Blennerhassett, showed to the unfortunate people who crossed the Atlantic on the Jeanie Johnson to escape the ravages of The Great Famine. Unlike the other ships that transported the desperate people at the time of the Famine, the Jeanie Johnson had a courageous and humane Doctor on board whose experience and medical knowledge kept the passengers safe from disease and starvation on the trans-Atlantic voyages. The ship's captain James Attridge,

like Dr Blennerhassett, had a professional and humane attitude to the people who were in his care. In all, over 2,500 people escaped the Great Famine or emigrated in later years on board the Jeanie Johnson, including a heavily pregnant young woman named Margaret O'Reilly who was allowed on board even though no other ship's captain would take her. Her baby was born on the voyage (mother and baby survived) and the baby was named after all of the crew of the ship, to honour the crew who had saved him. Uniquely, the Jeanie Johnson never lost a single passenger in all of the 16 trips she made crossing the Atlantic between 1847 and 1965. It was an unforgettable day for the students and the weather even held up!





Hockey

Hockey is off to a great start this year. We have six school squads for friendlies and Leinster league and cup matches.

- 2 x 1st year teams
- 2 x Minor (2nd years) teams
- 1 x Junior team (3rd & 4th years)
- 1 x Senior team (4th/5th/6th years)

Hockey is available to all abilities. The 1st years are currently playing 8-a-side on half a pitch. They progress to a full pitch in January. Huge thanks to the TY pupils that help with the 1st year coaching on Fridays.

Congratulations to the following 2024-25 captains.

- Senior - Eva Kelly & Aoileann Monaghan
- Junior - Grace Whelan, Annette Ditizio, and Rafaela Batista.

Captains for 1st years and Minors will be assigned soon.

We have had wins, losses and draws. The most recent Senior league match was on Wednesday 16th October. The Seniors played with super enthusiasm and teamwork and won 2-0.

Please remind players to check the sports notice board for hockey training and matches. The weekly schedule is always there ahead of the week and it is also sent to parents and guardians on VS Ware. If a player cannot make training she should email Emma.meir@sionhillcollege.ie.



From the Mind Body and Soul Committee

The Mind Body and Soul committee in Sion Hill aims to promote mental health and well-being throughout the school. In September, two members from each year were elected onto the committee and since then we have all met and discussed various ideas and plans we have for the school year. We decided to plan 3 events for the upcoming year and we brainstormed in our first session and came up with some amazing idea. We are currently planning our first whole-school event, positivityTEA, in which students can bring in a mug and enjoy a cup of warm tea at lunch time as the colder weather begins to come in!





Crystal Clear Project

Rebecca O'Dwyer & Chrissy Berna Rex Ignatius from Second Year have been working on a citizen science project with Ms. Kaye called 'Crystal Clear'. As part of the project the students grew eco-friendly crystals that when squeezed can generate electricity! Piezoelectrics are used in electric toothbrushes & even satellites. The project aims to help students learn about the process of growing green alternatives to materials made with lead which damage our environment.



Maths Club

Maths club has kicked off with Ms. Donohoe every Tuesday at lunch time in T4.2. Maths club involves activities such as games, puzzles, quizzes and investigations, maths trails and problem-solving challenges. It is a great opportunity for students who are interested in Maths to further develop their skills in an engaging setting.

Our school hosted the first round of the Mathematics Olympiad. Six students from our school were invited to the Mathematics enrichment classes held in UCD based off their scores in this round. From these enrichment classes a team will be created to represent Ireland in the next Olympiad!

We have also hosted The Maggie Gough Maths Competition which is an online competition which tests the problem-solving skills of Junior and Senior Cycle students. It is named after the first known Irish woman to receive a PhD in Mathematics – Maggie Gough (Sr Mary de Lellis Gough).

We will be hosting a lot more competition throughout the year so please get involved!



Ember Team

The Ember Team have been busy this term welcoming new members, reading weekly reflections and organizing the Opening School Mass. We also had the opportunity for some TYs to begin training as Eucharistic Ministers again.





Coiste na Gaeilge

Seoladh Coiste na Gaeilge don scoilbhliain 2024/2025. Bunaíodh an coiste den chéad uair i mbliana agus ‘sí aidhm an choiste ná an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn sa scoil. Tógadh ceannairí an choiste agus cuireadh tús leis an gCiorcal Comhrá, a bhíonn ar siúl gach Luan ag am Ióin.

