



Newsletter – December 2013

Message from Michael Moretta, Head of School

Introduction

I am writing this newsletter the day after our Carol Service that took place on Friday 13th December. I know that, for many of you, the Christmas season does not really begin until this wonderful service takes place. This year Ms Howard once again magically formed, trained, drilled and led another choir, put together in the few short months before December. Some of the students who sang on Friday had only been in school for one term, yet they sounded so professional and confident. The spirits of the large congregation were lifted and we left the church thrilled and awestruck. Particularly noteworthy this year was the astoundingly talented soloists whose pieces punctuated the carols. They spanned all the year groups. Also impressive were the 70 Junior School pupils who sang beautifully – ably directed by Ms Hauer – and will help us build new pools of talent in the school for years to come. Every year I leave the church proud, moved and amazed. All that is best about Sutton Park is on display on this night in December. Many, many thanks to Fionnuala and her team of dedicated musicians

Reports and Exams

This time of year is also the time for reports and exam results. It is the mid-year point and therefore an important time for reflection and analysis. I have the pleasure of reading all the reports before they are dispatched to you. I hope you do not mind if I offer a few words of advice when looking at the reports.

Reports only capture a snapshot of a students' performance. These exams are merely stepping stones and point towards much more important examinations. Many, indeed most, performed well and reached and even exceeded targets. If however, you observed disappointing grades it is important to analyse why. Often poor marks are due to a combination of poor timing, inadequate preparation and misreading of key words in questions. In the case of students preparing for mocks it is vital to absorb the lessons of these papers and use the remaining 7 weeks [5 teaching weeks] to put right mistakes. Try to look at the exam papers and the exam scripts. These are important resources and will tell you a great deal more than the stark percentage on the report.

Remember that with renewed effort and focus results can be transformed. Using the Cloud, organising a sensible revision schedule and keeping a positive outlook are essential to exam success. Heads of Year and individual teachers are also an essential resource so please do not hesitate to contact them and book a meeting.

Parent / Teacher Meetings 2014

In the penultimate week of term we had our first Parent Teacher Meetings. These took place with minimal disruption to the students' learning despite the ongoing industrial action by the ASTI. It is unlikely that we will hear the results of the ballot being conducted by this union before we break up

for the Christmas holidays, so I am unable, at this point, to set out our plans for meetings in the New Year. I do have contingency plans if the ballot goes against the Haddington Road agreement and I will inform you of these as soon as we know exactly where we are. I would ask therefore that you remain patient for the time being and join with me in hoping that this potentially damaging dispute is resolved before we return to school.

I will contact you by email letting you know our plans early in the New Year.

High Speed Broadband at Sutton Park

Somewhat later than planned we have finally been connected to the fibre optic cables that enable us to access high speed broadband. This will allow us to considerably improve the various interactive systems we have in place to allow you as parents to share in the learning of your sons and daughters. Our Cloud will allow you to share a great many resources the teachers use in their classrooms. Our ICT Committee are setting out a pathway that will, I believe utterly transform the way the students learn in the school. We have decide however to build up our systems step by step. Wi Fi hotspots will be opened around the site and students and individual subject teachers will begin to experiment with a wide range of devices and software that we believe will support learning. It is easy to spend vast sums of money without tangible learning improvements and we are all committed to bringing change that will deliver positive results.

School Security

As part of our ongoing self-review and self-evaluation the Board of Management have to arrive at judgements and decisions that mean changing the culture of the school. When we were inspected by outside evaluators in 2009 we were asked to review our security arrangements and especially the fact that our site is open and exposed to multiple points of entry by unauthorised visitors. Over the years we have made small changes and we are now ready to reconfigure the Reception area. From January 7th all parents and visitors will be unable to walk beyond the Reception area without a Visitors Pass after 9:30 am. Access will be more controlled.

I am sure you will agree that the safety of the children is paramount in any school. In setting out these arrangements we have tried very hard to maintain a balance between the friendly community atmosphere of Sutton Park with prudent safety measures.

The BOM will review the new arrangements. If you have any comments of the implementation please do not hesitate to contact me at info@sps.ie

New Parking Arrangements

In the last few days we have reviewed and changed our parking signs, layout and parking bays. It is very important that if you are driving on the site that you obey the simple guidelines. Driving on a site that has very young children and many cars at peak times demands careful and considerate driving. Here are the simple and clear ground rules.

Dear Parents,

We recently met with Fingal County Council's Roads Department and they advised that our current parking arrangements should be improved. Effective from to-day, we are asking for your co-operation in the following areas.

When dropping your children at the school in the morning, can you please stay to the left and drop your children in the drop off areas only. The old “drop off boxes” have been removed from the planted area.

The spaces in front of the old building (Georgian House) and the space marked for the bus can be used by parents as a “set down area” only.

We have provided parent / infant parking spaces in the upper car park. Where possible, please reverse into these spaces.

- There is no parking at the top of the driveway across from the Gym Hall. Parking on this corner prohibits the two way flow of traffic.
- Please ensure your speed does not exceed the safe limit of 10km per hour within the school premises.
- Please do not park in the disabled parking space.

Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.

Dogs on the School Site

The BOM have been considering another aspect of safety on the school site. The following statement about dogs is a gentle message once again designed to make our school a safe and pleasant environment for all students.

Concerns have been expressed that some children feel uneasy in the presence of dogs on the school premises. Even well behaved dogs can behave unpredictably when placed in noisy environments and this can potentially lead to an accident or injury to people or animals within the school grounds. The Board of Management therefore request your cooperation in ensuring that dogs are not brought to school property during school hours. If you are walking to school with your dogs, could you please meet your children at the front entrance.

Conclusion

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Michael Moretta
Head of School