



Student Newsletter

spread a
little
kindness
wherever
you go

St. Leo's College at Stripe Young Scientist Exhibition 2026

This year St. Leo's College had two successful entries to the Stripe Young Scientist Exhibition 2026.

Huge well done and congratulations to Naomi Picovici, Liela and Lojain Abdallah and Amala Rooney who competed at the Stripe Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition last week. The girls attended three days of judging and impressed the likes of An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Minister for Education and Youth Hildegard Naughton and Professor John O'Halloran, President of UCC.



Particular congratulations to Naomi Picovici who walked away with two awards. Naomi was the intermediate winner of the Biological and Ecological Sciences category, beating over 50 other projects. In addition, Naomi received a special award from Met Eireann and the Climate Change Advisory Group.



St. Leo's College at Stripe Young Scientist Exhibition 2026



NAOMI'S PROJECT: My project delves into the intricate relationship between queen breeding and the possibility to control what traits a queen bee inherits from its mother. Selecting docility as a representative, I hoped to prove that my hypothesis was factual: a beekeeper can select a colony with certain positive qualities and graft queens from its brood frames, confident that daughter queens will consistently inherit this temperament. This revelation would allow climate change-resistant traits as a result of mutations due to adaptive genetic variation (polyandry) to be exploited and made abundant

by beekeepers. Over a period of five months, I have assessed how successfully and consistently a sample of queen bees have acquired their mother's most persistent trait. To achieve a fair test, I completed the niche queen rearing process, which involves the grafting of larvae, incubation of queen cells, and the inspection of Apideas and Nucs. Docility, steadiness on comb, brood, and queen size amongst other qualities were assessed, and these various visual inspections and I intricate experiments led to my conclusion that a beekeeper can approach the queen rearing process with the certainty that all grafts will benefit from its mother colony's most beneficial traits, ensuring the native Irish black honeybee's survival in changing climates.



Naomi being judged by Prof John O'Halloran, president of UCC.

Liela, Lojain and Amala's Project: Our project, *Don't Let It Get Under Your Skin*, investigates sun safety awareness among Irish students, staff, and adults. Through over 380 surveys, interviews, and school visits, we researched and documented people's knowledge of UV rays, sunscreen habits, tanning culture, and the long-term risks of sun exposure. Our aim was to identify gaps in sun safety education and highlight the need for it to be included in the Irish school curriculum. Alongside our data analysis, we created an awareness campaign, hosted a fundraiser, made a noticeboard, had a KCLR radio interview and worked with skin cancer survivor Linda Chanders, who acted as our mentor. Linda has also agreed to publish our findings, as they may support research centres working in melanoma prevention.

We are honoured to have been invited to the Irish Melanoma Forum in UCD, sponsored by Enterprise Ireland, where our work will be shared with dermatologists, researchers, and medical professionals. We hope this project continues to move forward, and that sun safety may even be added to the curriculum as early as next year.



The girls spoke to the Minister for Education and Youth, Hildegard Naughton, about the importance of getting Sun Safety into the Irish curriculum. Minister Naughton was very impressed.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Whole School Evaluation: Management, Leadership and Learning

We look forward to welcoming Department of Education & Youth Inspectors to our school over the next two weeks for our WSE-MLL Inspection.

All Parents are reminded to complete the Parent Survey by 5pm on Friday 16th January.

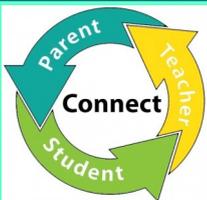


St. Leo's College School Calendar



Buy now for €10!

A great way to get organised for the new year.