Debate Club



Our senior debaters got off to a great start at the first UCD Leinster Mace Debates on Wednesday the 2nd of October. Two Sion Hill teams of two competed - Alisha Brennan and Florence Ji, and Tamara Bulat and Avishi Singhal. All of the debaters said the experience was fantastic, with lots of fun and stiff competition. Alisha and Florence won their debate (we knew they would!). Congratulations to everyone who competed and looking forward to the next debate evening!

Congratulations also to all of our debaters who competed in the Leinster trials for the Irish Debating Team recently. Although none of our debaters made it onto Team Ireland, they all said the experience was really worthwhile. They showed real courage and interest in competing in the trials which involved all the well established debating schools in Leinster.

Janet Li and Camila Rodriguez will be competing in the Junior Mace debate coming up on the 26th October next in Clonkeen College. We wish them every success and a great day of debating!

From the Environment Committee

In the environment committee we try to promote high standards to our peers to make sure we reuse, reduce and recycle as much waste as possible. We are currently standing with 10 green flags and striving to receive another one next year! We are busy planning our annual WOW (walk on Wednesday) and COW (cycle on Wednesdays), not to forget our Christmas ornament competition. Make sure to check the next newsletter to see how our events turn out. In Sion Hill we try our best to reduce the amount of paper and plastic we use daily and we recently placed new signs on all the bins highlighting what type of waste goes where. We hope to make our school a greener and better place.

Year Heads 2024/25

Year	Year Head	e-mail
1st	Ms Gráinne Clarke	grainne.clarke@sionhillcollege.ie
2nd	Ms Gillian Kaye	gillian.kaye@sionhillcollege.ie
3rd	Ms Aoife McLoughlin (surnames A to L) Ms Anne O'Reilly (surnames M to Z)	aoife.mcloughlin@sionhillcollege.ie anne.oreilly@sionhillcollege.ie
4th	Ms Sarah Canning (4 Amber & 4 Diamond) Ms Sarah Sherlock (4 Opal & 4 Sapphire)	sarah.canning@sionhillcollege.ie sarah.sherlock@sionhillcollege.ie
5th	Ms Nicola Wallace	nicola.wallace@sionhillcollege.ie
6th	Ms Emer O'Keeffe	emer.okeeffe@sionhillcollege.ie



FILM CLUB

The Film Club is one of the many extracurricular activities being run this year. Film Club is run biweekly with students from all years joining. There is a junior club for 1st – 3rd years and a senior club for 4th – 6th years. The students get to vote on what films they would like to watch at each meeting. We meet for an hour after school on a Wednesday to watch and discuss the chosen film. The Junior Film club had their second meeting this month and they watched 'Jojo Rabbit'. The Seniors are looking forward to their turn as they have picked 'Sleepy Hollow', a ghostly adventure just before the midterm!

VShare

VShare is our school's administration software and is our main method of communication with parents and guardians. It is also used to manage attendance, review termly reports, grant permissions for trips away and make payments to the school. Please ensure that you have access to this platform using the VShare app. It can be downloaded.

For Android devices: Visit the Google Play Store on your device and search for 'VShare'.

For iOS devices (Apple): Visit the App Store on your device and search for 'VShare. Tap 'Install'.

Alternatively, you can use the QR codes provided here.

If you have already downloaded and an update is available, you can tap 'Update' instead.

When setting up, please allow for push notifications. This way you will be alerted when a message is sent to you.

If you are having any issues setting up or accessing VShare, please contact the school office.



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SCAN ME



To read our parent/guardian user guides, visit support.vshare.ie/parent-app-overview

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Every Day Counts!

As a school we recognise the importance of good attendance for all students. The support of parents and guardians in promoting good attendance is essential.

Parents/Guardians are asked

- To support the school's Attendance Strategy in compliance with their legal responsibilities (Education Welfare Act 2000)
- To ensure regular and punctual attendance of students and avoid unnecessary absences.
- To provide a written explanation for any student absence (using VShare)
- To inform the school in advance of any planned absences from school
- To provide the school with reliable contact telephone numbers and alternative 'emergency' numbers.
- To acknowledge and, where necessary, reply to communications from the school in relation to attendance issues.
- To arrange, where possible, all elective appointments for after school or during school holidays.
- Signing in and out of school: Any student arriving late must sign in at the Office. Any student who needs to leave school early must sign out before departure and sign in again if returning to school on the same day

If you need support with promoting good attendance for your child, please contact the school.

