

NEWSLETTER



A TERM IN THE LIFE OF **ST LAURENCE COLLEGE** December 2025

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PRINCIPAL AND DEPUTY PRINCIPAL MESSAGE

Dear Students, Parents, Staff, and Members of the St Laurence College Community,

As we approach the end of this remarkable term and the joyful season of Christmas, we write to you with hearts full of gratitude for the warmth and welcome we have experienced during this time of transition.

It has been just three weeks since our new Principal, Robert Mathews, joined the St Laurence College family, but that has been enough time for him to experience the energy and sense of community that define this special place. He has witnessed firsthand the Marianist values of faith, family spirit, and service that are not just spoken about here, but truly lived each day.

This term has been one of significant change for our school community as we bid a fond and grateful farewell to Principal Cillian O'Riordan. The emotional guard of honour formed by our students as Cillian walked through the corridors perfectly captured the respect, affection, and appreciation felt throughout our community. We wish Cillian every blessing and success in his new endeavours, knowing that his legacy of compassion, inclusivity, and Marianist leadership will continue to shape St Laurence College for years to come.

This term has been a busy one and there has been so much to celebrate. From the academic dedication of our students to the creativity displayed in art and music, from sporting achievements to the profound spiritual growth fostered through initiatives such as the Alpha Programme and Narrative 4 workshops, our students continue to embody excellence in all its forms.

The last couple of weeks have been filled with Christmas celebrations, festive activities, prayer services, Christmas jumper day, and the joy that comes from celebrating this special season together as a school community. These traditions are precious, and it is a joy to witness the festive spirit that makes St Laurence College so special.

As we prepare to welcome the Christ child at Christmas, we are reminded of the Advent themes of hope, preparation, and new beginnings. Mary's example, her faith, her courage, and her willingness to embrace God's call inspire us to approach this season, and indeed this new chapter in our school's journey, with open hearts and generous spirits.

This Christmas, as families gather and communities come together, may we all find moments of peace, joy, and gratitude. May we remember those less fortunate and respond with compassion and generosity. And may we carry the light of Christmas, the light of hope, love, and possibility, into the new year ahead.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff, whose tireless commitment to our students inspires us daily. To parents and guardians, thank you for your continued partnership, trust, and the warm welcome you have extended to me. To our students: thank you for your energy, enthusiasm, and the joy you bring to our school community each day.

Wishing you all a peaceful, safe, and blessed Christmas, and a happy New Year filled with hope and promise.

Warm regards,

Robert Mathews and John Rowe

Principal and Deputy Principal

FAREWELL TO PRINCIPAL CILLIAN O'RIORDAN



A warm, emotional farewell took place as the St Laurence College community gathered to bid farewell to Principal Cillian O'Riordan. The photograph captures the moment students formed a guard of honour, lining the corridors, applauding and cheering as Cillian walked through the school one final time. Smiling as he made his way past the sea of faces, the atmosphere was filled with appreciation, respect, and the bittersweet reality of saying goodbye to a leader who had made such a meaningful impact on our community.

The spontaneous outpouring of affection from students, staff, and the wider school community speaks volumes about the relationships Cillian built during his time as Principal. His collaborative leadership style, willingness to listen, and commitment to supporting staff in their work created a positive, professional environment where everyone could thrive.

Under Cillian's leadership, our Marianist identity was strengthened, deepening our connections with sister schools across the globe. Cillian created a school environment where students felt safe, encouraged, and inspired to become the best versions of themselves. His door was always open, his support unwavering, and his belief in the potential of every young person absolute.

The strong sense of family spirit that defines St Laurence College is a testament to the culture Cillian nurtured during his tenure. He understood that a school is more than buildings, policies, and curriculum; it is a living community where relationships matter, where kindness is valued, and where every person's contribution is recognised and appreciated. As Cillian embarks on the next chapter of his journey, he carries with him the gratitude, best wishes, and fond memories of the entire St Laurence College community. While we bid you farewell with sadness, we do so with immense gratitude for all you have given us. You will always be part of the St Laurence College family, and we wish you every blessing, happiness, and success in all that lies ahead.

Go n-éirí an bóthar leat – May the road rise to meet you.

STUDENT COUNCIL - NEW VOICES, NEW LEADERSHIP



A warm welcome to our newly elected Student Council Representatives! Thank you for stepping up to represent the voices of our students and for your commitment to making St Laurence College an even better place for everyone.