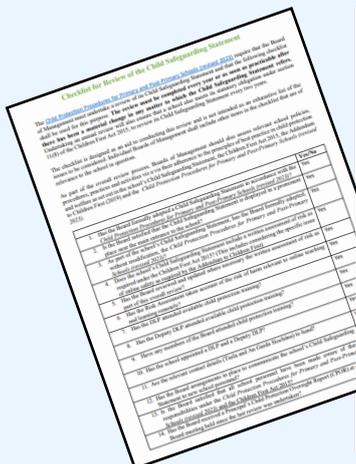
Fifth Year Parent-Student-Teacher Meeting:

We look forward to meeting with our Fifth Year Students and their Parents/Guardians on Thursday 22nd January 4.15-6.45pm.

Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment

The annual review of the school's Child Safeguarding Statement & Risk Assessment was completed by the Board of Management on Wednesday 7th January. Sincere thanks to students, parents and staff who engaged in this review process. Particular thanks to our Student Representative Council and our Parents' Association for their contributions.

The newly reviewed statement can be accessed on our website or is available to parents on request by contacting school reception.



This Week in The Nationalist

Students impress at scientist exhibition

By Derry Lenehan

CARLOW was well represented at the Stripe Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition last week with a project by a student from St Leo's College, Naomi Pivovci even taking home two awards.

A second project was presented by Naomi's schoolmates from St Leo's College while three teams from St Mary's Academy CBS also showcased the result of months of hard work as they exhibited their projects in front of large crowds over the course of three days at the RDS, Dublin.

Naomi won the Climate Change Solutions Award and came in first place in the intermediate individual category for her project titled *Like Mother Like Daughter: Pursuing beneficial traits of native Irish queen bees through controlled breeding to ensure species survival in changing climates.*

Naomi's fellow St Leo's students Amala Rooney and twin sisters Lejain Abdullah and Liela Abdullah also presented their project titled *Don't let it get Under your Skin: Exploring the hidden impact of beauty routines from UV exposure to aesthetic pressure and our*



Naomi Pivovci from St Leo's College, Carlow with her award-winning project at the Stripe Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition in the RDS, Dublin

health beneath the surface.

For their project, the girls collected over 380 surveys from students in local primary and secondary schools, staff groups and active retirement members. They also carried out a number of school visits

and held discussions with teachers.

"Our project began when we realised how common sunburn, tanning pressure and misinformation about UV are among young people in Ireland," explains Liela.

"We attend an all-girls school and we often saw

girls around us making decisions that harmed their skin without properly understanding the outcomes or consequences. This is what truly drove us to make an impact with our project.

"We were inspired by the story of our mentor, skin cancer survivor

Linda Chandera, whose experience made us realise how urgently sun safety needs to be taken seriously. That's what pushed us to investigate what Irish students, staff and adults actually know about sun protection," she added.

The girls have been in-

cluded in the Irish Melanoma Forum in UCD, where their findings will be shared with dermatologists and researchers. Their mentor Linda Chandera has also agreed to publish their results to support melanoma research centres.

St Mary's Academy

CBS had seven students across three projects taking part in the exhibition.

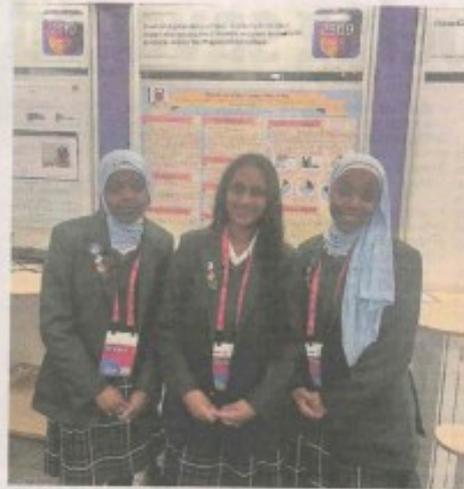
Emil Jaskruša, Muhammed Irshad and Siddharth Arvan Sharma presented an air quality device which monitors indoor air quality by measuring CO2 levels. The device works by mechanically opening a window if low air quality is detected in a room.

For their project titled *Watts at the Door*, T.J. Keating, Craig Power and Karol Szatkowski created an innovative energy harvesting system that converts the motions of a door into electrical power, providing an eco-friendly and sustainable source of energy through everyday movement.

