



Coláiste Pobail Acla

School Newsletter

December 2021

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Important Dates

- **22nd December**
 - Final day of term
- **6th January**
 - School reopens
- **27th January - 4th February**
 - Mock exams
- **14th - 18th February**
 - TY Work Experience
- **21st - 25th February**
 - Mid Term break
- **17th & 18th March**
 - School closed
- **21st - 25th March**
 - TY Work Experience
- **4th - 8th April**
 - 5th year Work Experience
- **8th April**
 - Final day of term
- **25th April**
 - School reopens
- **2nd May**
 - May Bank Holiday
- **3rd June**
 - School closes for summer holidays
- **8th June**
 - State Exams begin



Principal's Message

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the Christmas issue of the Coláiste Pobail Acla Newsletter, our first since December 2019. Our staff and students have been very busy this term, as is evident in this newsletter.

I would like to thank parents/guardians for your support and commitment to the work of the school during this term. I would also like to acknowledge the support and work of our Board of Management. Our Board members give generously of their time and expertise to support and enhance the essential work of the school.

Last September, we were all shocked and saddened to hear of the tragic passing of our 2nd year student Joseph McGinty. This was a very difficult time for all our school community. We remember Joe fondly and we are keeping his family and friends in our thoughts.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank staff and students for all their hard work this term and to wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Paul Fahy
Principal (Acting)

Student Voice Committee

The newly formed Student Voice Committee comprises of a group of students from first to sixth year who meet regularly throughout the year to express their views and opinions on various aspects of school life.

Minutes from the meetings are recorded and brought back to management who then take opinions and suggestions into account with regards to the organisation and management of the school.

Elections took place in September this year. The newly elected students are **Lauren McNulty** (6th year), **Cian Gallagher** (6th year), **Tristan O'Malley** (5th year), **Kitty McGinty** (4th year), **Eoin Murphy** (3rd year), **Scarlett O'Keeffe** (2nd year) and **Seán Gallagher** (1st year).

Modern Technology in CPA

Over the last year we have managed to make big improvements to the digital technology and equipment available to students. These improvements include brand new laptops, PASCO scientific sensors, 3D printers, CNC lathes, CNC routers, laser cutters, vacuum formers and a programmable robotic arm. All of these upgrades will ensure that our students are gaining experience with the most up-to-date technology.

Study Skills

3rd and 6th year students recently had a Study Skills Seminar with The EduCoach Marie Sweeney Khalifa. Prior to this, 6th Year students received a study skills booklet focusing on Self-Reflection exercises, Target Grade Setting, Time Management and Study Timetable. Extensive Academic Support is ongoing and is provided to students through Coláiste Pobail Acla's Guidance Counselling, Chaplaincy services, SEN Department, Pastoral Care Team, Academic Monitor and all individual members of staff.

School Musical

This year's school musical is 'Legally Blonde Jr'. The group have all been cast and are busily learning lines, songs and dance routines to prepare for the end of March.

The show is set to be a huge success with a powerful amount of talent in the Transition Year group. All students are eager to perform and we are thoroughly looking forward to hosting the show.

Digital Learning

Thank you to all teachers and students who took part in our recent online Digital Learning survey. Your feedback is very important and much appreciated. It will help to inform how we should progress with our Digital Learning in the future.



'Strive for Five'

For the month of November we ran a brand new initiative called 'Strive for Five' where students were encouraged to attend school five days a week for the full day.

The 'Strive for Five' campaign began on November 1st and has been a huge success. The attendance rate for this period was just over 91%, this was the highest monthly rate in over a year. Prizes were given out to the class with the highest attendance rate as well as individual student prizes. The 2 class groups (junior & senior) with the highest attendance rate for the month will be treated to a day out after the Christmas holidays which will include food and activities.

Wellbeing Week

29th November – 3rd December 2021

Wellbeing Week has become an important week in our school calendar and this year it was more important than ever before. This week provides our students and staff with the opportunity to promote an overall awareness for the wide ranging aspects of wellbeing, including social, physical and emotional wellbeing, something never before so important in these challenging times.