St Laurence College gathered in the hall for a special assembly as we formally welcomed our new Student Council Representatives. The photograph captures our students attentively engaged, reflecting the sense of pride and community that defines our school. With staff and students united, the assembly underscored the Council's vital role in representing student voices and shaping positive initiatives throughout the year.

The election process itself was a wonderful exercise in democracy and civic engagement. With creative, thoughtful campaign speeches, our students demonstrated maturity, creativity, and genuine passion for improving school life. The competitive nature of the elections in many tutor groups speaks to the engaged and active student body we have at St Laurence College.

This moment marks the beginning of an exciting chapter of leadership, collaboration, and student empowerment. We congratulate all newly appointed representatives and look forward to the contributions they will make to school life at St Laurence College.

Thank you to all the tutors for educating our students on the importance of the Student Council and for conducting elections that were fiercely competitive and enjoyable. Here's to a year of positive change, creative initiatives, and strong student voice!

STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

A Star is Born: Jorja Forsyth Shines at The Helix

A huge congratulations to our incredibly talented First Year student, Jorja Forsyth, who recently took to the stage at the iconic Helix theatre to perform for Music Generation in front of a large and enthusiastic crowd!

Jorja's participation in this prestigious event is a tremendous achievement, showcasing not only her musical talent but also her remarkable poise and dedication. To perform at such a renowned venue so early in her secondary school journey is truly inspiring.

At St. Laurence College, we are committed to nurturing every student's unique gifts and passions. The entire college community is buzzing with pride. Well done, Jorja we can't wait to see where your talent takes you next and we look forward to you entertaining us at our Christmas celebration

Boxing Excellence

Huge congratulations to our talented First Year student, Cassius McDonald, who recently stepped into the ring for an incredible boxing exhibition at the Mansion House!

Cassius earned a coveted spot on the undercard of an event headlined by Ireland's own double Olympic champion, Kellie Harrington. This was a fantastic opportunity for him to showcase his dedication and skill in the sport on a prestigious platform. We are so proud of the courage, and sportsmanship he displayed.

At St. Laurence College, we celebrate our students' achievements in all fields, both academic and extracurricular. Well done, Cassius the entire college community is cheering you on!



BUILDING COMMUNITY



GRANPARENTS BREAKFAST

St Laurence College was filled with warmth, laughter, and a strong sense of community as the school proudly hosted its annual First Year Grandparents' Breakfast Morning. This cherished event, rooted in the Marianist family spirit and the welcoming ethos of the Le Chéile tradition, brought generations together to celebrate the bonds that shape and support our students' lives.

From early morning, the smell of freshly cooked breakfast filled the school as students and staff worked side by side in the kitchen, preparing a hearty spread for the grandparents who play such an important role in our young people's lives. First Year students proudly welcomed their grandparents, guiding them through the school and sharing stories of their first months in secondary school. The atmosphere was one of genuine joy as families reconnected, posed for photos, and enjoyed warm conversations over breakfast. For many grandparents, it was a meaningful opportunity to step inside their grandchild's world – a journey that most of them also walked themselves in years past.

The morning featured a short reflection celebrating the Marianist tradition of family spirit, emphasising the values of community, inclusiveness, and mutual respect. The Grandparents' Breakfast Morning was not only a celebration of family, but a living expression of the Le Chéile welcome that lies at the heart of our school's mission.

A massive thank you to our HSLO Sean O'Neill, our dedicated staff Ms Cummins, Ms Coyne, Ms Moore, Ms Stanley and Ms Mohan, and our brilliant students, Brooke Mitchell, Daisy McClurg, Sophia Flynn, Saoirse Carraher, Yasmin Wallace, Sadie Wallace and Millie Kennedy.

SCIENCE WEEK

Celebrating Science Week with our local primary schools: inspiring young minds through discovery, innovation, and hands-on learning at St Laurence College:

St Laurence College was delighted to welcome pupils from our local primary schools as part of our Science Week celebrations. This exciting collaboration provided young learners with the opportunity to explore the world of science through engaging experiments, demonstrations, and interactive workshops led by our dedicated staff and enthusiastic students. The energy in the labs was incredible as pupils investigated chemical reactions, explored physics in action, and discovered the wonders of biology through hands on activities.

Science Week is a highlight of our academic calendar, and partnering with neighbouring schools allows us to share our passion for STEM while helping to spark curiosity in the next generation of scientists. The visiting pupils showed great enthusiasm, creativity, and teamwork throughout the day. We are proud to strengthen our connection with local primary schools and to support a smooth, inspiring transition into post-primary education. We look forward to building on this successful collaboration in the years ahead, and welcoming up all the students in the new year to participate in our TY leadership sports programme.



