

# accs NEWS

ISSUE 2 • 2023/2024



## Student Voice at Dublin Castle

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• Oide Technology in Education • Around the schools  
• Recent ACCS Info Bulletins & DE Circular Letters



Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools  
Cianann na Scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheacha

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# ACCS Student Voice Conference



**Akiko Chong and Success Omochere, event facilitators and students at St. Mark's Community School.**

I really enjoyed the whole experience of preparing for and attending the recent ACCS Student Voice Conference. Being able to contribute to the decision making surrounding our schools and education was a huge responsibility but very fulfilling. I think it is important that students are involved in decision making as they are the ones that will be affected by it. It was an honour for me to represent my peers.

It really made me stop and think when I heard different people's perspectives and opinions on topics like bullying, assessment, inclusion and student-teacher relationships. It showed me how much our schools are doing to combat these issues but also some of the other things that we could be doing.

When I found out that I was giving the opening speech in Dublin Castle I was very excited but also very nervous at the same time. I have had some previous experience with public speaking but never at such an important gathering. Once I finished writing the speech, I tried to practice it at every available opportunity, with friends, family and teachers. I even got up on the stage in my school and gave the speech to an empty Assembly Hall. Once I arrived at Dublin Castle and saw how big the room was and all the people there, everything became real. It was nerve racking! Once I was done, I was really proud of myself. I think I did a good job. I was relieved that it was over, but it definitely gave me a taste for more.

One of the best things about the day was that I got to meet like minded people and make new connections with other students as passionate about Student Voice as I am. It was inspiring to watch the video from Alicia Joy O'Sullivan. She is a young woman from Ireland who was once in the same place as me but now she is a Youth Delegate on a UN committee. She is living proof that anything is possible if you put your mind to it.

## My key takeaway message from the Conference

One of the key takeaways from this experience was the realisation that change begins with conversation. If you don't speak up about a problem you are facing with your school or community, then nothing can be done. Every voice matters and is valued. You may think that you are not important enough to make a change, but you are.



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Layout & Print: Print Bureau

### Personal Reflection

Being a student facilitator for the ACCS Student Voice Conference at Dublin Castle was an incredibly rewarding experience that allowed me to step into a leadership role and advocate for important issues. Facilitating a conversation about inclusion was both challenging and enlightening. During the conversations about inclusion, I witnessed the power of dialogue first hand. Participants shared their experiences, perspectives, and ideas on how to create more inclusive educational spaces. It was inspiring to see the genuine passion and commitment from everyone involved. Guiding the discussion, I learned the art of active listening, ensuring that every voice was heard and valued.

### Success Omochere,

event facilitator and student at  
St. Mark's Community School

## Akiko Chong brings Student Voice experience to Singapore students

**H**ello, my name is Akiko Chong and I am a 6th Year student in St. Mark's Community School. Since I was in first year our school has recognised and encouraged student voice and participation. We have an active student council, a student-led wellbeing club; The Oak Team, and many more student-led initiatives and events, most notably perhaps the annual spectacle of colour and pageantry that is Culture Day. I have always found it rewarding to get involved in leadership and representative roles within the school. I think when the opinions and concerns of students are listened to it definitely leads to better relationships between students and teachers and a stronger and happier school community. As well as being hugely beneficial for the school, being involved in student voice has presented me personally with some very memorable and worthwhile opportunities.

In 5th year for example, I had the great fortune of speaking to a host of TDs and decision makers in Leinster House. My peers and I presented on the topic of 'The impact of the Leaving

Certificate on the mental health of young students', and how, little by little, we could implement a solution. That experience really showed me that there are people who will listen to us, who would take our concerns into consideration and seek to put solutions in place. Having been met with an attentive and enthusiastic reaction, I realised that student voice is a powerful tool that could pave the way for lasting change, not only in my school, but also in the community and in the wider world.

Then, late last year a group of school leaders from Singapore visited our school to explore how we promote student voice and participation. I met with them as part of the student council to share my perspective. When I mentioned in conversation that I had family in Singapore and would be visiting them during the holidays, I was given the once in a lifetime opportunity to visit Edgefield Secondary School. I was thrilled to have been able to represent, not only St. Mark's Community School, but also to represent aspects of student engagement in the system in Ireland.



Akiko presenting to students and staff at Edgefield Secondary School, Singapore.





On arrival at Edgefield Secondary School, I met with the Principal, Mr Lee, where I had a short briefing for the exciting day ahead of me. I started my day by speaking at an assembly of over a thousand people, and immediately felt a buzz not only from myself, but also from the students as I walked through the corridors of this new environment. It was almost as if they were fascinated by what I could possibly bring them from my own school in Ireland.

During my visit, I facilitated a number of circles. The concept of circles was not something that the Singaporean students were familiar with. As a result, I shared with them what I learned in St. Mark's on student facilitation, and how restorative practice encourages open dialogue among students and builds relationships. The circles provided a platform for the students to engage in open conversation and share their thoughts. Through my training with the Student Council and The Oak Team, I was able to put my skills into effect, introducing to Singaporean students the purpose of a circle, and effectively how to conduct them.

After working with many groups of students from different age groups and with different perspectives, I ended the long day in a meeting with Edgefield's Student Council representatives, prefects and excos (students elected as members to contribute to policy-making). I talked about the structure and role of our Student Council, the concepts of the democracy of the Student Council, and the autonomy of student involvement in policy-making. From their presentation of their own Student Council, I recognised some similarities in the promotion of Student Voice.

I also shared my experiences of Restorative Practice, how it encourages and enables students to articulate their thoughts, and feelings and how they could use this going forward to promote dialogue, build relationships and also for conflict resolution.

We also shared our different student-led initiatives as well as school clubs and teams. I was treated to an impressive taekwondo exhibition. I explained our Culture Day, which is almost completely led and promoted by students and welcomes many visitors to our school. Similarly in

*“The experience I and my fellow students have gained throughout the last few years through the Student Voice initiative has been invaluable.”*

Edgefield, they hold a highly anticipated festival - ArtasFest, which includes many student-made creations for sale, mini-games to participate in and most importantly it is a major project for students to work with each other and conduct a big event for the local community. I was just sorry not to be able to stay to experience it.

Undoubtedly my visit to Edgefield Secondary School in Singapore was a special opportunity. Not only did I have the chance to share my school experiences and skills with a school across the globe, I also had the delightful opportunity to meet new people and make new Singaporean friends!