- To start the week our junior students performed an act of kindness for a particular student in their own year groups.
- Our Art students were involved in themed Art competitions throughout the week including; 'Positive Mental Health' & 'Stand up against bullying'.
- 2nd and 3rd year students organised a bake sale, with money raised going to 'Mayo Mental Health Association'.
- As part of our School Completion Programme, our 1st and Transition year students were paired up as Big Brothers/Big Sisters and had a lovely breakfast morning in Alice's. The Big Brother Big Sister programme will be in place for the rest of the school year.
- 6th year Irish students/teachers had tea and scones at a 'Comhrá agus Caint' morning.
- 5th year students organised a darts competition for senior students and teachers.
- 3rd year students went to a local gym for some fun activities and wellness talks.
- TY students organised a friendly football match against some of our staff.
- Finally on our last day of Wellbeing week, a non-uniform day was organised with money raised going to 'Gearoids Smile' and 'Pink Ribbon Cancer Research'.



Sport in Coláiste Pobail Acla

- **GAA – Return to competitive football**

This year saw the welcome return to competitive football competitions. Our 1st years, U-15's, U-16's and senior Boy's football teams all took to the field in their own respective Mayo Post Primary competitions. Our senior boys competed well in the Flanagan D competition, reaching the final but unfortunately losing out to St. Tiernan's of Crossmolina in a closely contested match played in the Dome at the Connacht Centre of Excellence.

- **Rugby – Huge uptake in recent rugby coaching sessions**

This November, our junior students got the chance to participate in a four-week introduction to rugby. Approximately 85 students took part altogether. The coaching sessions were delivered by Kate Feehan, Westport RFC and Connaught womens team. When she saw the level of interest she brought 3 more coaches with her for extra support. Following these session, some students have decided to make the journey to train with Westport Rugby Club. This was hugely popular with our students so we hope to arrange further sessions next term.

- **Hurling - CPA Hurlers making great progress**

The CPA Junior Hurlers are making great progress and are mastering new skills all the time. The team were treated to an 'expert coaching session' at the Connacht GAA Centre of Excellence DOME in Bekan this term. Connacht GAA Hurling Director Damien Coleman and Croke Park's National Hurling Director Martin Fogarty hosted the coaching session for our students.

- **Soccer – Our girls are improving their soccer skills**

Our girls soccer team will continue training in the new year. We hope to arrange some challenge matches for the 25+ girls who have taken part so far.

Literacy Events in Coláiste Pobail Acla

Coláiste Pobail Acla continues to promote literacy awareness in our school world by encouraging our students to enjoy the benefits of reading. Reading has been proven to expand vocabulary, improve spelling, enhance writing skills, improve focus and concentration, reduce stress, among many other benefits.

In Colaiste Pobail Acla, the school librarian supports all the literacy initiatives, many of which are initiated from the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP). The school library is the cornerstone which helps to build on this framework of developing a reading culture in our school environment. During this term, our students have been involved in the following literacy initiatives:

Bookmark Exchange Programme: This year students from Colaiste Pobail Acla partnered with schools in Wisconsin, U.S.A. and Navinal, India exchanging beautifully crafted bookmarks both handmade and digitally created.

One Book – One Read Programme: This is a community based reading activity where first year students in our school will work with sixth class students from local primary schools. The book chosen for this year's event is "The Twelfth Day of July" by Joan Lingard. We would like to thank all the sixth class teachers and students who have participated this year.

Great Reads 2021: Students from Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle enjoyed reading a new range of novels in this exciting reading initiative. Students read the titles short listed for the awards and vote to decide the award recipients. Participating students have been reading and submitting their votes since September. Well done to everyone involved.

Janice Memorial Awards 2021: Planning for a celebratory event to mark the 20th anniversary of the JMAs is well under way. Contributions from previous winners will form part of the event and the 2021 JMA winners will be announced and presented with their prizes. US photojournalist Chris Martin has been sponsoring the annual Janice Memorial Awards in the school, in memory of her late mother Janice Atkinson since 2001.

French Week

First Year, Second Year, Transition Year and Fifth Year students enjoyed a French Breakfast in order to celebrate French Week this year. Other activities including watching the classic French film 'Les Choristes' and a poster competition on the theme of protecting the environment. The winner of the junior category was Aisling Carey (2nd year) and the senior category Norah Schar (TY). Félicitations!

Science Week

Students took part in a variety of activities during Science Week 2021 in November, including a Genetics Workshop, Environmental Circus, Quizzes, Fire Fun in the lab and Poster & Photography Competitions.

