Reflections

2025-2026

THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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PRINCIPAL'S ADDRESS

Welcome to Reflections,

While Shakespeare famously states that "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet", we chose the title "Reflections" carefully. Like a mirror, this yearbook lets you catch a glimpse of yourself: your passions, your friends, your achievements in a colourful montage of a year well spent. Yet "Reflections" also captures the inquiring look back that contemplates the journey between 'then' and 'now'.

Before the school year had even started and we welcomed you through those yellow doors, the staff gathered to coordinate our vision for the year to come. Voices from across all departments and roles converged to craft a set of values that would define life in this school. We wanted a vision of excellence that permeates every aspect of your day, from the steps to the office counters to the classrooms. The conclusion was simple on paper but grand in aspiration: our is mission to transform the lives of our students.

We agreed that for our school to thrive as both a place of learning and a place of personal flourishing, that we must act with integrity and empathy so that you know we are always there to support you. I hope you feel that each morning as we greet you on the steps and see that sense of belonging in the smiling faces printed on the pages within.

This bedrock fosters independence and respect amongst our students: respect for their teachers, respect for their peers, respect for themselves. These pages display your ambitions and successes. Be it Young Scientist projects, robotic duels, debating competitions, a plethora of Olympiads, Mathematics quizzes, Economics projects, sporting contests, charity work (to name only a few) you have worked together to achieve whatever you set your mind to. You knew what you wanted and knew the people to help make it happen.

And we, the whole staff of The Institute of Education, resolved to reflect on all of this to make sure that our vision remains clear and no laurels are rested upon.

So as you flick through these pages, let yourself reflect on how you have transformed this year. Compare the person who entered through those Georgian doors in September to the person who strides out into the world in June and see how far you have come.

Yvonne O'Toole

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

The Academic Council provides support to the school management team. The Council meets on a regular basis throughout the year.

Yvonne O'Toole
Principal

Aideen Corr
Deputy Principal

Pat Doyle
Physics Teacher

Richard Whealans
Retired Principal

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin
Study Skills
6th Year Tutor
German Teacher

Jane D'Alton
Head of Pastoral Care and Safeguarding

David Loughrey
Bruce College Principal

Melanie Mullins
Head of People Operations

MESSAGE
FROM THE TEAM

Aideen Corr
Deputy Principal

Ailbhe Nolan
6th Year Head

Lorraine Killeen
Interim Deputy Principal
5th Year Head

Deirdre Kelly
Deputy Principal
4th Year Head

No two years are ever truly the same. Sure, we may cycle through the same set of months; bustled from Autumns through the gusts of Winter and onward stridently to Summer but the tangible, real details of each lived year are unique. This is one of the most refreshing and exciting elements of school life. We may know at the start of the book that Sherlock Holmes will crack the case but that makes it no less special, thrilling and intriguing. As students your story is wrought with twists, turns and challenges all of your own. This book sets out to capture snippets of those tales as they are written; a single moment in the continuum of this vibrant school.

One of the great delights of working here is getting to know your unique personalities, the cast of characters of the tale. To put not only a face to a name but see the light in your eyes as you chase your passions, ambitions and inspirations. It is a privilege to be trusted with your stories and dreams, and we do not take it for granted. This is a school with respect built into every facet of our values and it shapes the dialogue between us. That dialogue is so precious because where else could you meet such a wonderous myriad of people.

In each class you sit beside luminaries of debates (both national and international), burgeoning chess masters, future politicians and journalists. In the breakout spaces you share sweets and chat with the innovators of proven acumen in Mathematics, Astrophysics, Robotics, Economics and a litany of other Olympiads and research projects. On the steps you chat and share study tips with rising stars in Cricket, Camogie, Hockey, Baton Twirling, Athletics and Gaelic Football. In the canteen you talk and share coffee with skilled sailors, rowers and swimmers. Even the briefest scan of these pages shows the breathtaking variety of skills that converge in the corridors, and it is an honour to be part of it all.

Not only have you found your own places within school, but you have also sought to include others. Your enthusiasm, open minds and open hearts have been a guiding light as you have made sure that everyone feels welcome. It can be something as simple as giving directions to a new student lost in the labyrinth of stairways and corridors, but it matters as a gesture of recognition. Recognition that everyone starts here from elsewhere and needs to find their way. Beyond these halls, the charity work for Daffodil Day, Focus Ireland, Embrace Badjao and in Kilkenny Design will help transform lives.

Yet not all stories need podiums or medals to be meaningful, to be beautiful. Real enduring achievement is not just exams but consistency, resilience, and showing up on difficult days. The "ordinary effort" of the day-to-day work, getting back up when things didn't go well and carrying on with quiet perseverance keeps your story moving with indelible momentum. Stories are not just the final lines; they are the whole arc. As the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle reminds us "We are what we repeatedly do, excellence therefore is not an act, but a habit".

Aideen, Ailbhe, Lorraine and Dee

> "One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world"
> *Malala Yousafzai*

HISTORY

Zoe Brennan 6th Year

History at The Institute:

History is an unavoidable interest in my house. Every shelf is lined with books on any subject you could possibly imagine. Decades of my dad's thirst for knowledge. I could talk about my favorite events, US Presidents, or Cold War spies for ages. If you're taking this as an advertisement for studying History, I am indeed a very biased source. I am, however, also very aware that this comfortability does not always translate to studying a subject in school. As many pages as I can write about JFK and his presidency, that alone is not getting me a H1. Thankfully, at The Institute, that balance is found between that feeling of sitting at home, traversing the bookshelves, while also being taught how to succeed in an exam scenario.