I was delighted to act as a Student Facilitator at the ACCS Student Voice Conference recently in Dublin Castle. The experience I and my fellow students have gained throughout the last few years through the Student Voice initiative has been invaluable. I am confident that it will stand to us in the future and on whatever path we choose when we complete our post primary education. This edition of ACCS News gives you a snapshot of our recent student led event.

Enjoy!

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**Akiko Chong,**  
event facilitator and student at  
St. Mark's Community School



Eladh, Sophia, Ciara, Isabel and Mags, Mountmellick Community School.



Grace and Kate, Carndonagh Community School with Eva, Newpark Comprehensive School.



Edel, Adranna, Issy, Petra and Shauna, Portumna Community School pictured with Áine O'Sullivan and James Duignan.

# The story of Student Voice



Grace and Kate, Carndonagh Community School, Eva, Newpark Comprehensive School with ACCS President James Duignan

In 2018, the ACCS and NCCA initiated a joint project on the theme of 'Student Voice at the Centre of Learning and School Life' in Community and Comprehensive Schools. The project sought to explore how the voices of students could be amplified in matters that affect them in their experience of schooling, both inside and outside the classroom.

The subsequent evolution of this project has seen students, teachers, school leaders, policy makers, researchers and education system leaders focus on how Student Voice can be realised meaningfully and powerfully in classrooms and schools. A culture of innovation and collaboration has characterised the engagement of schools in this project, with teachers looking critically at their own professional identity, and school communities reconceptualising themselves to place Student Voice at the core of the characteristic spirit by which they exist.

The forerunner and momentum for this project was an EU-funded Erasmus Plus project called 'Student Voice – The Bridge to Learning'. This project involved a collaboration between teachers and policy makers from various jurisdictions including Ireland, Slovenia, Scotland, the Netherlands and Hungary. The Irish contribution to the project was a collaboration between NCCA and the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) Support Service.

The project set out to recognise, celebrate and to showcase achievements in promoting and establishing robust Student Voice practices in Community and Comprehensive schools.

**What were the best things about today...?**

**Voices**  
from  
Dublin Castle

"Students had a stage, and our students are now inspired to run similar events."

"People understanding that the education system should be changed! Being understood and listened to!"

"It was a really comfortable environment, and it was a really good safe space to have open conversations."

"Getting to discuss our opinions with other students from different schools and from all over Ireland."



**Pictured from top left:**

- 1.** Beatriz, Natalia and Max, St. Tiernan's Community School.
- 2.** Sarah, Ashvita, Daniel and Abigail, Portmarnock Community School.
- 3.** Ruth, Alex, Megan, Conor and Aisling, Athboy Community School.
- 4.** Dympna, Rebecca, Donnacha, Lisa and Regina, St. Clare's Comprehensive School.
- 5.** Laura, Orlaith, Rian, Amy and Maureen, Rosses Community School.
- 6.** Maire, Aoife, Nathan and Mary, Ramsgrange Community School.
- 7.** Ella, Ryan, Lauren and Savannah, Cabinteely Community School.
- 8.** Isabel, Emily and Emma, Blakestown Community School.
- 9.** Jakub and Mia, Old Bawn Community School, Emma and Chloe, St. Colmcille's Community School and Ciara, Mountmellick Community School.



**Pictured from top:**  
**10.** Aisling, Kayla, Luke and James, Glenamaddy Community School. **11.** Mohammad, Olivia, Zahra, Olga and Ruth, Kildare Town Community School.

## The Journey

Central to the project was a series of one day workshops held since 2018. These workshops facilitated opportunities for participants to explore their own understanding of Student Voice. The impact of Covid-19 on schools didn't deter the students and much of the programme migrated online. The students found the webinars a really useful way to connect with each other and a means of enabling discussion and commentary between young people in second level education on issues which matter to them. ACCS and NCCA continued to facilitate such webinars over the next few months with the goal of allowing individual schools and regions taking over the role of facilitation in due course.

As we slowly came out of lockdown the students began to meet regularly online.

At the June 2020 Webinar in a Presentation facilitated by Ger Halbert, we considered how the Lundy Model of Participation could be used as a way to ensure meaningful, authentic Student Voice Initiatives in our schools. The Lundy Model for Child Participation puts young people's

## What were the best things about today...?

"The best things I've learned were how much teachers and the Department of Education want to know and how to help students with solutions coming from students."

"The atmosphere was incredible, and the conversations were incredibly meaningful and productive."

"Understanding that many others feel the same way about topics even though we are from very different settings."

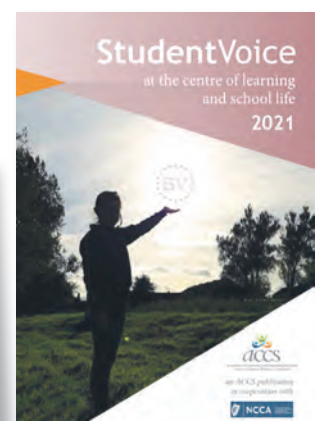
"Great to see an event being led by students for students – loved the graphic harvesting."

"I loved getting to voice my opinions and concerns and to hear from people all over the country. It made me feel like my concerns were valid and important. The facilitators were a great help and explained things and led the groups very well."

right to be consulted at the centre, and Professor Laura Lundy's work is central to the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2021).

The Student Voice journal was produced in 2021 and reflects discussions and ongoing collaborations with our schools. The journal is greatly enhanced by the opinions and authentic voices of the students themselves.

We were delighted to have Professor Lundy to launch the Student Voice journal at our Education Conference in May 2021.









Alicia Joy O'Sullivan addresses the audience.

The journey of students, teachers and critical friends led to a one-day student led Student Voice and Participation conference in Dublin Castle on 19th September 2023. The conference was hosted by ACCS, in partnership with NCCA, and represented the final event in our journey.

The aims of the conference were to:

- Celebrate the journey of ACCS schools in building a culture of meaningful and authentic Student Voice and Participation.
- Demonstrate a student-led consultation event to groups and agencies engaged in similar work.
- Inform an ACCS Student Voice submission on the future of education to policy makers.
- Showcase a structure for similar student-led events in individual school communities.

James Duignan, ACCS President formally opened the conference on the day. This was followed by morning workshops facilitated by the students. A group of 30 students guided participants throughout the day, led the workshops and gathered all the ideas from the discussions. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive.

We feel we have established a rich and dynamic community of practice where we have shared our Student Voice stories and the success and challenges of strategies we have designed to promote Student Voice and meaningful participation in classrooms and spaces across our schools.

### Thank you

A key feature of the project has been the role of 'critical friends'. We were very lucky to gain the expertise on our journey from some of the key influencers in education; Dr. Domnall Fleming, UCC School of Education, Norman Emerson, former Director of Curriculum and Assessment of NCCA, Ger Halbert, retired Education Officer with NCCA.