CHAPLAINS CORNER



Alpha Programme

At St Laurence College, we believe in educating the whole person, and a vital part of this is supporting our students' spiritual and personal growth. We were proud to run the Alpha Youth programme, a dynamic initiative that creates space for young people to explore faith, life, and meaning together. Alpha Youth is more than just a resource, it's an opportunity for students to ask life's big questions in an open, honest, and welcoming environment.

Alpha Youth is more than just a resource, it's an opportunity for students to ask life's big questions in an open, honest, and welcoming environment. Over the course of the programme, students gather for sessions that include three core elements: Connection, Content, and Conversation.

What makes Alpha special is the community it builds. Students discover they're not alone in their questions or their search for meaning. They build connections with peers, grow in confidence, and develop the courage to explore faith on their own terms. It complements our Religious Education curriculum beautifully, taking learning beyond the classroom and into the realm of personal discovery and authentic relationship.

We are grateful to the staff and student leaders who make Alpha possible at St Laurence College, creating an environment where faith can be explored, questions can be asked, and young people can discover a sense of purpose and belonging that will sustain them throughout their lives.

Head to Heart: A Marianist Reflection for Educators

In October, one of our educators, Carol Doyle, had the privilege of attending the "Head to Heart" workshop for Marianist schools. This profound experience focused on exploring how our Marianist mission and charism can actively guide both our teaching and our community life.

The core of the workshop was a reflection on the journey from an intellectual understanding of our values ("the head") to fully living them in our daily practice ("the heart").



Through collaborative sessions, we focused on essential themes: fostering deep inclusivity, recognising the inherent dignity of every person in our care, and intentionally creating school environments where all truly feel they belong. The gathering offered valuable opportunities to discuss practical strategies for integrating faith, service, and community into the fabric of our school culture. A particular highlight was the opportunity to build meaningful connections with colleagues from other Marianist institutions, share inspiration, and learn about the impactful work happening across our network.

It was a valuable experience that will continue to resonate in our classrooms and corridors.

SPORTS UPDATE

St Laurence College is proud to commend the outstanding success and commitment shown by its sports teams this season, with impressive performances across football, badminton, and basketball. The dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship displayed by all students involved have been a credit to the school, and their efforts have been rewarded with every team progressing to the knockout stages of their respective competitions.

The boys' football team delivered a series of strong performances, highlighted by a memorable victory over Blackrock Educate Together. Third year student Alex O'Connor was exceptional in this match, producing a magnificent performance that played a key role in securing the win. In girls' soccer, Sadie Wallace has been a standout performer, demonstrating skill and hard work throughout the campaign.

The basketball team has also enjoyed notable success, with Patrick Gajardo making a significant impact through his consistency, work rate, and scoring ability. Meanwhile, the badminton team has shown great resilience and focus, with Eoin Wilson and Joe McGinley leading the way through disciplined and high-quality performances in the Boys under 16.

These achievements reflect the hard work of the players and coaches alike. St Laurence College congratulates all involved and wishes the teams every success in the knockout stages ahead.



TY EXPERIENCE



Transition Year students from St Laurence College enjoying the Curiosity Programme at University College Dublin, an inspiring experience that encouraged curiosity, critical thinking and a glimpse into third-level education.

Four Transition Year students from St Laurence College Alex Kerr, Flavia Ivanov, Emily Motilall and Caiden Murdock recently had the opportunity to attend the Curiosity Programme at University College Dublin (UCD), a unique initiative designed to inspire young people through exploration and inquiry.

During their time at UCD, the students engaged in interactive workshops, thought-provoking discussions and hands-on activities that encouraged

them to think critically, ask meaningful questions and explore a wide range of subjects. The programme offered valuable insight into university life, allowing the students to experience learning in a third-level environment while developing confidence and independence.

The Curiosity Programme places a strong emphasis on creativity, problem-solving and collaboration, all of which our students embraced enthusiastically. Alex, Flavia, Emily and Caiden represented St Laurence College with great enthusiasm and maturity, making the most of this enriching educational experience that will undoubtedly support their future academic journeys. Well Done to all involved.