Shoebox Appeal 2021

This year, our Transition Year worked very hard to raise money for the annual 'Team Hope Shoebox Appeal'. Together with Dooagh and Achill Sound National School we filled and sent off 54 Christmas boxes. These boxes will travel to orphanages around the world and provide a much needed Christmas surprise for many children living in poverty. Thank you to the local community who knitted hats and donated many items for each box.

Sing for Simon

On Friday 10 December, some of the TY students are participating in the Sing for Simon project. Each year Sing for Simon brings together groups and choirs, who sing Christmas carols and songs in various locations around the country. The TY group are generously giving of their talents to support this charity. Well done to all the TY students who organised the event.

Circus Visit

Transition years enjoyed two visits from the environmental circus performers. Students attended a performance highlighting the significance of climate change and the correlation between geology and performance art. The students particularly enjoyed learning and completing the performance skills.



CPA 'focus' on the future

Podcasting, digital media marketing, video editing, sound recording, graphic design, media law and internet safety are just a few of the topics our TY students covered in our new innovative Digital Media Module at CPA.

Traditional Music Sessions

As Achill Island has a huge tradition of Irish Music, Coláiste Pobail Acla has set up a Traditional Music Society. Many of our students that have been involved in Scoil Acla over the years have been bringing their talents into our Traditional Music Society here in the school.

Choir

Junior Choir (First, Second and Transition Year) takes place weekly on Wednesdays at 12:35 and the Senior Choir (Third, Fifth and Sixth Year) meets on Thursdays at 13:15. Disappointed with not performing at their Christmas Concert again this year, this talented group of students look forward to performing in the New Year.

Transition Year Fundraiser

Four Transition Year students, Leona Ginty, Eva Harris, Luke Moran and Edel O'Malley along with Ms. Scully and Ms. Patten are involved in an ongoing fundraising campaign throughout the school year. At both Christmas and Easter, they will be bringing some joy to the school community by organising two fundraising events. The final amount raised will be donated to St. Fionnan's Nursing Home where the students hope the money raised will be of some benefit to them.

Clubs

After two disjointed years of lockdowns and online teaching/learning, since September 2021 the staff and students of CPA are putting in huge efforts to get school life back to some semblance of normality. After a student self-management survey last May, one of the major red flags identified was the lack of extra-curricular activities that couldn't take place and students were missing out on. Extra-curricular activities and clubs are a vital part of school life and community and contribute more to student motivation, attendance and positive behaviour in school that can be quantified fully. A big thank you must go to the staff involved in organising and supervising the activities involved during lunchtimes and after school every week and to the students for embracing and contributing to the development of a positive and enjoyable school experience for all. Some of the clubs/groups are listed below:

- **Art Club**

Art Club has been running for a month now in school for juniors and seniors on Tuesday lunchtimes. We are currently making Christmas cards but projects to be undertaken in the future include several competitions and group work activities. It is an opportunity for students who may not have had the option to study art to be welcomed into the Art Room and participate in artistic activities and learn new skills and processes. New Members are always welcome!

- **Running Club**

Members of our running club meet every Wednesday evening at 16:05 for a run/walk. Most of these runs take place on the Greenway and we have a very dedicated group of students and staff who are willing to go out and exercise in all weather conditions. We started an initiative whereby anyone who attends four runs receives a 'CPA Running Club' hat. So far, over 50 different students and staff have attended the club and some have taken part in the Achill Greenway Parkrun on Saturday mornings. We encourage all members of the school community to keep active and stay healthy.



- **Science Club**

Science club takes place every Tuesday at 12.45 (Room 1). Open to everyone who has a fascination with science or would like to explore more. With fun experiments, science quizzes, demonstrations, online activities, as well as offering help with science homework. All are welcome!

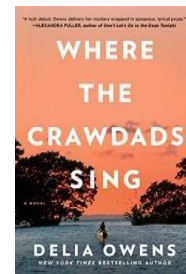
- **Chess Club**

Junior Chess Club has been a popular addition to our extra-curricular timetable and we have had several students challenging each other during Monday lunchtimes. This is a great opportunity for students to try something new that they may not have considered previously. Anybody who is interested, just pop in and grab a board!

- **Book Club**

We are delighted to announce that the CPA Book Club opened it's doors this term. It is an opportunity for book lovers of all ages to come together to share their thoughts on the latest title. Our first work is the hugely popular 'Where the Crawdads Sing' by Delia Owens and we are very grateful to the local library for sourcing multiple copies for us. All students and staff are welcome to join us as we move on to our next book.

"A room without books is like a body without a soul" - Cicero



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