Thank you to Arlene Forster, Chief Executive, NCCA for her support from the outset of the project.

Thank you to Professor Laura Lundy for taking the time to speak at our Education Conference in 2021 and for launching our Student Voice journal.

Thank you to the Principals and teachers for accompanying and guiding students along the way.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the student participants, that they know now that their voices are definitely heard by policy makers. We hope that they have grown in confidence and will continue to show us the way forward.

*Encouraging students to make judgements about what needs to be changed, how to go about changing it and taking action to do so is teaching students to live democratically.*

(Kessel 2015)

**Voices**

from  
Dublin Castle

**What were  
the best things  
about today...?**

**"How much group work we did instead of too much listening."**

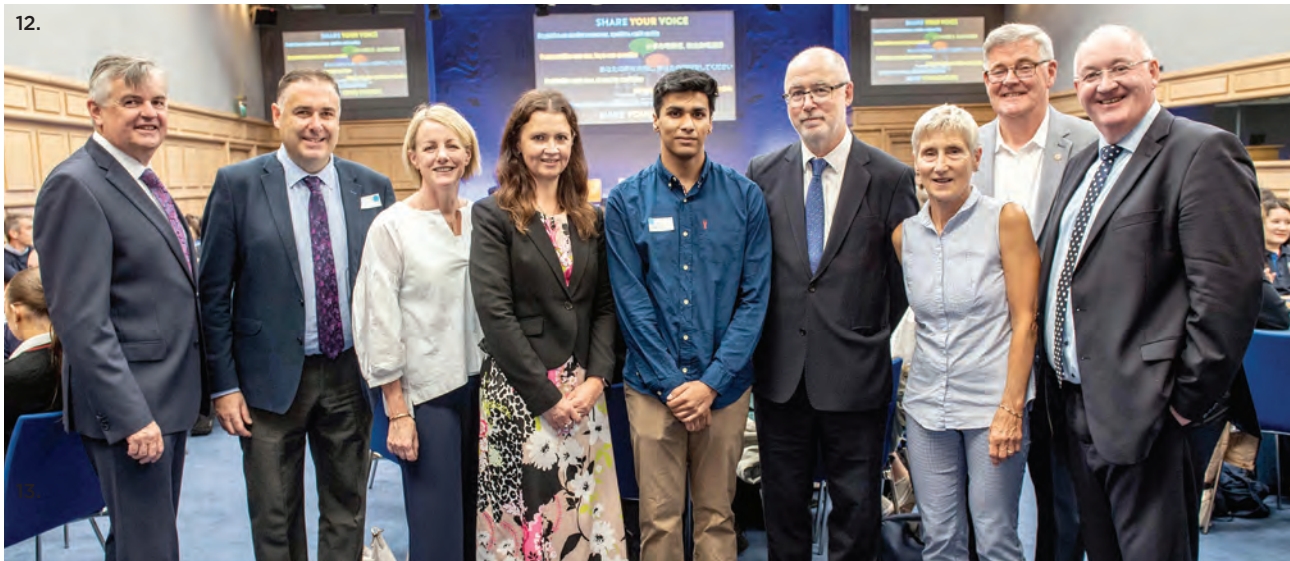
**"The passion, enthusiasm, and insight from the students – the speakers were exceptional."**

**"Student capacity and literacy on topics – sense of possibility – facilitators very skilled – very proud of our Community & Comprehensive schools."**

**"Knowing we have input in our future."**







**Pictured from top:**

**12.** John Irwin, Ger O'Sullivan, Áine O'Sullivan, Arlene Forster, CEO, NCCA, Shari Irfan, President, ISSU, Seán Ó Foghlú, Chairperson, NCCA, Ger Halbert, Dr. Domnall Fleming and James Duignan.

**13.** Aileen, Emma, Chloe and Jennifer, St. Colmcille's Community School.

**14.** James Duignan, Ger Halbert and Dermot O'Brien, NYCI.

**15.** Hazel, Giulia, Ann, Óisín and Cillian, Pobalscoil Neasáin.

**16.** Charlene Brasil, Department of Education, Shari Irfan, ISSU, Suzanne Conneely, Judith Lyons and Laura Dooley, Department of Education.

# New State Claims Agency Contact – Ciara Daly



After 11 years with the State Claims Agency (SCA), Katie Nugent has moved on to pastures new. We wish Katie the very best in her new role with the Irish Prison Service and thank her for her years of work with the SCA and ACCS.

I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce your new client lead, Ciara Daly, Enterprise Risk Manager. Ciara will be working alongside other members of the Enterprise Risk Management Unit who work directly with the ACCS, Boards of Management, Principals, Teachers etc.

Ciara, who has been with the SCA for over 9 years, has worked closely with many Delegated State Authorities including, the Defence Forces, Tusla and the Department of Agriculture and the Marine. Working with the School Sector has always been on Ciara's wish list, and she is delighted that on her return from maternity leave, she is getting that chance.

Should you have any queries, please note her contact details are as follows:  
email: [ciara.daly@ntma.ie](mailto:ciara.daly@ntma.ie) tel: 087 7590807

Best of luck Ciara and welcome to the team!



## ACCS Garda Vetting – Some updates

We are currently experiencing a large volume of vetting applications. It takes 9 working days on average for an application to be processed by the National Garda Vetting Bureau (NGVB). However, on some occasions it can take longer and this is beyond the control of ACCS. Please remember to factor this into your plans for the academic year, particularly for Transition Year students and School Exchange programmes.

Please ensure that applicant details are entered correctly into the vetting portal in the school. Incorrectly entered details can result in a delay to the process.

Applicants must be 16 years of age to be vetted. Their details can be entered into the vetting portal from the day they turn 16.

Disclosures: Applicants should be made aware that all disclosures are emailed from ACCS to the Principal of the school. ACCS are unable at any stage to give disclosures directly to applicants.

For vetting queries contact [jaminge@accs.ie](mailto:jaminge@accs.ie).

# November Wellbeing Series

An engaging health and wellbeing studio experience delivered to a dedicated platform and app, available live and on demand. Tune in from Wednesday 8th November at 1:15pm.



## Our Hosts:



**Keith Walsh**  
Radio DJ, Writer  
& Presenter



**Clare McKenna**  
Radio & TV  
Presenter

## What this series delivers:

- 4 live seminars with option to interact with the host and guest via polling and Q&A function.
- E-learning material on Understanding Stress.
- Supportive tipsheets relating to the series topics for you to download, read and share with your colleagues.

