



16th November 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We trust this letter finds you all well. We are reaching out to update you on various aspects relating to our school.

Term 1 Review

The initial eleven weeks of the 2023-2024 school year have been remarkable successful. We are impressed with how swiftly our students have adopted positive routines and healthy habits. From punctuality and adherence to our dress code to active participation in lessons, their commitment has set a high standard. These commendable habits will undoubtedly contribute to sustained academic success over the upcoming weeks and months. Should you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality, please feel free to contact your child's tutor for support. While we maintain high expectations, we are always here to collaborate with you in addressing any emerging issues.

Please also speak to your child regarding our extra and co-curricular programme (available to view on our website under 'Our School'). We have twenty-four clubs and activities on offer to students across lunchtimes and after school. Such a dynamic programme is testament to the commitment of our amazing teachers who volunteer to lead these clubs at no additional cost to parents. If your child has not yet engaged with any of these clubs, regardless of what year group they are in, please do encourage them to give a new club/sport a try. There is very solid international and national research (ESRI *Growing up in Ireland* study) that highlight how student participation in lunchtime and/or after school clubs boosts engagement and student sense of belonging, which overall is a strong predictor of more positive student outcomes across the six years of second-level education.

Open Day & Admissions

Thanks to all parents and students involved on our Open Day on Saturday 7th October. The day was a huge success with over 500 families touring our campus and learning about the learning experiences on offer in our school. On the day, a number of prospective parents commented on our positive community spirit and the strong sense that we are all building something very special, together. The huge interest in our school has also been reflected in demand for places for First Year 2024-2025. We have 90 places available and have received over 350 applications. It is clear that we are fast becoming the school of choice for families in our local area. We have not reached this point in our school's development by accident and it is testament to the work, engagement and commitment of all stakeholders. Particularly, we would like to thank all parents for firstly campaigning for our school, then advocating for our school, continuously supporting our school and being so giving of your time, skills, expertise etc.

Innovation Academy Partnership

As we all know, the world is changing at an unparalleled rate and many of your children will go on to work in jobs that don't yet exist. In HCETSS, as educators, we feel a responsibility to develop students with an innovative mindset and the resilience to adapt. In 2022-2023, we were delighted to become the first and only secondary school in Ireland to forge a formal partnership with UCD's Innovation Academy. In 2023-2024, this relationship has continued to go from strength to strength with more of our teachers engaging in the Innovation Academy's Post Graduate Diploma in Creativity & Innovation for Education. In addition to this, our Transition Year students have been invited to a bespoke student workshop in the Innovation Academy's Maker Space in Term 2. The Innovation Academy have also committed to supporting the development of our first Leaving Certificate Established Programme by facilitating a staff collaboration day in Term 3. We are very appreciative of our Board of Management for supporting our students and staff with this one-of-a-kind partnership.

Student Behaviour in our Local Area

Regrettably, we have received concerns from Leinster Place residents about the behaviour of a small number of our students. Leinster Place is located directly behind Centra on Harold's Cross Road accessible via an alleyway adjacent to Centra. Behaviours reported to us include students leaning and sitting on cars, blocking pedestrians in the alleyway, littering and refusing to move on when asked to by neighbours. Such behaviours are clearly not in line with our Code of Positive Behaviour, our shared school values and your own expectations of your children. If your child does need to access Leinster Place in order to get into or get home from school, please speak to them and explain that they need to move through the area and must not congregate. Similarly, if your child does not need to access this area on their way to or from school, please ask them to simply avoid the area altogether. Residents have also contacted our community guard and we expect a Garda presence around Leinster Place over the coming days and weeks. As a school of and for our local community, we wish to enhance our local area and to never impact negatively on our neighbours right to safety and enjoyment of their environs. We thank you for your support with this important matter.

TikTok "Borrowing" Challenge

It has been brought to our attention that there is currently a TikTok trend across Dublin where teenagers are encouraged to record themselves shoplifting items from shops and then posting images/videos on TikTok of items they have stolen. Users can evade TikTok content filters by swapping the phrases "stealing" and "shoplifting" for "borrowing". Please discuss this with your child to ensure they understand the legal and ethical consequences of such actions.

Vaping

As you may be aware, Dáil Eireann has recently passed legislation to ban vaping products being sold to under 18s. The Public Health (Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Bill passed all stages of the legislative process in the Dáil and the Bill will now proceed to the Seanad. It is hoped that this legislation will make it more difficult for teenagers to purchase and use harmful vaping devices. The evidence review by the Health Research Board published earlier this year, found a strong association between smoking cigarettes and e-cigarette use. Teenagers who experimented with e-cigarettes were five times more likely to becoming cigarette smokers and see their lifespans shorten by between 10 and 15 years as a result. We encourage you to discuss this area with your child particularly the health implications, addictive properties of nicotine and potential damage to adolescent hearts and lungs. Please note that possession or use of a vape in our school is an immediate suspension. Any student found to be sharing a cubicle toilet with another student will also result in an

immediate suspension. All students will be reminded of our clear expectations around this area in our student assemblies over the coming days.