TY FIRST AID TRAINING

Our Transition Year students recently participated in a comprehensive First Aid Response course, gaining crucial, real-world skills that empower them to act confidently in an emergency. Over several practical sessions, certified instructors guided them through essential techniques, including CPR, the recovery position, and managing choking, wounds, and fractures.

This hands-on training moves beyond theory, instilling not just knowledge but the competence and calm needed to potentially save a life. Students engaged enthusiastically, practicing on mannequins and working in teams to assess and respond to various scenarios.

At St Laurence College, we believe in educating the whole person, and equipping our young people with such vital, lifelong skills is a key part of that mission. We are incredibly proud of our TY group for their focused participation and for embracing this important responsibility towards the well-being of others.



FIRST YEAR NARRATIVE 4 EXHIBITION



Our First Year students recently took part in a powerful and transformative Narrative 4 Workshop, culminating in a moving exhibition of shared stories. Narrative 4 is a global empathy-building programme where students learn the art of 'story exchange', deeply listening to a peer's experience and then retelling it in the first person as their own.

This unique process creates profound connections as students step into each other's lives, seeing the world through different eyes and understanding experiences beyond their own. The workshop challenged our First Years to be vulnerable, to listen with open hearts, and to honour the stories entrusted to them by retelling them with authenticity and respect.

Students' written reflections illustrated themes of resilience, belonging, identity, and understanding. The displays revealed the rich diversity of experiences within our First Year group.

This initiative perfectly aligns with our college values of community, inclusion, and respect, demonstrating how storytelling can break down barriers and unite us. In a world that often feels divided, Narrative 4 reminds us of our shared humanity and the power of truly listening to one another. We are incredibly proud of all participants for their thoughtful engagement, maturity, and willingness to connect deeply with their peers in this unforgettable experience.

MUSIC GENERATION



Some of our talented students participated in a 10-week Music Generation programme, learning, creating, and producing music alongside professional producer Ritchey McCourt. What an incredible experience!

This unique opportunity gives students hands-on experience in music production and recording, skills that go far beyond the traditional music classroom. The Music Generation programme is designed to nurture young musical talent and provide pathways for students passionate about music to develop their skills. Over 10 weeks, participants explore different genres, experiment with sounds, collaborate on original compositions, and gain invaluable insights into the music industry.

What makes this programme so special is the authentic, professional experience it provides. Students aren't just learning theory; they're actively creating, producing, and bringing their musical ideas to life with guidance from an industry professional. This real-world experience builds confidence, technical skills, and a deeper understanding of music as both an art form and a potential career path.

We are incredibly proud of our students for seizing this opportunity and for the creativity, dedication, and enthusiasm they bring to each session. We can't wait to hear the music they create and to see where this experience takes them on their musical journey!

DAVE'S JUNGLE - WILD SCIENCE COMES TO SCHOOL

Students experienced an exciting and interactive science presentation with Dave's Jungle! This thrilling educational show brought the wonders of the natural world right into our school, offering a hands-on learning experience that went far beyond ordinary documentaries. A highlight of the visit was the inclusive and sensory-friendly approach taken throughout the sessions.

Diving into captivating topics like spider senses, how snakes perceive the world and hunt, the remarkable skills of chameleons, and more, Dave's presentation combined fascinating facts with live animal encounters that left students both educated and entertained.

The stars of the show included snakes, scorpions, a tarantula, a chameleon, a snapping turtle, frogs, and more, each creature offering unique insights into the incredible diversity of life on our planet. Students had the rare opportunity to observe these animals up close, learning about their adaptations, behaviors, and the vital roles they play in their ecosystems.



Dave's Jungle provided a one-of-a-kind educational experience that brought science to life in the most literal sense, demonstrating that learning can be both educational and exhilarating. We're grateful for this memorable visit that will undoubtedly leave a lasting impression on our students!

SCHOOL COMPLETION PROGRAMME

At St. Laurence College, we are committed to supporting every student's journey from their very first steps. We are delighted to highlight the positive start of our School Completion Programme (SCP) with a dedicated group of our First Year students.

This vital programme provides targeted academic, social, and emotional support, helping students to build strong foundations, foster a sense of belonging, and fully engage with school life. Through tailored mentoring, learning support, and wellbeing activities, the SCP empowers students to develop confidence, resilience, and essential study skills.

The enthusiastic participation of our First Years has been wonderful to see. The programme is already making a meaningful difference, ensuring that every young person has the opportunity to thrive. We look forward to continuing this important work, nurturing their potential throughout their time at St. Laurence College.



IT'S CHRISTMAS!....