## Seminars:

### Fertility Awareness Week

Join us for an illuminating live event during Fertility Awareness Week. Discover the vital aspects of fertility awareness, gain insights into understanding your body's natural rhythms, and learn proactive steps for making informed decisions on your journey. Our expert speakers will guide you through engaging discussions and practical tips, fostering a supportive environment for open dialogue and learning. Whether you're planning for a family or simply seeking to deepen your understanding of your body, this event promises to equip you with valuable tools for embracing fertility with confidence and awareness.



Helena Tubridy,  
Fertility Coach



Becky Kearns,  
Co-Founder of Fertility  
Matters At Work

### World Diabetes Day

Join us for a transformative live event in honour of World Diabetes Day, as we raise awareness for living with diabetes. Through insightful discussion and personal stories, this event will offer a deeper understanding of diabetes management, prevention, and the importance of a healthy lifestyle while providing you with practical strategies. Whether you're living with diabetes or passionate about promoting wellness, this event is a unique opportunity to come together, learn, and advocate for a brighter, healthier future.



Sophie Bertrand,  
Registered Nutritionist, Author  
& Host at Forking Wellness



Sinéad Powell,  
Senior Dietitian & Regional  
Development Officer at  
Diabetes Ireland

### International Men's Day

Celebrate International Men's Day with us and join a dynamic conversation as we shine a spotlight on men's wellbeing and empowerment. Explore the diverse facets of men's health, mental resilience, and positive relationships, featuring insightful discussions, expert insights, and personal stories. Discover strategies to foster a healthier, more fulfilling life and contribute to a supportive community that uplifts and celebrates men's experiences.



Keith Walsh,  
Broadcaster and  
Writer



Fergus Maher,  
Mental Health  
Promotion Manager in  
EAP & Clinical

### Money Mindset

Join us for Money Mindset for a transformative event where we explore the crucial connection between financial health and overall wellbeing. Join us for insights from our distinguished guests, Lorraine McFall, a Financial Wellbeing Coach at Money Matters, and Sharon Farrell, an expert in Credit Risk Management and Collections. Discover practical strategies and mindset shifts to achieve financial stability and peace of mind around your finances.



Lorraine McFall,  
Financial Wellbeing  
Coach at Money  
Matters



Sharon Farrell,  
Director at FACE  
Credit  
Consultancy

November

Wednesday 8th  
@ 1.15pm

November

Wednesday 15th  
@ 1.15pm

November

Wednesday 22nd  
@ 1.15pm

November

Wednesday 29th  
@ 1:15pm

# Oide Technology in Education

'PDST Technology in Education' is now 'Oide Technology in Education'.

The website and services are still located at <https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/>

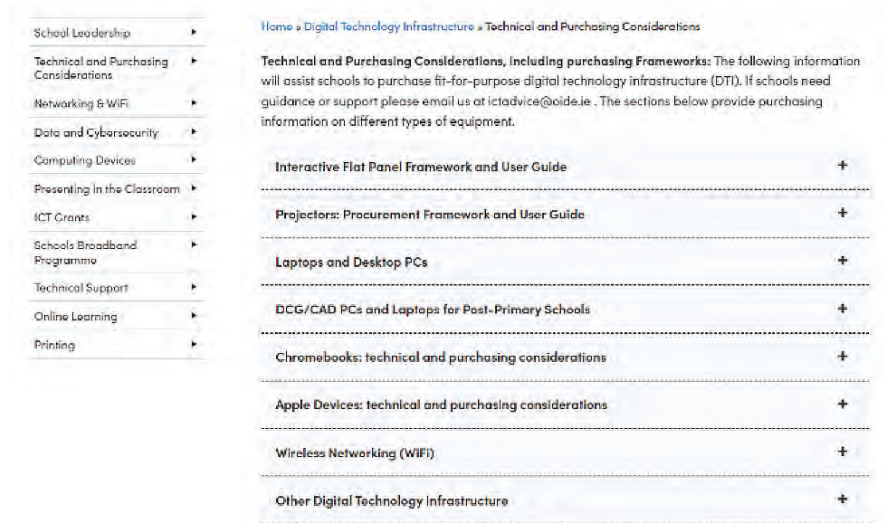
The Digital Technology Infrastructure (DTI) section is still located at: <https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/technology-infrastructure/>

Guidance and support continue to be provided for schools on suitable Digital Technology Infrastructure, including computing devices, school networking and WiFi, projectors & interactive flat panels, learning platforms, cybersecurity and technical support. We also provide a single point of contact and support for 'Schools Broadband' via our Schools Broadband Service Desk.

The screenshot opposite illustrates a summary of some of the services available.

ACCS member schools needing guidance or support can email [ictadvice@oide.ie](mailto:ictadvice@oide.ie)

Schools Broadband Service Desk can be contacted at [broadbandservicedesk@oide.ie](mailto:broadbandservicedesk@oide.ie)



## Middle Leaders Cohort 4 Residential One



Pictured at the Middle Leaders event in The Mullingar Park Hotel in October (Left to right: Pat McKenna, Áine O'Sullivan, Assistant General Secretary, ACCS, Rachel Hayes, Principal, John the Baptist Community School, Bríd Ní Annracháin, Principal, Pobalscoil Neasáin, Kathleen O'Brien, Deputy Principal, Kinsale Community School and Dr. Joe O'Connell.



# SEAI Energy in Education Programme



The Energy in Education programme offers a range of supports developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills designed to help schools to improve energy management practices, reduce school operating costs and protect the environment.

For 2023/4 the programme contains opportunities for online and face to face energy management training, knowledge sharing and networking.

## Online Training

January - March 2024

Three courses, each course is spread over four weeks and involves three, two hour sessions. In between the online sessions, there is an opportunity for schools to avail of an Advice, Mentoring & Assessment (AMA) support service.

## Face to Face

**School Visits** - The AMA service consists of a school visit by a SEAI trusted advisor to provide practical guidance and knowledge sharing within the school community.

**Group Training & Networking** - Groups of up to 50 can be accommodated for a half-day session. This is a bespoke service launching in September 2023 with the ETB in Blanchardstown.