Chewing Gum

A reminder that our school is a chewing gum-free campus, for both staff and students.

Spanish Inspection

On Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th October, we had our first Spanish Subject Inspection. The Inspector evaluated subject provision and whole-school support, teaching, learning and assessment and planning and preparation. We expect to receive the Inspection Report sometime in the new year and this will then be shared with all members of our school community. The informal feedback highlighted:

- Provision for Spanish is very good (260 hours Junior Cycle).
- Modern Foreign Language is compulsory for all year groups in line with Department of Education guidelines.
- Highly effective extra and co-curricular programme that supports the teaching of Spanish.
- Our staff Learning Community is an excellent platform for sharing best practice.
- Praise for culture and atmosphere around school, within student focus group and within Spanish lessons.
- Excellent collaborative culture amongst staff.
- High levels of student engagement and evidence of student-centred learning.
- Spanish department plan very detailed and well laid out.
- Significant work completed on our L2LP Spanish programme.

A huge well done to our teachers of Spanish, Laura and Caoimhe who managed the entire process in an exemplary fashion.

Junior Cycle Results

On Wednesday 18th October, our Transition Year students received their state examinations results. Not only were these, the first set of State Examination results which they students received but they were also for us as a school, our first ever set of State Examination results. Congratulations to all of our Transition Years for an outstanding set of results. We commend their hard work and resilience. We are so very proud of this particular group of students who navigated the move from primary to secondary school at the height of a global pandemic, who have bonded as a year group in spite of social distancing and base class separation for all of Year 1 as well as having to engage in remote learning for over three months in 2021. We look forward to presenting them with their Junior Cycle Profiles of Achievement (JCPAs) later this term.

Food Village

Our student lunchtime experience has been greatly enhanced this year with the introduction of Food Village who supply a range of healthy, nutritious and affordable lunches to our students, Monday to Thursday each week. Please ensure that if your child wishes to avail of this service, they must have their fob with them in order to collect pre-ordered food. Any students who do not have their fob need to wait in a separate queue at lunchtime as without a fob, the Food Village member of staff needs to access their order on a separate database to confirm and process the purchase. No students are permitted to use the Food Village app on their phones at lunchtime and any phones on display at break or lunchtimes will be confiscated.

Student Journal

Our student journals are a highly effective way for your child/children to take responsibility for their learning by recording all homework tasks, assigned project work etc. As part of our Regulated Classroom routines, all students are required to have their journal on their desk at the start of every lesson. Please note that the student cost of replacing any mislaid journal is €15 so please remind your child/children to write their name and base class on their journal and to keep it safe and accessible.

Admin Charge

The recent OECD report 'Education at a Glance 2022' once again ranked Ireland in last place out of 36 countries for investment in second-level education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). In 2019, the year analysed in the OECD report, Ireland invested 1 per cent of GDP in second-level education compared to the OECD and EU averages of 1.9 per cent. In addition, voluntary secondary schools receive a significantly lower proportion of funding from the State and, as a result, are more reliant on annual contributions and fundraising. Despite this, nothing has been done to address the inequitable funding of schools in the voluntary secondary sector with the equalisation process, already conceded by Government, still not initiated.

Our administration charge for this academic year is €150 per child. This charge covers such items as 24 hour student insurance, lockers, locks, various subject materials, Office 365 licences, V's ware subscription, Schoolwise subscription, School App, Website costs, web-text, telephone, photocopying and administration charges. We are very grateful to all parents who have paid this charge. If you have not yet had an opportunity to pay this charge, we would greatly appreciate if you could contact Alex, at your earliest convenience and in confidence at office@hcetss.ie to arrange a payment schedule that works for you.

Annual Contribution

As highlighted above, our school is not funded to a level which enables us to flourish and plan for our future. Simply put, the capitation grant that we receive from the state does not even cover the bare minimum required for heating, lighting, security, cleaning, water & bin charges, broadband and communications, insurance, maintenance contracts and ICT.

It is your annual contribution which has enabled us to purchase outdoor furniture including our outdoor canopy and 35 picnic tables and 25 benches, thus ensuring that your child/children have somewhere to sit at break and lunchtimes. Your contributions have also helped us to purchase sports equipment to help us offer a wide range of athletics activities and music equipment to support the teaching of music as well as music clubs/activities and also our first school musical. Please note that the Department of Education do not provide funding for any of these items.

We are grateful to our parents who have paid the €275 contribution as suggested by our Board of Management. If you have not yet had an opportunity to pay this contribution, we would really appreciate and urgently need your help to provide the second-level educational experience which your child/children require and very much deserve. If you are in a position to pay more, we would equally appreciate this to allow for parents who may not be in a position to contribute this amount.

Contributions are gratefully received via our school app via the school shop option. By donating €275.00 we can claim €130.00 approx. tax back from Revenue, so your very generous donation of €275 is actually worth €385 approx. to our school. Please liaise in confidence with Alex our school administrator around what exactly works best for you. We fully appreciate that every family's personal circumstances are different. Your ongoing financial support is essential to our continued success, always hugely valued and never taken for granted. Our Board of Management are working on an

infographic which we hope to share next week with all parents which highlights the annual running costs of our school and how much we need to break even.