Taif Akbar's showcased his project titled *The People's Electrolyzer*, which is an open-source project designed to analyse and quantify the efficiency limits of small-scale hydrogen production, making clean energy research more accessible to all.

The overall winner of the exhibition was fourth-year student Aoibhneas Daly from Mercy Mounthawk in Kerry for her project which aims to help doctors improve the treatment of brain cancer through the use of AI.

In total, 350 students from 221 schools took part in the exhibition.



Leila Ahmed Abdullah, Amala Rooney and Lejain Ahmed Abdullah from St Leo's College, Carlow took part in this year's Stripe Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition of the Year last week in the RDS, Dublin

St Leo's student among finalists in 'poetry aloud' competition

By Laoise Murray

SAINT Leo's College Carlow student Emmanuela Adekunle was a finalist in the 2025 Poetry Aloud competition, which challenged students to recite a prescribed poem from memory.

Emmanuela was one of 328 students from schools across Ireland who entered the competition and one of 20 finalists who brought heart and energy to their performances at the National Library of Ireland, recently.

For the competition, Emmanuela recited a previously unpublished poem *Those Winter Evenings* by the late poet Seamus Heaney. The poem is from the recently published collection *The Poems of Seamus Heaney*.

"The event was a joyful celebration of the beauty to be found in speaking and listening to poetry," said Dr Audrey Whitty, director of the National Library of Ireland.

All the students recited their poems with "heart-



St Leo's College student Emmanuela Adekunle was presented with a Poetry Aloud certificate by the director of the National Library of Ireland, Dr Audrey Whitty

felt expression and thoughtful interpretation", she said.

The judging panel included Dr Audrey Whitty, Liz Kelly, director of Poetry Ireland and John Fitzgerald, poet and adjunct professor with the School of English at

University College Cork.

The overall winner, Luke Power from Ramsgrange Community School in Co Wexford, captivated the judges with his recitation of *Among the Trees* by Alvy Carragher. Luke received the perpetual Seamus

Heaney Poetry Aloud trophy, designed by Meath-based sculptor Fiona Smith-Darragh, and a €300 cheque. The winner of each age category received a cheque for €300 and runners-up got a €100 book token.

The teacher from each

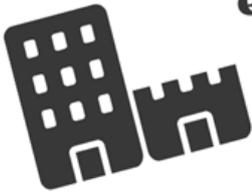
winning school was presented with a book token for €300 to bring back to their school libraries. All finalists, including Emmanuela, were presented with a certificate of recognition and a National Library of Ireland gift bag.

SUSTAINABILITY

TIP

SAY NO TO FAST FASHION

We discard 92 million tons of clothes waste every year, that's enough to fill 1 1/2 empire state buildings everyday



Fast fashion is one of the biggest contributors to climate change and CO2 emissions

ACTION YOU CAN TAKE!



to shops like H&M, Zara, Shein etc.

some of these especially Shein use unethical labour with child labours and poor pay



ZARA

H&M

SHOP SECOND-HAND

SHEIN

use vintage/charity shops or websites like vinted to bag some more sustainable finds



as well as the climate benefits, they are better value and higher quality



H.O'D. and T.C.