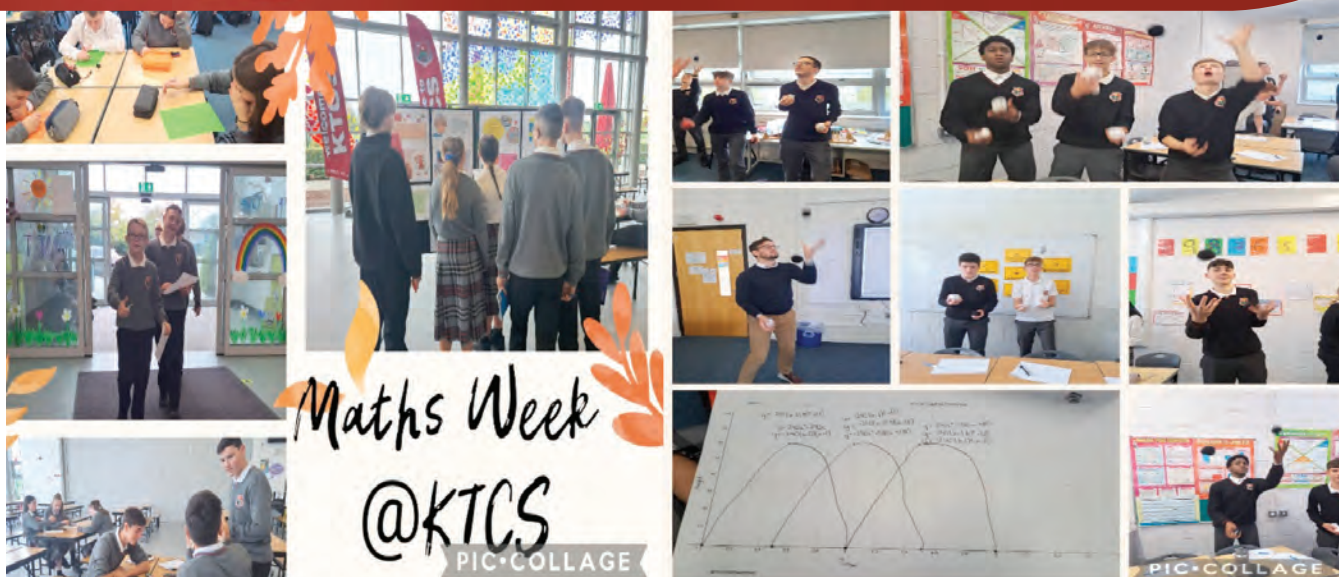


Celebrating  
20 years  
of awarding excellence  
in sustainable and  
renewable energy



For further information contact [energyineducation@seai.ie](mailto:energyineducation@seai.ie) or visit [www.energyineducation.ie](http://www.energyineducation.ie)

## Summing up Maths Week at Kildare Town Community School



Maths week really kicked off at KTCS recently, with different activities and competitions happening every day for all students. 1st year Maths Trial, The 12 puzzles of Maths week, A juggling Maths Workshop for 5th years, Maths Art competition and Junior Maths Help Hub.

**Juggling** - 5th year students at KTCS took part in a Maths Juggling Workshop with @mrmathweeney. They learned how the skills of juggling are linked to understanding the basics of quadratics. Balls were flying, graphs were drawn, and the students had a BALL of a time!

**Help Hub** - 5th year students also ran a Maths Help Hub on Thursday at lunchtime. It was a huge success with many junior students dropping in to get support with homework and general maths topics. Both junior and senior students found this peer tutoring process very beneficial and rewarding. Thanks to the many senior maths students who offered up their time and maths knowledge.

### Kildare Town Community School display leadership skills at the William “Squire” Gannon Primary School GAA Blitz

Congratulations to St. Brigid’s primary school, who became the second winner of the now annual Kildare Town Community School GAA primary school blitz.

A great day was had by all, and some super performances were on display. Thanks to staff members Mr. Scahill, Mr. Finn, Mr. Casey, and Ms. O’Neill for their help in running the event.

The Kildare Town Community School students displayed their leadership skills by refereeing the games and organising the fixtures. Thanks to all the schools who participated on the day and to their teachers/coaches for bringing them.

Chairperson of the board, Bernie Prendergast and the Deputy Principal Colm Hanratty presented the captain with the trophy at the end of the tournament. Well done to all the players and we look forward to next year’s competition.

**Colm Hanratty**  
Deputy Principal, Kildare Town Community School

## Pride of Place success at **St. Wolstan's Community School** as students and teachers develop their Biodiversity and Sustainability Education and Resources



Here in St. Wolstan's Community School we were very fortunate in our application to Intel's Pride of Place Initiative 2023. The Pride of Place competition is about enriching the lives of people in the neighbouring communities of Leixlip, Celbridge and Maynooth by supporting projects that improve local organisations while also benefitting the wider community. Our application had two aspects to it, and we received full funding to carry out our winning project.

We identified two areas that we wanted to support:

1. **Biodiversity and Sustainability Education and Resources**
2. **Waste Management in the School**

We selected two companies that could supply us with resources to help us to achieve these goals.



- 1 We purchased raised flowerbeds from PACE (Prisoners Aid through Community Effort) in order to increase our Biodiversity resources and protect students accessing both our school and the primary school beside us, as well as walkers and people using the athletic club facilities here too from cars mounting the path. We worked extensively last year on promoting Biodiversity through a weekly competition and introduction of a new module on Biodiversity in our Transition Year Curriculum. The flowerbeds will add to the plans for expansion of biodiversity spaces on the school grounds. <https://paceorganisation.ie/social-enterprise/>
- 2 We purchased new bins for each classroom to encourage better waste management and education around waste management in our school community. We had trialled some bins on loan to us from ALLECO Ltd in our staffroom and two classrooms to great success. Thanks to the funding received from Intel we have now expanded the initiative to the rest of the school. <http://www.alleco.ie/>

Working with a social enterprise initiative that employs ex-prisoners and a waste management company with a strong eco focus has a far-reaching impact beyond the school. St. Wolstan's Community School's expected benefits include better social integration, reduced pollution, enhanced aesthetics and the promotion of sustainable practices. If anyone would like any more information about this initiative, please contact us at [info@stwolstans.ie](mailto:info@stwolstans.ie).

# Hartstown Community School

Connecting with the Phoenix Park and Office of Public Works (OPW)



Lucia Ryan (Principal) and Emmet Tormay (Woodwork teacher) at Phoenix Park



Pictured above left and right: Hartstown Community School student Sofia Popovici

## Sustainability in Action – Transforming Phoenix Park trees for educational resources for our students

In today's world, the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship cannot be overstated. Across the globe, individuals, communities and organisations are joining forces to implement innovative projects that contribute to a greener, more sustainable future.