History is all-consuming. It's woven through everything. Constitutions, technologies, the clothes we wear, and the food we eat. There's a chronology behind it all. Understanding this makes the world feel like a much more expansive place. Think about it. Historical movements rarely happen in a vacuum. The leaders of the 1916 Rising were inspired by the actions of predecessors such as Wolfe Tone. We exited the Dark Ages through the rediscovery of Ancient Greek and Roman texts. Even today, when it's easy to take supranational bodies like the UN for granted, their importance is immediately revitalised upon remembering its World War I predecessor, the League of Nations. The bottom line is that it's hard to appreciate progress, or recognize its absence, without looking back. And that can only be done through the study of History.

In my experience, studying History with Stephen, here on Leeson Street, he has always had the ability to crack events wide open, creating these same links between past and present. Whether it's Stalin, dramatically reforming a post-revolutionary Russia a near century ago, or attempts to find peace just over the border in more recent history. Stephen is able to shine a light straight through into the modern world I live in and afford me the skills to shine that light into where I feel the darkness exists in contemporary life. The skills I have acquired - critical appraisal, the ability to understand bias and the patterns of history - to me are the most important tools I will use as I traverse adulthood in a world that feels as though it is rapidly changing. In this information age, where many would have you believe there are no more lessons to be learned from History, I counter that with the words of Harry S. Truman. "There is not really anything new, if you know what has gone before."

Tom Hayden 6th Year

The RSR offered me a rewarding opportunity to conduct independent research on the Magna Carta's origins. It was a chance for me to explore a subject of great personal interest, as the charter stands at the intersection of law and history - a symbol of order from an era of medieval barbarism. The charter was born out of popular discontent with the English monarchy in the 13th century. In the wake of John Lackland's disastrous actions as king, the English people sought to impose restrictions on the monarch's power to safeguard against future tyrannical rulers. In so doing, "free men" and the clergy were bestowed with an early form of human rights, setting in stone the common law tradition that would continue to develop over the next eight centuries. The Magna Carta was originally a failure, as John refused to implement the peace accord with the barons and appealed to the pope for support. The charter was ultimately restored following the First Barons' War (1215 - 1217), after John had died and the barons had found a suitable successor in his son, Henry III. Louis VIII of France had originally supported the barons in their war with the king by sending an army to defend London, but lost favour with the rebels after John's death.

During my research, I was surprised to learn that the Magna Carta is not mentioned in Shakespeare's play *King John*. While the king's conflict with the barons is omitted, his foreign conquests and disputes with the pope form central elements of the plot.

Clodagh Gray 6th Year

For my RSR, I wanted to choose a topic that I found interesting; what's more interesting than something you don't know much about? Most people don't know much about the Dancing Plague in Strasbourg, and when I tell people about it, they usually question if it really existed. That sense of the unknown drew me to the topic and was the final decider for me. The most surprising aspect of my research was probably how the Dancing Plague wasn't even really a medical crisis, like most would assume. While we still don't know the exact cause of the disease, we do understand that it was a stressful time in that area of the world. Most historians believe that instead of a disease that you can catch, it was an instance of mass hysteria caused by this stress.

Travis Pounder 6th Year

The topic I chose was a key event in the downfall of the British Fascist Movement that emerged just before World War Two, The Battle of Cable Street. I chose it because I was interested in why, while fascism found success in Germany, Italy and various other nations, it failed in the UK. It was an event that from everything I had read, was the destruction of fascism in Britain, where the various communities of the East End came together to protect themselves and their neighbours. However, the more I read about the topic, the more complex it became.

It is true that hundreds of thousands of people marched against the British Union of Fascists, and their leader, Oswald Mosley, but, on the day, the only violence that occurred was between the anti-fascists and the police, as the police tried to batter a path forward so that the fascists could have their march. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the conflict, the fascists' spun their defeat into a victory, and found many willing recruits. In the immediate aftermath, the fascists launched one of the most violent anti-Jewish attacks in British pre-war history: they looted shops, violently assaulted anyone they saw, and threw an old man and a four-year-old girl through a shop window.

While The Battle of Cable Street is often presented as the total defeat of the British Union of Fascists, we must always remember that the fight against hatred and bigotry will not be won in a single day. Like the people of the East End, it is far easier, far more effective to fight against prejudice when we act as one, when we stand together in solidarity - just as the Irish and Jewish communities stood hand in hand with the Socialists and Union men of the East End to protect themselves and their families, we must not allow ourselves to be divided.

Niamh Curran 6th Year

For my project, I wanted to find a topic that combined the two areas of History that I find most interesting: Irish History and Women's History. The Irish Women's Liberation Movement does just that. They were an incredibly significant feminist organisation during the early 1970s in Ireland, a time of change in the rights of women. I admire their campaigns and the work that these women did in areas such as legal reform, employment equality, and changing perspectives. I wanted to take the opportunity to delve deeper into these issues and the developments that the movement brought about.