An Taisce



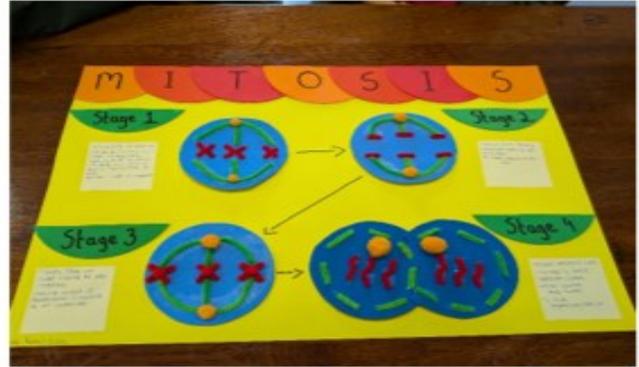
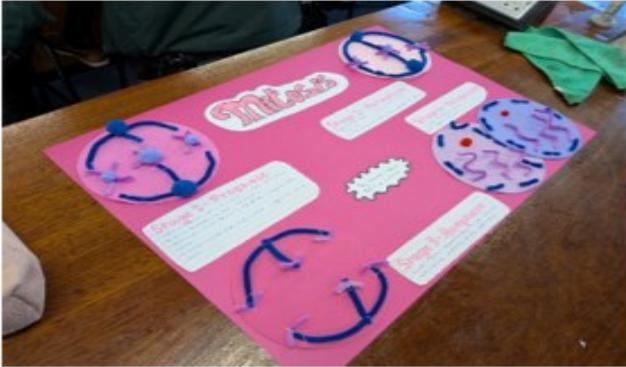
Great photos of some of our Sixth Year students engaging in Chemistry coursework practicals in Maynooth University on Wednesday 14th January.

Students got to experience carrying out experiments to the highest standards in the university labs and engaging in discussions with each other and the Chemistry Lecturers.

Sixth Year Chemistry Practical Day at Maynooth University

Fifth Year Biology

Ms Kelly's Fifth Year Biology students are currently exploring Cell Continuity. Student were challenged to create an A2 poster which demonstrated the main stages of mitosis. Great work produced by all.



Second Year Science

Second Year Science students are currently completing CBA 1 'Extended Experiment Investigation'. Students began testing their hypothesis this week. Excellent scientific investigations being carried out.



SPORT

The Junior Football team is now through to the Leinster Final after beating St. Mary's College Naas in the semi-final 2:8 to 1:9 on Thursday 15th January.

Well done to all the girls involved and best of luck in the final!

LEINSTER FINALISTS



CONGRATULATIONS JUNIOR FOOTBALL TEAM



Congratulations to the First Year Netball Team who beat Rosemount School Dublin 20-1.

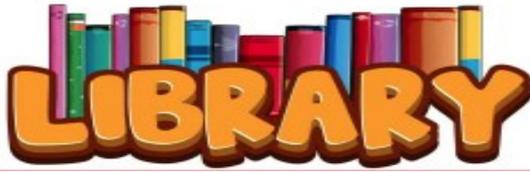
The Junior Netball Team beat Rosemount's B Team 13-6.

**First Years
WON**

**Seconds Years
missed out
by 3 points**

WELL DONE FIRST AND SECOND YEAR BASKETBALL TEAMS





The books in the Rebel Skies series by Ann Sei Linn are probably one of the best fantasy books I've ever read, it