One such inspiring initiative emerged from the strong connection Hartstown Community School has with Phoenix Park and Office of Public Works (OPW). Emmet Tormay, a dedicated woodwork teacher with a passion for sustainability, played a pivotal role in forging a partnership with Phoenix Park rangers to use their felled trees as material for Junior Certificate Wood Technology and Leaving Certificate Construction Studies projects. This connection was the driving force behind a sustainability project that would engage and educate our students in an unparalleled way, setting the stage for a unique educational experience for

our students. The project's primary aim was to utilise the timber sourced while imbuing students with a deep appreciation for sustainability and the responsible use of natural resources. Some of the timber even came from the garden of Áras an Uachtaráin adding an extra layer of significance to the initiative.

After the delivery of the logs, the school's state of the art Logosol Sawmill was used in converting the logs to planks and then seasoned in our storage area.

The success of this project can be measured not only in the beautifully crafted projects that emerged but also in the lasting lessons imparted to each student. By instilling a sense of pride in their local environment and teaching them how to utilise natural resources in a sustainable manner the woodwork department and the OPW have set a remarkable example for the community and beyond.

# Ramsgrange Community School

## Crowned Battery Recycling Winners

Last year students, staff and the local community of Ramsgrange Community School were busy collecting batteries for two very worthy causes. In October 2022, WEEE Ireland launched a competition calling on all primary and secondary schools to organise a battery recycling drive so that they could be recycled with WEEE Ireland. Ms. Roche and her 2nd Year CSPE class jumped at the opportunity as they were already focusing on sustainability in their classes and knew of the many advantages of battery recycling. As well as that, as part of the competition, WEEE Ireland pledged to make a donation to LauraLynn, Ireland's Children's Hospice for every battery recycled.

In order to encourage battery recycling among the students, a battery collection point was created in the front hall of the school, and a competition was established among year groups as to what year could collect the most batteries, and the winning year got a prize. The battery drive lasted from January to March and by the end of the competition, over 70 barrels, drums, crates and boxes of batteries had been collected for recycling.

The students were all keen to get behind the battery drive as according to one of the 2nd Year students, based on their research in class, they are aware that binning batteries is not good for the environment because the batteries contain harmful chemicals that can seep into the ground, damaging plants and animals if not disposed of correctly. They also learned that recycling batteries can contribute to your school's sustainable development goals to prevent climate change and help contribute to the circular economy by giving batteries a new life.

The competition ended in March 2023 and in September 2023, the school was informed that they won the national completion



in the medium secondary school category, collecting more batteries for recycling than any other school in the country in that category. A grand total of the equivalent of 82,200 AA batteries were collected for recycling by the school. Overall from the competition, 2 million used AA batteries – the weight of around five school buses – were diverted from landfill, protecting the environment and supporting WEEE Ireland's charity partner LauraLynn.

As a reward for all their hard work, the school was presented with a €2000 sports equipment voucher. The school also plan to use some of the money to purchase the game 'bocce ball' for PE in order to enhance the accessibility of PE for all students in the school.



# Castlecomer Community School

When we surveyed our fellow students on wellbeing last year, the number one concern students had was being able to access toilets when they needed to. In consultation with parents, teachers and school management and based on research we took the following steps to improve the situation.

- We helped school management create the new toilet policy in our code of discipline
- Through the Parents Council we got their perspective
- The outside doors of the toilets were removed, whilst making sure that students still have their privacy
- 1st and 2nd Years were given tours of their toilets by tutors and year heads at the start of term
- The Parents Council granted the school money to improve the toilets

So far this year we have found the toilets to be far better kept and a far more comfortable place to go than this time last year.



Castlecomer Student Council: Molly Fox, Luke Storey, Manuel Lopez, Amy Corcoran and Lexi O'Reilly.

# Climate Change Action in Coolmine Community School



## Climate Change Interview with Phoenix FM

Coolmine Community School were interviewed recently by Áine Briody for 'Talking Climate Change' on Phoenix FM. To find out what our school is doing in response to a changing climate you can hear the interview through this link <https://www.mixcloud.com/925PhoenixFM/talking-climate-change-11-10-2023>

Participants were Marvellous Awolowo, Sophia Chiperi, Sean Cooper, Jason Jones, Nikita Demchenko, Emilija Latvyte, David Pruteanu, Miss O'Hora and Mr Kinlon. Missing from the photograph is Jack Lowe.

## Climate Change Action in Coolmine Community School

Our Global Citizens are focusing on the theme of biodiversity and sustainability.

- Following a meeting with Craig Benton from Composting for Schools, the students planned several projects. They have built leaf cages from wire fencing on school grounds. Leaf litter will turn to leaf mould and will turn to compost.
- We are in the process of installing a wormery which will turn our food waste into high quality compost. With less food going to landfill it is a way of reducing methane emissions.
- We are currently working with Stepping Stones Forests and planning an urban garden on school grounds. We will plant 300 native Irish trees. Obviously, there are benefits for climate change but also it will be an important educational resource for young people. One of Stepping Stones lead sponsors is Amazon Web Services (AWS).
- Transition Years carried out a survey on Climate Change and it was apparent that students were very knowledgeable about the causes and impacts. There were some concerns and we felt that when everybody worked together that it could make a difference.



Sean Cooper, Nikita Demchenko and Emilija Latvyte working with Mr Kinlon and Craig Benton from Composting For Schools.



They are making leaf cages and will use these to collect all the leaves that will fall over the next while. This will make some lovely compost for our school garden.

## Poets for the Future. Theme: Climate Change

In a world too hot, our Planet cries,  
Ice caps melting, seas on the rise.  
Forests burning, species under-threat,  
It's time for action, no time to forget.  
Reduce emissions, let's make a start,  
Drive less, recycle, be mindful of our part.  
Renewable energy, a brighter way,  
Together we can make a difference, come what may.  
For the Earth, let's stand strong and fight,  
Preserve our home, with all our might.  
Climate change won't wait, let's not delay  
For a greener future, lets pave the way.

By David Pruteanu, 1st year

Climate change is within our range,  
The indifference of us humans is quite strange.  
"Carbon emissions, look over here please listen!"  
But no one seems to care,  
In the future, we won't be here.  
Take a seat,  
Open your ears and listen.  
Grab a sheet, for  
Our mortality rate has risen.  
Sign your name and help us out.  
don't just sit there,  
I hope you can hear,  
Then maybe to a good future,  
The Earth can steer

By Jason Eze, 1st year

# Minister Heather Humphries visits Moyne Community School to launch 50th Celebrations



Our school year in Moyne Community School began with great fanfare as we welcomed Minister for Rural and Community Development and Minister for Social Protection Heather Humphries TD to our school on Friday 8th September to officially open two of our new school developments and to officially launch our 50th Celebrations. The Minister was joined by Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach Peter Burke TD, Local Senator Michael Carrigy, Leas Cathaoirleach of Longford County Council Cllr Garry Murtagh and other Longford elected members and council officials.