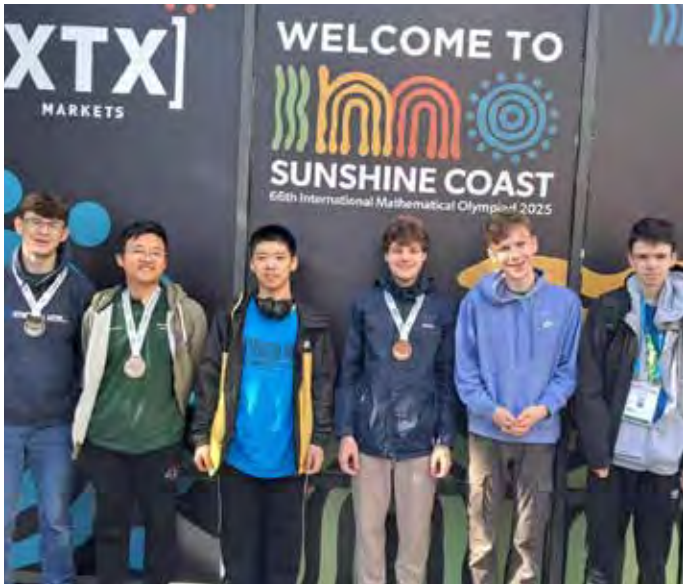
I think the most surprising thing for me was learning just how much the group accomplished in such a short time - they were together for less than two years! The group was founded in the summer of 1970 and weekly meetings began shortly afterwards. Their manifesto, "Chains or Change" was published on March 6th 1971. It detailed six key demands, including things like equal pay and educational opportunities. The group appeared on The Late Late Show that night, which was monumental to raising awareness of women's conditions in Ireland. They succeeded in conveying both the justification and urgency of their demands. Their first public meeting at Mansion House had over 1000 women in attendance, which was quite a feat and the first real indication that women all over the country were identifying with their messages. The women created one of the most radical yet peaceful social movements in Irish history and showed how working together could transform a once-conservative country.

Caleb Martin 6th Year

My family is originally from Northern Ireland and many of my relatives still live there today. The Troubles in Northern Ireland were a big feature of my parents' and grandparents' lives and I wanted to understand more about it and its impact. My RSR was on the La Mon Hotel bombing of the 17th of February 1978 - an IRA bombing that left twelve dead. It was one of the worst atrocities of the Troubles. I was interested in examining the IRA's motives, the response of the police and the impact of the bomb on those affected and their families. I have a personal connection to the hotel as I grew up near it, visited it many times and was taught to swim there.

The most surprising thing I discovered was that my grandfather, who is a lawyer, was involved in dealing with the tragic human aftermath of the bombing. He was involved in a child custody case between the paternal and maternal grandparents of Gordon and Joan Crothers, a husband and wife who had been killed in the attack. This really put into perspective how many people were directly or indirectly affected by the atrocity. Another surprising detail was that the Miami Showband was due to play at La Mon that night but had cancelled. The same band had been targeted in 1975 in a UVF bomb plot in which three members had been killed. This showed to me that both sides of the Troubles cared only to inflict as much damage and chaos as possible and also how connected separate events are.

MATHS



International Maths Olympiad (IMO) 2025

We are immensely proud to have had two students from our school, selected as members of the six-person team to represent Ireland at the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) 2025 in Adelaide, Australia. 6th year students Tianci Yan (above left) and Justin Angyang Li (above right) made the team after a tough selection process and training in Irish universities. Being chosen to represent Ireland at this level is a remarkable honour, and we were delighted to hear how successful they were. The team was the most successful Irish team ever to compete at the IMO with the highest ever team score, exceeding the previous record by 50% and breaking into the top half of the table for the first time. Ireland took home three medals, two silver and one bronze and three honourable mentions. Tianci Yan won a silver medal and Justin Angyang Li received an honourable mention for their fantastic individual scores out of 630 contestants. The event is designed to challenge the brightest young mathematicians globally. The IMO is the largest and most prestigious of all the international Olympiads. It has been running for 66 years and has grown to 110 countries this year. A huge congratulations to Tianci, Justin Angyang and their teachers.

Irish Maths Olympiad (IMO) 2026

A record number of almost 100 Institute students took part in the first round of the Irish Maths Olympiad, held on Thursday the 18th of September 2025, all around the country. It was great to see so many Mathletes in action! They each had 30 minutes to solve six puzzling questions which needed a clear mathematical and logical mind. Thanks to Andy Quinn, Adam Goodwin and Oliver Murphy who organised the event. Depending on their results, those who qualify attend training sessions at Irish universities, until a final six students are chosen to represent Ireland at the International Maths Olympiad 2026. This year it is being held in Shanghai, China. Our top scorers from the Irish round are listed below - the marks were out of a possible 6:

6 Marks: Muyan Zhang (5th Year)
Harris Mirza (6th Year)

5 Marks: Yuxuan Yang (5th Year)
Johnny Li (5th Year)
Ho Win Wang (5th Year)
Alexey Filippov (6th Year)
Bohan Zhang (4th Year)

4 Marks: Boyuan Qiu (5th Year)
Linzhe Song (4th Year)
Joysmit Patra (5th Year)
Ryan Wong (6th Year)

International Maths Olympiad (IMO) 2026

We are delighted to announce that two of our students Tianci Yan and Justin Angyang Li have again qualified for the Irish Olympiad team! They will travel to Shanghai this year and because Ireland finished in the top 50 last year, they have also received an invitation for pre-contest training. They will depart straight after the Leaving Certificate exams. We wish them the very best of luck at the International Maths Olympiad (IMO) 2026.

American Mathematics Contest (AMC) 10/12

We were delighted to share that 4th year Catherine Huisan Xu (pictured above) scored an extraordinary 144 out of 150 on the AMC 10, taken by 4th year students worldwide. This placed Catherine in the top 1% globally! We also had an outstanding top scorer in the AMC 12 exam which is for 5th and 6th years. 5th year student Shiqing Zhang (pictured below) scored an impressive 118.5. Both Catherine and Shiqing met the qualifying threshold for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME). The AIME is part of the selection pathway for the U.S. Mathematics Olympiad team, though international students who qualify, may also participate for fun. Congratulations as well to the rest of our AMC 10 top scorers: Bohan Zhang, Aadya Krithika Santosh, Linzhe Song, Timothy Lau and Mark Federenko, and to our top AMC 12 scorers: Wenlin Jiang, Xiaozhen Yu, Harris Mirza, Boyuan Qiu and Haowen Wang. A big thank you to Oliver Murphy for organising the competition this year.