Book Review by Lillian Kennedy 4D

immerses Eastern cultures and merges many fantasy aspects all in a book series. Here is an extremely simplified storyline of how the books sort of start off, to avoid spoilers. It follows Kurara; a girl who has the ability to be able to bring paper to life with the limit of her imagination. Some other individuals also have this ability and they are known as Crafters. The three books in the series revolve mainly about this simplified concept I gave you but expand upon it with many, many more fantasy gimmicks that sort of compliments it and makes it even more compelling for the reader. Ann Sei Linn may be one of my favourite authors for world building out there. She introduces us as the reader to the world of Rebel Skies, not in such a way that makes it confusing or that it is dumbed down, but in a way that makes us feel as if we were already a part of the world. She doesn't land all the topics on us all at once, but gradually, evenly spread between story and understanding the world around us. And that's what a well written fantasy novel should look like. The description of the Mikoshiman Empire (the world the Rebel Skies series is set in) throughout each book is most excellent also. The ideas of cities in the skies weren't just left as is but were expanded upon tremendously also. Ann Sei Linn gave it background, structure and made it makes sense. In fact, not a singular thing described by Ann was left as is. She went above and beyond for every aspect of her world building. And that's how a fantasy novel should be written. Not only is her world building skills excellent, the character depth is amazingly diverse and deep also. For example, some authors write female characters with a constant reoccurring unrelatable mind-set but Kurara has emotion, and not emotion just for the sake of it but for real relatable reasons. Describing her as determined would be such an understatement, to say the least. And Himura, with a sort of conservative and stubborn mind-set also has depth, trauma, validity to every emotion he is feeling. These characters also have visible development throughout the series, and this development isn't just after one chapter, but over so many chapters. They get confused, unsure they question the world around them, and that is what makes them a proper protagonist. There are also so many different well developed (less major) characters that I could have talked about too, it's not the main characters who get development. Throughout the whole series also, there are many twists that are sometimes satisfyingly hinted at, but not in the way you would expect. These twists are also in detail, like the rest of Ann Sei Linn's writing style. Twists not only depend on the story being told but how it is being told also, they can be done very wrong, if they are not incorporated into the story in a clean and consistent way. Speaking of twists the interlude segments of the books are very clever also, tying into the story in some way or another in each book in the series. If I were to pick my favourite book in the series, it would have to be Rebel Fire, the second addition to the series. The first book was definitely intended to be an introduction to the series, with more minimalist twists that merged with the main plot of the second book. The third book felt a bit more like the plot was quite fixed; expanding from where the second book left us. It felt almost too planned in my opinion; whereas the second book was more twisty and chaotic, which I greatly prefer. I like how the names of each of the books tells us how the story is going to be like; the skies being a sort of calm blue, however, skies can change fast and unpredictably. Fire is such a wild thing possibly significantly the symbols of radical ideology scattered throughout, as well how wildly the story develops, and everything isn't how it seems. And of course, dawn is the most recognisable symbol, which is rebirth, almost like a do-over. I think all three books are close enough in rating to each other, in my opinion. This fantasy series is amazingly well written not only with world building but also with a most incredible and compelling story. This series is highly underrated and I advise any readers who desperately want a change in books they read to get into this series as this is actually how I got into this actually and it really helped with my reading slump!





Weekly Hot Lunch Menu

Monday 19th

- Pasta Bolognese
- Pasta Bolognese (V)

Tuesday 20th

- Spicy Chicken Noodles
- Spicy Noodles (V)

Wednesday 21st

- Chicken Curry & Rice
- Veg Curry & Rice (V)

Thursday 22nd

- Taco Loaded Baked Potatoes or Taco Fries
- Loaded Baked Potato or Loaded Fries

Soup

Homemade Vegetable

Small Dinner €4.00 | Large Dinner €6

One small
Positive Thought
in the morning
can change your
Whole Day

Happier January 2026

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY



1 Find three things to look forward to this year

2 Make time today to do something kind for yourself

3 Do a kind act for someone else to help brighten their day

4 Write a list of things you feel grateful for and why

5 Look for the good in others and notice their strengths

6 Take five minutes to sit still and just breathe

7 Learn something new and share it with others

8 Say positive things to the people you meet today

9 Get moving. Do something active (ideally outdoors)

10 Thank someone you're grateful to and tell them why

11 Switch off all your tech at least an hour before bedtime

12 Connect with someone near you - share a smile or chat

13 Take a different route today and see what you notice

14 Eat healthy food which really nourishes you today

15 Get outside and notice five things that are beautiful

16 Contribute positively to your local community

17 Be gentle with yourself when you make mistakes

18 Get back in contact with an old friend

19 Focus on what's good, even if today feels tough

20 Go to bed in good time and allow yourself to recharge

21 Try out something new to get out of your comfort zone

22 Plan something fun and invite others to join you

23 Put away digital devices and focus on being in the moment

24 Take a small step towards an important goal

25 Decide to lift people up rather than put them down

26 Choose one of your strengths and find a way to use it today

27 Challenge your negative thoughts and look for the upside

28 Ask other people about things they've enjoyed recently

29 Say hello to a neighbour and get to know them better

30 See how many people you can smile at today

31 Write down your hopes or plans for the future



ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

Happier · Kinder · Together