A Week of Joy, Tradition, and Giving

The final week before the Christmas holidays was filled with festive spirit, cherished traditions, and joyful celebrations that brought our entire school community together. From exciting outings to heartwarming acts of charity, from beloved annual traditions to spectacular performances, it was a week that perfectly captured what makes St Laurence College so special.

Our students enjoyed a variety of festive excursions, gliding across the ice at skating rinks, marveling at the magical Christmas lights in town, and enjoying friendly competition at bowling in Bray. Back at school, movie and pizza parties created cozy moments of relaxation and fun, while laughter and excitement filled every corner of the building. The school corridors also came alive with festive creativity during our Christmas Door Decorating Competition. After much deliberation, Ms Coyne's spectacular design was crowned the winner. Well done to all who participated in bringing Christmas cheer to every corner of the school!

Some of our most treasured traditions took center stage this week. Bro Fred's legendary hot chocolate station warmed hearts (and hands!), while first years gathered around the fire to roast marshmallows – simple moments that create lasting memories and strengthen the bonds of our school family. These traditions, passed down through generations of students, connect us to our past while creating new memories for the future.

Importantly, amidst all the celebration, we kept the true spirit of Christmas at the heart of everything we did. Our Christmas Jumper Day raised vital funds for Childline, a charity that makes a real difference to children who need support. Students and staff alike donned their most festive jumpers, showing that giving to others is what Christmas is truly about.

A big thank you to all our wonderful staff and students who contributed so generously to our Christmas Care Box Appeal for St Joseph's Nursing Home in Shankill. The boxes, filled with thoughtful gifts and treats, will bring joy and comfort to residents during the Christmas season, reminding them that they are remembered and valued by our community.

The week culminated in a fantastic Carol Service where our wonderful students shone once more. Voices joined in harmony, filling the space with the timeless songs of Christmas and creating a moment of reflection, gratitude, and celebration. It was the perfect way to mark the end of term and prepare our hearts for the true meaning of Christmas.

The photographs that follow capture the joy, laughter, warmth, and community spirit that defined this special week. From festive outings to quiet traditions, from charitable giving to spectacular performances, these images tell the story of a school community celebrating together, caring for others, and embracing the magic of Christmas.



ON THIN ICE - DUNDRUM SKATING ADVENTURE

Our 2nd and 3rd-year students got their skates on for a fun-filled outing to Dundrum on Ice! The excursion provided a valuable opportunity for students to enjoy festive activities, build friendships, and embrace the Christmas spirit outside the classroom.

The ice rink buzzed with energy, laughter, and the occasional wobble as students of all skating abilities took to the ice. From confident skaters gliding gracefully around the rink to brave beginners clutching the barriers and finding their balance, everyone embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and good humour.



The photographs capture moments of pure joy, friends holding hands for support, triumphant smiles after completing a lap without falling, and the camaraderie that comes from shared experiences and mutual encouragement. For many students, it was their first time on ice, making the achievement of staying upright (most of the time!) all the more rewarding.

Beyond the skating, the outing provided valuable time for year groups to bond, relax, and create memories together. These experiences are an important part of school life, strengthening friendships and building the sense of community that defines St Laurence College.



BRAY BOWL

A group of students headed off on the bus to Bray Bowl for an action-packed afternoon of bowling, arcade games, and pizza, the perfect recipe for festive fun!

The bowling lanes echoed with cheers and friendly competition as students aimed for strikes and spares, with some discovering hidden bowling talents and others just enjoying the laughter that came with the occasional gutter ball. Between bowling frames, the arcade beckoned with its flashing lights and exciting games. Students competed to win tickets, carefully strategizing which games would yield the biggest rewards.

After all that activity, pizza was the perfect fuel. The combination of competition, games, food, and friendship made for an unforgettable outing. Students returned to school worn out but happy, with smiles on their faces and memories of a fantastic day together. These experiences remind us that some of the best learning happens outside the classroom, building friendships, sharing joy, and creating moments that will be remembered long after the school year ends.





Merry Christmas

ST. LAURENCE
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2025



Merry Christmas

**ST. LAURENCE
COLLEGE**

2025

December



THANK YOU FOR A WONDERFUL TERM!

As we wrap up another incredible term at St Laurence College, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to our students, parents, teachers, and staff for their dedication and support! Together, we've achieved so much and created lasting memories. Have a peaceful, safe Christmas, see you all in 2026!

Warm regards,
The St. Laurence College Team

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