MATHS

Irish Mathematics Teachers' Association (IMTA) Regionals

Congratulations to our students who won the IMTA Team Maths Dublin Regional Final, held on the 5th of March 2026 at Alexandra College. Our winning team of Tianci Yan, Kent Liu, Justin Angyang Li and Shiqing Zhang (pictured above with their teacher Oliver Murphy) have now qualified for the national finals. Further congratulations to our three other teams (pictured below) who also performed extremely well, finishing joint 5th and 8th. Well done to Roisin Brophy, Oisin O'Brien, Zihan He, Naina Rose Melbin, Shaunak Mohapatra, Muyan Zhang, Linqian Li, Yuan Yin and Ho Yin Wang. Thank you to Oliver Murphy for coordinating and accompanying the teams to the regionals.

IMTA TEAM Maths National Finals

Our strong team of Tianci Yan, Kent Liu, Justin Angyang Li and Shiqing Zhang came 2nd in the national finals of the Irish Mathematics Teachers' Association (IMTA) Team Maths competition 2026. The finals were held in Portlaoise on Saturday the 25th of April, where our students delivered an outstanding performance, narrowly missing first place by just one point. We are very proud of their achievement and representation of the school. They showed excellent teamwork, composure under pressure, and impressive mathematical ability throughout the competition. Sincere thanks to Oliver Murphy for supporting them throughout the competition and for his continued guidance and encouragement.

CHINESE

This year marked another important step in the growth of Mandarin Chinese at The Institute, with Ms Amelia An joining Ms Yun Wu in the department and further strengthening the subject within the school community. Mandarin Chinese continues to flourish not only as an academic subject, but also as a vibrant part of school life, offering students opportunities to engage with language, culture and identity in a meaningful way. Pictured above is this year's 6th years - our Mandarin Chinese Class of 2026. And below we welcome new teacher Ms Amelia An.

Students of Mandarin Chinese have much to be proud of this year. Under the guidance of Ms Yun Wu, 6th Year students Stella Wei (pictured above with Ms Yun Wu) and Yutong Li (pictured below with Ms Yun Wu) achieved outstanding success in the Second World Chinese Essay Competition, a prestigious international competition attracting entries from more than 30 countries. Stella was awarded a Special Prize, one of the competition's highest honours, while Yutong received Second Prize. These achievements were especially impressive in the midst of a demanding Leaving Certificate year.

CHINESE

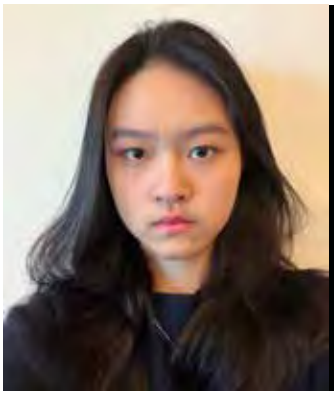
5th Year students Xingjian Cao (pictured above), Ziqing Weng and Ruixin Chen (pictured below) also reached the final of the 9th Global Chinese Recitation Competition, a remarkable accomplishment in one of the most high-profile international Chinese recitation events. Mandarin Chinese at The Institute continues to be about much more than characters, vocabulary and examination preparation. While teaching remains closely aligned with the NCCA specification, students are also encouraged to engage with Chinese language and culture in rich and meaningful ways. Throughout the year, they took part in a wide range of activities, including Chinese New Year workshops, calligraphy, paper-cutting, cultural presentations, watching the Spring Festival Gala, and attending events such as the Chinese Embassy's New Year reception. Pictured at the Chinese Embassy's New Year, which was a spectacular event are The Institute's Emma Gill from our International team and Ms Yun Wu (pictured above), and 6th year student Jiaqi Bian and Ms Yun Wu (pictured below).

It was especially encouraging to see students sharing their enthusiasm beyond the classroom through events such as Open Days and Culture Day, where they introduced the subject in both Chinese and English. These experiences were also shared with the wider school community, including through the Year of the Horse Spring Festival performance, which brought a festive spirit to school life and highlighted the vibrancy of Mandarin Chinese at The Institute. Most rewarding of all has been the progress made by students from a wide range of backgrounds and with very different starting points. Some have excelled on the international stage, while others have made remarkable progress in reading, writing and self-expression. Mandarin Chinese at The Institute continues to bring together academic achievement and cultural engagement, helping students grow not only in skill and confidence, but also in curiosity, connection and pride. Pictured above are students volunteering at an Open Day, below Judy Hu and Kaili Guan show their Year of the Horse work and to the right students watch the AI Chinese New Year Gala and take part in a Calligraphy Workshop.

CHINESE

Kaili Guan, 4th Year

I am Chinese-Irish and was born in Ireland. Although I can speak and understand Mandarin, I was not able to read or write Chinese characters. When I first chose Mandarin as one of my subjects, I was worried that I would not be able to keep up with the rest of the class, especially as many of my classmates were native speakers. However, after just a few lessons, I realised that even though I could not yet read or write, I was still able to communicate and understand what was happening in class. During the first term, I found many tasks difficult because my reading and writing skills were weak. However, once the second term began, we started learning more Chinese characters and words, as well as how to write and recognise them. I have learned so much over the past few months that even I am surprised by my own progress. During the school year, we also did paper-cutting and drawings for Christmas and Chinese New Year 2026. I had a lot of fun in Mandarin this year, and I really appreciate Ms Yun Wu for her patience and the time she gave to help me. *Kaili is pictured above playing the guzheng.*



Eileen Chen , 6th Year

Memories of Chinese class are filled with warmth, laughter, and a strong sense of growth. Each lesson was more than just learning a language - it was an opportunity to explore a rich culture, from calligraphy and poetry to traditions like the Mid-Autumn Festival. I remember the satisfaction of finally recognising characters that once seemed impossible, and the fun of practising dialogues with classmates, often laughing at our mistakes but improving together. The classroom always felt lively, whether we were listening to stories, watching videos, or celebrating small achievements. These moments not only strengthened my language skills but also built lasting friendships and a deeper appreciation for Chinese culture.