The Minister's first job on arrival at the school was to officially open our new Eco Park and Amphitheatre area. This project was funded to €185,000 by the Minister's Department under the Town & Village Renewal Scheme 2021. Longford County Council also contributed over €20,000 to the project with the school Board of Management also contributing to the project. This project provides a beautiful walkway, seated areas, eco-garden and Amphitheatre area which will provide not just for the school but also the local community and neighbouring Primary School.



The Minister then proceeded to open our new Multiple Use Games Area or MUGA pitch. This astro-turf style pitch was developed with the assistance of over €50,000 in grant aid from the Minister's CLAR programme with the remainder being funded by the school Board of Management. This All-Weather surface is a significant addition to the schools sporting and recreational facilities and is also available to the local community outside school hours. Both projects were developed with the assistance of local architect and past pupil Eamon Sheridan from ESArch based in Arva.

The Minister, in the presence of our other guests, then addressed the full school community in the Sports Hall where she officially launched our Year of Celebrations. The Minister had high praise for the recent developments in the school which added to our 1.7km Slí na Sláinte – which was also funded through the CLAR programme from her Department in 2021. She also paid high praise for the schools continuing contribution to education in area.

Des Cullen, Principal, Moyne Community School

# Kinsale Community School

## Emerges as the Sole Microsoft Showcase School in Cork



Kinsale Community School is proud to announce its 6th consecutive year of being awarded Microsoft Showcase Status, a remarkable achievement that solidifies its reputation as a leader in educational technology and innovation. Notably, this recognition makes Kinsale Community School one of the few schools in Europe and the sole Microsoft Showcase School in Cork. This distinction brings a wealth of benefits to the school, particularly for its students.

Microsoft Showcase Schools, selected for their commitment to creating immersive and inclusive educational experiences through the innovative use of Microsoft technologies, are recognised as exemplars in the integration of technology to enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

A standout feature of Kinsale Community School's ongoing success is its exceptional team of 38 qualified Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts (MIEEs). These dedicated educators are instrumental in driving innovation and technology integration within the school. They consistently foster creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking among students, ensuring that education at Kinsale Community School remains at the forefront of modern pedagogy.

One of the standout advantages for students of being part of a Microsoft Showcase School is the enhanced learning experience. Through the innovative use of Microsoft technologies, students develop advanced digital literacy skills, becoming proficient in tools widely used in the professional

world. This equips them for future careers and fosters self-directed learning and problem-solving.

Personalised inclusive education is another key benefit, as technology allows educators to tailor lessons to individual students' needs and learning styles. This, in turn, ensures students receive the support and challenges required to excel academically, ultimately preparing them for the challenges of the 21st century job market. Kinsale Community School is dedicated to providing its students with a world-class education that leverages technology to empower their learning and prepare them for a bright future.

Principal, Mr. Fergal McCarthy expressed his immense pride for this significant achievement:

*"Receiving Microsoft Showcase Status for the sixth year running is a testament to the relentless dedication of our teachers and the tireless support of our 38 qualified Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts, and our students who embrace technology to enhance learning. This recognition reaffirms our commitment to providing a world-class education that prepares our students for the challenges of the 21st century."*

### Microsoft Innovative Educator Fellow Recognition for Gemma Cooper at Kinsale Community School

Gemma Cooper, a Computer Science and Maths teacher at Kinsale Community School, has been honored with the Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) Fellow Award. This award speaks to Gemma's commitment to integrating technology and digital tools into the fabric of teaching, learning, and assessment practices at KCS. This achievement underscores her pivotal role as a digital leader within the Kinsale educational community and her unwavering commitment to professional development. Gemma is among the first educators in Ireland to receive this distinction, which also reflects Kinsale Community School's ongoing commitment to educational advancement. She represents not just our school, but also the province of Munster.



# Old Bawn Community School



## Introduce Polish Class

The first ever Polish class in Old Bawn Community School took place in September, with sixteen first years enrolled, led by Polish teacher, Ms. Ewelina Mencnawska.

The students in the class come from a broad range of starting points, from those who speak Polish at home, to students who have never spoken Polish. This is an exciting extension to the language department within the school and we are delighted to offer this opportunity to our students.

We wish the class the best of luck with their studies.



# Portumna Community School

## 1st year writing competition winners

Portumna Community School recently held a variety of activities to celebrate their annual event 'Literacy Week', which promotes the development of literacy and reading for pleasure across the school community. This year, it was particularly significant as it was celebrated alongside the Shorelines Festival. The Shorelines Festival provided wonderful opportunities for the students of Portumna Community School to harness not only their literacy skills, but also to embrace their creativity by providing circus skills and drumming alongside sponsoring prizes for a whole school writing competition. This competition was judged by the talented author and lecturer Clara Kumagai. Portumna Community School would like to extend their gratitude to Breda O'Connor and Shorelines for funding the writers' workshops and competition prizes.



Left to Right: Sofia Wielgus, Liz Skelly (English teacher), Ava Keary, Elaine Shanahan Dunne (Deputy Principal), Lucy Mahony, Anne Hough (English teacher) and Niamh O'Hare.

## JP McManus academic All-Ireland Scholarship

Congratulations to former Portumna Community School student Peter Burke who was awarded a JP McManus academic All-Ireland Scholarship from the University of Limerick. Peter is currently studying Biomedical Engineering in University of Galway.



Former student of Portumna Community School Peter Burke and Shane McClearn.

Life in

# Scoil Mhuire Community School, Clane

A helicopter landing on the grounds for Career & College Awareness Week, students in hazmat suits during an Intel presentation, students and teachers joining together for a Christmas Concert to raise over €5,000 for the school Breakfast Club, Soroptomist Debating success, a TY Taekwondo workshop, lunch time Board Games Club, Launching the Learning Hub, Congratulating successful Leaving Cert. students, a retirement party for staff, attending Climate Detectives workshop... all part of the hectic life in Scoil Mhuire Community School, Clane!



Principal Kevin Martin with some of the students from the Class of '23 who returned for an awards presentation for excellence in Leaving Cert.



Learning Hub.



Student Council students on a video link with German students.



Prefect Team for 2023-24.