Assessment Week

We have almost completed our first set of summative assessments this year. Well done to all students, particularly our First Year students for whom, this was their first set of formal house examinations at second level. Teachers will spend the coming weeks, outside of class-time, correcting assessments, preparing student feedback and writing reports for parents. We will notify you in two weeks approx. around the process and date on which you can access your child/children's results on Vs Ware. Once reports are published, we will focus on supporting your child/children to reflect on their assessments, identify what went well, help them to explore areas to improve and co-create with their teachers realistic SMART learning targets.

Upcoming Events & Dates for your Diary

PSA Committee Fundraiser Thursday 16th November (Tonight!)

No plans for tonight? Why not join the PSA for an amazing wine tasting fundraiser hosted by D-SIX on November 16th from 7.30pm to 9.30pm at Peggy Kelly's. This is a wine tasting event like you have never experienced. Spend two hours tasting over 40 different wines while sampling local cheese boards and charcuterie pairings. Take your palate on a culinary journey while supporting our school. A portion of the proceeds from each ticket and any additional donations will go towards the purchase of additional much needed outdoor school equipment. In addition to supporting our school, all tickets purchased will include an entry for a chance to win a wine hamper valued at over €200! Please purchase tickets ahead of time using this link: <https://gofund.me/ba244bcb>

A huge thanks to our dynamic and committed PSA Committee of parent volunteers who are working so hard to enhance the student experience in our school.

Stand-Up Week

We will celebrate Stand-Up week during the week of the 27th of November. This week will be an opportunity for our school community to take a stand against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. By raising awareness and showing our support, together, we can create spaces in our school and beyond where LGBTQ+ young people feel safe, equal and valued. Our Student Council will join with Harold's Cross Educate Together National School's Student Council to plan a number of campus events for that week culminating in a Pride March for both schools on Friday 1st December. This student-centred and student led event will be a true and powerful reflection of how we enable student participation in our school in an authentic and meaningful way.

Zeeko Parent Workshop

As the online world advances daily, Internet Safety becomes increasingly important to keep your child/children safe online. We are delighted to partner with Zeeko Education to provide bespoke Internet Safety Seminars to our Junior Cycle students, all staff and all parents. On Thursday 30th November, Zeeko Education will visit our school, facilitate student seminars and a staff workshop during the school day. Later that evening, they will present to all parents in an online session at 7.00pm. We will forward you the zoom link closer to the date but please do mark this date in your diary. The goals of these seminars are to empower your child/children through education to safely benefit from the Internet and technology, to engage students, teachers and parents to contribute to a positive online culture and to contribute positively to your child/children's mental health. Our parent

talk will not be recorded so we encourage all parents to attend so as to empower you how to support your child/children safely navigate the online world.

School Musical

We are so very excited about our upcoming musical. Whether you are a fan of 80's music or not, "Let's Hear It For The 80's" is an event not to be missed! The musical will take place from the 23rd to 25th of November in the Assumption Junior National School, Walkinstown. Tickets are on sale from Leonna and Amy in school as well as in our local Centra on Harold's Cross Road. Tickets cost €10 for students/OAPs and €15 for any other attendees. Family tickets for family of four (2 adults, 2 children) for €40. There are a limited number of tickets available and will be sold on a first-come-first-served basis. Tickets will be required for all patrons upon entry.

College Awareness Week & Parent Participation

We are running College Awareness Week from 11th to 15th of December and really need your help to make this week a success. We are looking for guest speakers to talk to the students across the four year groups from 8:45am-12:00pm on Friday 15th December about their own educational experiences at school/college/university/apprenticeship and their working life. It is great for our students to learn about different people's experiences. Whether your routes through formal education to employment were direct or circuitous, your stories and lived experiences will be hugely valuable to our students as they consider the different pathways open to them after second-level education. Each talk needs to be only 5 minutes in length. With students now starting to consider their options from an earlier age, we will rotate each year group around so that all students can access our talks. The session with each year group will last 30 minutes approx. so even if you are only available for one session, that would be a huge help to making this event wide and varied. If you are interested and available in taking part in this activity or have a link to anyone else who you may think would be interested, please contact Lorraine at lorrainegalvin@hcetss.ie.

Tutor Details

Group	Year Coordinator	Tutor
1A	Ciara Mealy	Gráinne McInerney
1B		Amy Kerins
1C		Shane Hynes
2A	Ger Vickery	Emily O' Dwyer
2B		Conor Halton
2C		Deirdre McGauran
3A	Laura Power	Amie Hughes
3B		Aideen Kinsella
3C		Leonna Condron

4A		Daniel Clark
4B	Claudia Murtagh	Niamh Small

All staff email addresses are fullname@hcetss.ie, e.g. ciaramealy@hcetss.ie

Thank you again for your continued support.

Kind regards,



Pádraig Conaty
Principal



Mick Heffernan
Deputy Principal