Two Chinese proverbs that stayed with me are:
"Practice makes perfect." (熟能生巧 – Shú néng shēng qiǎo)
"A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."
(千里之行，始于足下 – Qiān lǐ zhī xíng, shǐ yú zú xià)

These sayings reflect my experience in Chinese class - progress comes with patience, effort, and the courage to begin.

Xinchen Xie, 6th Year

Learning Chinese over the past two years has given me a valuable opportunity to better understand my culture. Even though I am ethnically Chinese, I was born and raised here, so my understanding of Chinese culture has always been somewhat limited.

In Chinese class, we learned about festivals, traditions and traditional stories that I might not otherwise have come across. The festival that stands out most to me is the Mid-Autumn Festival, which we studied in 5th Year. It was the first time I truly learned the meaning behind the traditions that my family and I follow each year when celebrating the full moon. Learning about the stories behind these traditions also helped me understand why we celebrate them, which allowed me to appreciate them even more. I really enjoy studying Chinese, and I now feel much more confident both in understanding the culture and in speaking the language. I hope to continue learning Chinese in college, whether through an exchange programme or simply in my own time :)

Tiffany Huang, 6th Year

Chinese classes over the past two years have meant much more to me than simply learning a language. Chinese is often regarded as one of the most challenging languages to master, and studying it has taught me patience, discipline and perseverance. Sticking with it over time has helped me become more resilient, both in my learning and in myself. As a class, we have also grown closer together over these two years. Group assignments such as our "春节项目" (Spring Festival Project) helped me develop both teamwork and interpersonal skills. Unbeknownst to me at first, studying Chinese for the Leaving Certificate also helped prepare me for college. With a history spanning more than 4,000 years, Chinese culture offers endless opportunities for discovery.

Personally, I have especially enjoyed learning about Chinese festivals and the customs and traditions behind them. Although my family and I have always eaten fish and dumplings during Spring Festival, I never fully understood the meaning behind these traditions. Now I know that because "鱼" (fish) sounds similar to "余" (abundance), eating fish symbolises prosperity and good fortune in the coming year. Similarly, dumplings eaten at midnight on "大年三十" (New Year's Eve) represent welcoming the new year and wealth, as they are shaped like ancient Chinese gold ingots, or "元宝". Learning the meanings behind these customs has made them feel even more special and has deepened my appreciation of the culture they represent.

Overall, studying Chinese for the Leaving Certificate has broadened my understanding of the world and strengthened my appreciation of both the language and the culture. For that, I am truly grateful.

Han Derrick Lin, 6th Year

Over the past two years, learning Mandarin Chinese has felt like a roller coaster - demanding at times, yet deeply rewarding. When I first joined the class, I had very little Chinese and often found it difficult to keep up. However, Wu Lao Shi consistently encouraged me to do my best, pushing me to improve and never settle for less. Through hard work and dedication, I have improved immensely, from being unable to write even basic characters to now being able to write short essays with confidence. What I have enjoyed most about learning Mandarin is discovering Chinese culture - my culture. Studying Chinese at The Institute of Education has made me feel more connected to my roots than ever before. Whether it was learning about traditions, beliefs or ancient stories, each lesson deepened my understanding of where I come from and strengthened my appreciation of that heritage.

Learning Mandarin has also helped me grow in confidence. From the very beginning, it pushed me out of my comfort zone. At first, the hundreds of new characters on the board felt like a tidal wave - overwhelming and impossible to escape, as if they were crashing over me all at once. But over time, that same wave became something I could learn to navigate. With practice and persistence, what once intimidated me became something I could face with confidence.

Overall, studying Mandarin Chinese at The Institute has been a truly transformative experience. Now that I have reached the end of this roller coaster journey, I can take a deep breath, let the adrenaline settle, and appreciate just how far I have come.

Xinchen Xie, 6th Year

The two year journey of Leaving Certificate Chinese felt like an unstable system slowly drifting towards equilibrium, never fully settled. "Pinyin + tones = meaning"; like "Na + Cl = NaCl", suddenly stable. My essays oscillated in equilibrium, with $\Delta G < 0$ only when deadlines approached. Teacher feedback acted like catalysts, lowering the activation energy for understanding.

Even my identity shifted: "English (aq) + 中文 (aq) ⇌ bilingual state." In the end, I wasn't just learning a language - I was watching myself precipitate into something new.

HOME ECONOMICS

Tori Khan 6th Year

I had picked up Home Economics as my Leaving Certificate subject back in 5th year, not knowing what to expect. I remember the first chapter we started learning was proteins - it genuinely felt like that topic lasted forever. Every class seemed to circle back to amino acids, globular and fibrous proteins, complementary proteins - it just never ended. At one point, I was convinced I would never fully understand it, never mind finishing the course, but I'm here today telling you my experience of Leaving Cert Home Economics after finishing its eventful course.

One thing that really stands out from my own experience, was our Home Economics teacher Alice, who somehow managed to make even the most confusing topics more bearable - and even entertaining. I'll never forget how she helped us learn amino acids with her own little sayings. Tryptophan became "trip to France," isoleucine turned into "I saw Lucy," and lysine… well, that was simply "lice." As random as they sounded, they actually worked, and to this day those are the only reasons I can remember them.