# Scoil Phobail Bhéara

## Transition Year

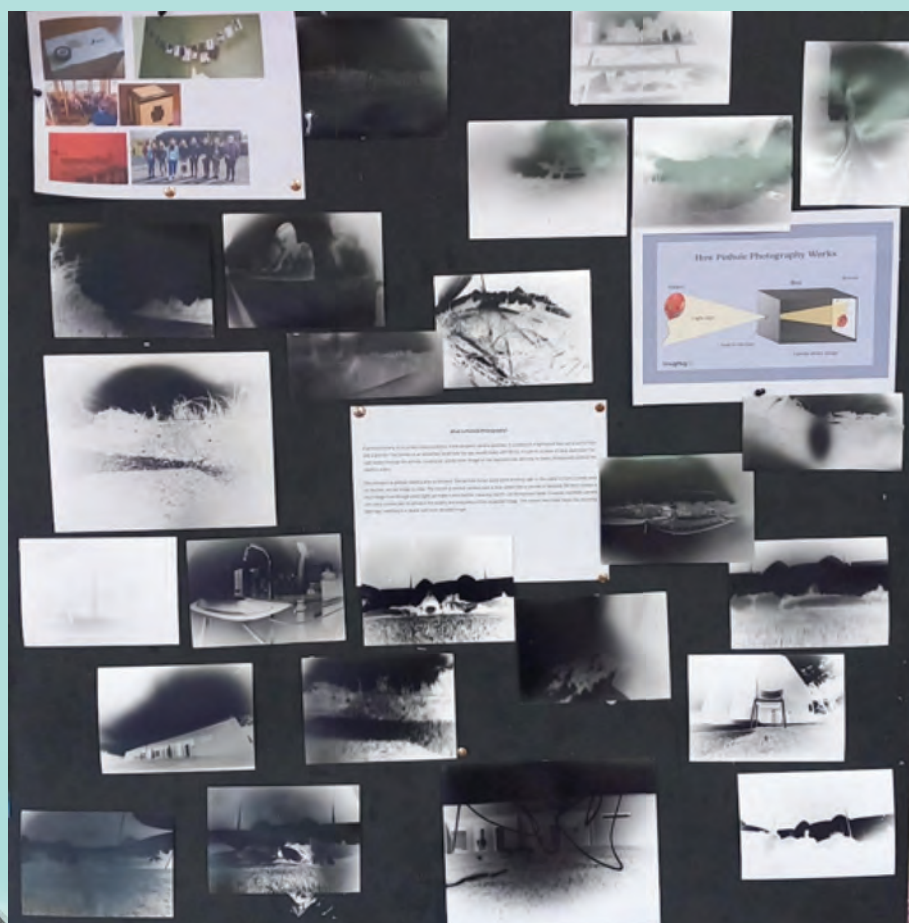
Transition Year students at Scoil Phobail Bhéara are currently benefitting from the many educational opportunities being made available to them in the community. For this piece we are looking at the community of Bere Island.

Our TY students have been learning how to record, edit and produce their own radio segment each week during communications class and are supported attentively by Bere Island Radio before the piece is aired each Sunday morning on the local station. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students, developing their research skills, experimenting with presentation skills, while also learning how to use radio editing software effectively too. The feedback from the community on the project has been excellent with members of our extended school community tuning in eagerly each week to hear the latest news from the student voice at Scoil Phobail Bhéara. You can listen live on Sundays by following the link on <https://www.bereisland.net/radio> or by tuning in locally at 100.1 FM.



Transition Year students enjoying the September sun at Bere Island Arts Festival

As part of Bere Island Arts Festival, a group of Transition Year students participated in the Pinhole Photography workshop that took place on Bere Island on September 22nd. The students had an excellent experience using a light-proof box and photographic paper. They took the morning ferry to the island and had a brilliant day experimenting with this method of photography. Their work is now on display for all to admire at the school. We are most grateful to all involved in Bere Island Arts Festival for providing this unique opportunity to our students.



Photography on display at Scoil Phobail Bhéara



## Recent **ACCS** Info Bulletins

BULLETIN NO.	DATE	SUMMARY
<b>ACCS/Info Bulletin 17/23</b>	<b>07/11/2023</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital Completion and Submission of Leaving Certificate Coursework.</li> <li>Food Studies Practical – Coursework Journal 2025.</li> <li>Turas Abhaile.</li> </ol>
<b>ACCS/Info Bulletin 16/23</b>	<b>23/09/2023</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note on the relevant person in the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023) &amp; Template 1 Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment Template.</li> <li>Note from NCCA re links and materials available to support the implementation of the new JC SPHE curriculum.</li> <li>Oide, the DE school support service &amp; communications to schools.</li> <li>Updated Admission Forms.</li> </ol>
<b>ACCS/Info Bulletin 15/23</b>	<b>30/08/2023</b>	Publication of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023) Circular 0036/2023.

## Recent Relevant **DE** Circular Letters

CIRCULAR NO.	SUMMARY
<b>CL 54/23</b>	Curriculum and assessment related developments at Senior Cycle with particular reference to school years 2023/24 and onwards
<b>CL 53/23</b>	Breastfeeding Breaks for Special Needs Assistants employed In Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 52/23</b>	Breastfeeding Breaks for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 51/23</b>	Unpaid Leave for Medical Care Purposes for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 50/23</b>	Unpaid Leave for Medical Care Purposes for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 48/23</b>	Adoptive Leave Scheme for Special Needs Assistants employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 47/23</b>	Adoptive Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools
<b>CL 46/23</b>	Revision of Salaries for School Secretaries Previously Funded Under Ancillary Grant Funding Application of pay adjustments due on 1 October 2023
<b>CL 45/23</b>	Revision of salaries for Clerical Officers and Caretakers employed in National Schools under the 1978/79 Scheme and Clerical Officers employed in Post Primary Schools under the 1978 Scheme under Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2023 (“The Agreement”)
<b>CL 44/23</b>	Revision of Salaries of School Secretaries and School Maintenance Staff in Community and Comprehensive Schools under Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement Application of pay adjustments due on 1 October 2023
<b>CL 42/23</b>	Revision of Salaries for Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) under Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2023 (“The Agreement”)
<b>CL 41/23</b>	Revision of Teacher Salaries under Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2023 (“The Agreement”) Application of pay adjustments due on 1 October 2023
<b>CL 38/23</b>	Building Momentum - A New Public Service Agreement 2021-2022 Implementation of Sectoral Bargaining with effect from 1 February 2022 - Payment of PME/HDip Allowance to post primary teachers on the pre-2011 teacher pay scale
<b>CL 37/23</b>	Partial Absences for Medical-Related Service Appointments for Post Primary Teachers
<b>CL 36/23</b>	Publication of Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools (revised 2023)