Then came the project - the moment everyone had been dreading. It began near the end of 5th year, suddenly everything got very real. It wasn't just notes and class tests anymore; this was a major, crucial piece of work that would actually count, a whole 20% worth of my actual Leaving Certificate. The process of writing what felt like 670,000 words about eggs and vegans was honestly draining and tedious. Eggs out of all things! I never imagined, I could stretch those topics into such depth, but there I was, researching, writing, rewriting, and questioning my own life choices along the way. Although it was daunting at first, it forced me to engage with the subject in a way I never had before. Of course, the written work was only half the battle in regard to the project. The practical side brought its own chaos. The rush to prepare and cook dishes in only an hour for our project was intense. The pressure and atmosphere in the kitchen felt as if we were on MasterChef. I decided to make a vegetarian pineapple massaman curry, and let me tell you, it wasn't particularly the best moment of my life. However, not everything in the kitchen was a disaster, my strawberries and cream Swiss Roll saved the day in the end. Maybe I am not completely hopeless in the kitchen after all.

Another thing that stood out throughout the course was the variety of topics we covered. Some were expected, like nutrition and food science, but others were completely different from anything I thought Home Economics would include. From social studies to consumer issues, it wasn't just about cooking or food - it was about understanding how we live, eat, and make decisions every day. I also really enjoyed the class discussions we had throughout the course. Talking about different topics and hearing other people's opinions made the subject more interesting and easier to understand. At times it felt random, even confusing, jumping from one topic to something totally unrelated, but it added depth to the subject that I didn't fully appreciate at the start.

Now, in 6th year, I can see how far I've come with this subject. What once felt overwhelming; proteins, projects, practicals, and all those discussions about different topics has become something I have managed to get through and ended up being enjoyable. There were definitely moments of stress, panic, and frustration, but in the end, it's also been a learning experience in more ways than one. And even though I complained (a lot), I made it through, and that is something I am proud of.

APPLIED MATHS

IRISH APPLIED MATHS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (IAMTA) QUIZ 2026

In the Dublin Regional round of the IAMTA Senior Applied Maths Problem-Solving Quiz, an astonishing 61 teams took part at The Institute on Thursday the 12th of March 2026. After a very intense and close contest, 1st place went to Sandford Park, 2nd place to Benildus College and 3rd to Oatlands. The Institute had 12 teams competing, which shows great interest in these competitions. There were students from all years taking part and two of our teams came joint 5th; they were in the running right up to the last round. Well done to all who took part.

Many thanks are due to the team of 4th years students who helped set up the two rooms, to the print-room team, Alan and Des, who prepared all the questions and answer-sheets, and especially to Adam Goodwin who ran the event brilliantly. It was a big undertaking with nearly 200 students involved.

Naina Rose Melbin 6th Year

The theme of our Applied Maths project this year was Collisions and Impacts. We see collisions around us every day from balls bouncing to large car crashes, so the options for the project were endless. For my project I chose to analyse the Women's Wimbledon 2025 Final and investigate different serving positions. Doing this project gave me a valuable insight into how even a simple interaction between a ball and a racket involves many variables, such as speed, force, angle etc. During the project, I gained a practical understanding of how to break down large problems into small manageable parts that I could solve using my knowledge of Applied Maths. This project allowed me to take the theory that I had learnt in class and apply it in a real-world context. Also, as a creative person, I enjoyed being able to showcase my presentation skills through the various graphs and diagrams in the project. This acted as a creative outlet in the midst of a demanding school year. Overall, this project not only strengthened my analytical and problem-solving skills but also enhanced my ability to present and communicate effectively - something I can carry forward beyond the Leaving Certificate.

Ava McIlkenny 6th Year

I found doing the Applied Maths Project really engaging as I was able to apply the concepts that we learn in class to a real-life situation that I was actually interested in. The brief this year was on collisions, so I decided to do my project on a rugby tackle. Although completing the project was frustrating at times, I found that my teachers were always there to help and their support and guidance was always very beneficial. Overall, I found that I gained a really good understanding of how the Maths that we learn as part of the Leaving Cert course can be applied to different real-world problems and situations outside of the classroom.

Namuun Natsagdorj 6th Year

The Applied Maths Leaving Certificate project was a challenging yet rewarding experience. Initially I was unsure what to do given all the possibilities that were available from the brief about collisions and impacts. However, once I started the project I realised that I enjoy writing up reports and presenting findings. Reasoning is so important to me and I was able to provide explanations for every step I took in the project - which I really enjoyed. It was a time-consuming process for sure. I had to cut down nearly 500 words, but the satisfaction I felt when I submitted it in the end, was extraordinary. The project allowed me to improve skills such as time-management and problem-solving, but most importantly it made me appreciate Applied Maths in the real world more.

Hebe Wu 6th Year

Doing the Applied Maths project for the Leaving Certificate was a very rewarding experience, especially when it came to understanding the problems and deciding how to approach them. Sometimes, it was frustrating when the maths in the conclusion did not match my expectations, but by trying different methods, I learned from my mistakes and improved the outcomes by adjusting some of the variables. I found the most difficult part was actually starting the project and choosing the suitable equations. However, with my teacher's guidance and with one-to-one discussions with them, I was able to develop a clearer understanding of the topic. Getting feedback from each submission also helped with clarity, improved my grammar, and encouraged more effective ways of solving problems. Although it was challenging at first, I began to find the project really fun, especially when working on the mathematical part in each iteration. It helped me see how Maths connects to real life and strengthened my confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems.

GEOGRAPHY

6th Year Trip to Killiney Beach with Lesley Aslin

POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Politics and Society is a great subject to take as it helps you to understand the world and become a more informed citizen. Paul makes it much easier with clear concise notes and a straightforward path to success. He also helps a lot with project work If you're nervous about starting it - you should definitely go for it.

Oscar Pan 6th year

The Politics and Society course provides us with a deep understanding of ongoing societal issues while developing critical thinking skills. Paul McAndrew is an outstanding teacher who brings clarity and real-world insight to Politics and Society, making complex ideas engaging and easy to understand.

Sophie Howard & Aíne McEneaney 6th year

I enjoy Politics and Society because this subject allows me to analyse critical issues and consider diverse perspectives on important global topics.

Keerthi Eswar 6th year

Politics is a fun and interesting subject to talk about and debate too. It involves a lot of group work and practical classes that many other subjects don't have. As well as that, it's easy to score high in, so its a great subject.

Sujith Ramesh 6th year student

Politics and Society has allowed me to reframe everything I thought I knew about the world. It has given me the chance to question what I knew to be true and find a new set of beliefs on how the world is, or should be. This has developed my active citizenship and opened a new door of opportunities for the future. I have immensely enjoyed the subject, where I am sure to gain positive energy and valuable information, every class.

Amy McNamee 6th year

Politics for me was the subject I was most pessimistic about choosing but after studying it, I was so happy I picked it. Not only was it such an enjoyable class, it improved my English tremendously with its debating elements, counter arguments, and chance to express our opinions. I can sum Politics up in three words, great laughs, great banter, great craic!

Davitt McGettigan 6th year

Politics and Society is a fascinating subject that rewards students with an interest in current affairs and social injustices. It covers a broad range of topics, from autocratic regimes to how supranational organisations function. The diversity of activities and assessments in the subject ensures that it is never boring, with weekly debates being an exciting feature of a Leaving Certificate student's timetable.

Thomas Hayden 6th year

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time spent studying Politics as well as having developed a well-rounded and objective viewpoint of critical world issues. It's a truly diverse subject which fosters a wide range of opinions and beliefs. Due to the small number of students who choose to study this subject, classes are always highly engaging and topical. You learn a wide range of important skills which enable you to critically assess and comprehend world conflicts and truly understand the foundational causes of such civil unrests. I would highly recommend this subject to anyone who is looking to develop a more well-rounded skill set and knowledge which is of high relevance to the current global situation we find ourselves in.

Ruth Doherty 6th year

I like Politics and Society because I am an opinionated person who likes to give my opinion on all sorts of different topics and issues. I like to think that when we listen to other people's opinions on topics we can change and learn to be better people. We might get a totally different perspective on a topic that we always thought was one, fixed way. We talk about all sorts of different topics in class debates. When it comes to coursework it can be challenging but Politics and Society is giving your opinion, finding proof to back it up whilst also using a counterpoint to learn that your opinion isn't the be all and end all. Politics and Society really helped me see that the world isn't black and white - there are shades of grey.

Medb Reilly 6th year

Politics and Society is an ineluctable subject that I found I was well suited to due to my academic preference of essay writing compared to STEM. Politics was a wonderful way to expose myself to the world and its foibles, both through the assigned study of the curriculum, and discussions guided by Paul that allowed me and my peers to hear different viewpoints. I found the ability for bold debates in class equally as beneficial as the state-appointed coursework, in preparing me for my Leaving Cert., and for the prospect of independently moving forward in life.

Clodagh Creedon 6th year

Choosing Politics helped me to become better at arguing, it allowed me to analyse and critique all my arguments which in turn made me a better discursive writer. Politics is a broad subject which touches on all types of political and social issues, personally I am very interested and passionate about sustainability, something that is an aspect of the course.

Sarah Wokocha 6th year

Politics is a great choice for your Leaving Cert because Paul is great craic, the course is nice and short and you can do the project with a buddy! Just make sure to move if he asks you to swap seats with someone.

Oisin O'Brien 6th year

I believe that as a young person there is nothing more important than knowing about the systems that govern us and staying informed about current affairs especially in today's political climate. The Politics and Society course encourages you to expand your civic competence and critically analyse what you read in the news every day, I couldn't recommend it more.

Milo Okin 6th year

If you enjoy collaborative subjects and have an interest in anything political or societal, this subject is definitely for you. It combines creativity, discussing opinions and ideas on current topics. We really enjoyed taking this class.

Sarah Cullen & Georgia Keenan 6th year students

The Politics and Society course provides an insight into various aspects of society which affect our daily lives. The Citizenship Project you carry out also is beneficial in the sense that you can choose a topic from multiple prompts and pursue it in a way which interests you as you have a certain level of freedom with it.

Lia Cahill 6th year

Politics and Society is one of the most enjoyable subjects in the Leaving Certificate. Paul is a great teacher who keeps classes engaging and manages to make the few boring parts of the subject interesting. Politics is one of the classes I have enjoyed the most during my time in school, unlike some subjects where you spend the class sitting there bored. In Politics we actually got involved with the things we were being taught.

The debate classes in 5th Year were always enjoyable and they gave me the chance to bond with people who I otherwise may have never talked to. Overall, Politics and Society is in my opinion the subject that most rewards students for expressing their own thoughts, ideas and opinions rather than simply learning off a stack of notes.

Travis Pounder 6th year

There is a multitude of reasons why one should choose Religion or Politics and Society with the most competent teacher The Institute has ever seen - Paul McAndrew. Firstly, Paul makes the class enjoyable for all types of people whether you are interested in STEM subjects or are politically or religiously devoted to a cause.

Secondly, even with the bare minimum of work ethic you can easily score a H4/H3. Finally, Paul provides an avalanche of voluntary support for anybody looking to improve essays, tests, understanding, and coursework as he offers a large catalogue of materials on Moodle, ranging from sample answers to step by step guides for completing projects.

Toby Collins 6th year

RELIGION

I love Religion because it gives me a chance to explore different world views and ideologies, which broadened my horizons and increased my empathetic understanding of others. It also gives us good ideas on how to live our own lives, not by lecturing us but by studying topics like moral decision making, philosophy and case studies of great people. The ones that stood out to me are the women covered in the "Religion and Gender" chapter, notably Catherine McAuley and Helen Prejean. The course brought me not only a more mature understanding of moral value but inspirational key figures to look up to, regardless of religious belief. It is truly a subject for all, theist, agnostic or atheist. The atmosphere in the classroom is jocular and comfortable, and it is easy to ask Paul any questions or share stories with the class, meaning you absorb many relevant stories from your peers regarding their experiences. It's a wonderful subject and one you can find a real passion for, as well as prosper in terms of the Leaving Certificate.

Clodagh Creedon 6th year

Religious Education is more than just studying religions. It's about opening your eyes to the world of ideas - testing the knowledge the world is built upon and examining the human person as a moral being. There is no doubt I have emerged more morally aware, politically conscious and with contrasting worldviews, from my studies of this subject. Religion classes are my favourite of the week, full of laughter and optimism! **Amy McNamee 6th year**

Religion allows us to view ongoing societal issues through a philosophical lens. Paul McAndrew offered a lot of support to understand this complex course.

Sophie Howard & Aíne McEneaney 6th year

We get to learn about all the different religions in the world. It's great to learn how other people in different countries have totally different belief systems. It keeps you curious about life as well as showing you, there is not one way to live life. There are many different ways to live - that are just as fulfilling as our own way. Religion can be quite a peaceful subject that helps give meaning to life.

Medb Reilly 6th year

I would recommend any incoming student to pick Religion as a subject. The course is interesting and relevant to a lot of more modern topics then you would think. I've thoroughly enjoyed all my classes with my teacher and classmates. It was one of my favourite subjects! **Freya Kearns 6th year**

Religion opens your mind to how society at large began to find meaning in their lives and the problems that search caused. It focuses on new trends and old ones and gives you a birds-eye perspective of it all, unlike any other subject.

Leo Allen 6th year

Religion is by far my favourite subject. It doesn't just focus on major religions, it also focuses on morality, the search for meaning and the juxtaposition between religion, gender, and science. The course is extremely interesting, and I look forward to every class. From cosmology to philosophy to rituals, humanism and much more, Religion is the best subject and one of the greatest decisions I made relating to Leaving Certificate subjects! **Sarah Wokocha 6th year**

I really enjoy Religion because it lets me learn more about other people and their understanding of the world. Paul is a really good teacher and makes complex ideas easy to understand. **Lucy Donohue 6th year**

Religion helps you understand different beliefs and cultures around the world. It builds critical thinking and open-mindedness. It's an engaging subject with relevant real-world topics. **Aaron Kenny 6th year**

Religion is a really interesting subject and is a nice change of pace to other subjects. Classes are really engaging and fun as-well!

Aaron Fitzpatrick 6th year

Paul is an amazing teacher and makes topics in Religion which I would have previously found boring both enjoyable and easy to learn. Finishing the entire course at the start of February and getting the project out of the way early is also a huge bonus as it gives loads of time for revision. Highly recommend!!!

Charlie O'Connor 6th year

I often find that there's a lot of misconception surrounding Religion, that it is purely based off the five major world religions. This is entirely not the case. It's much more diverse, covering aspects such as philosophy, how we derive a sense of meaning in life and how we, as individuals make decisions. I always look forward to Religion - as it is never dull. We can often be heard discussing a wide range of topics, through stories told by pupils or personal reflections given by Paul. All of this truly enhances our overall understanding of the course, while also providing invaluable knowledge and perspectives. Religion is one of my favourite subjects and this is truly because of the nature of Paul's classes. He takes an individual interest in each of his students and ensures that we all understand what it is that the course requires of us. I would highly recommend Religion to anyone who is looking to gain a more comprehensive understanding of not only the world, but who we uniquely are as individuals. **Ruth Doherty 6th year**

We both joined Religion in 6th year and we are so glad we did! Paul made it really easy to transition into the subject and to help us achieve good results. We completed our projects in no time, which allowed us to focus on the syllabus. Taking Religion has been an enjoyable experience and we would recommend it to anyone who is interested in Philosophy and writing.

Georgia Keenan & Finn Fitzpatrick 6th year

ART

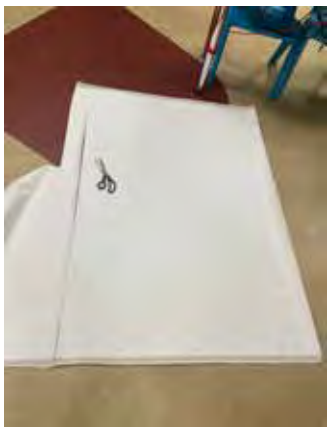
Studying Art in The Institute is not like studying Art in any other school. In The Institute the art room is a haven for creativity. It is overflowing with different mediums, calling out to be used. The utensils available in the art room allow students to have a university experience at second level. Not only do we get to paint and draw like most schools, but we also get to build, to print, to sew, and to collaborate with our peers. In The Institute the art room is a platform that launches us towards our full potential. I had the privilege to attend The Institute in 4th year. It allowed me to explore the artistic world from perspectives I hadn't even imagined. Conversation with our incredible Art teacher, Declan Kelly, allowed me to see that Art was so much more than just Realism and Impressionism. Art is about expression, and emotion, Art doesn't need to represent a certain thing, it just needs to be. Declan sparked a new-found passion in me for Art. I became obsessed with the beautiful imagination that artists display. I have spent countless hours since visiting as many museums and galleries as possible, trying to educate myself as best I could about this magnificent world. Thankfully the in-depth and detailed explanations of Art History in our theory classes, have helped me understand the multifaceted world of Art, to the extent that I can confidently converse on many aspects of artistry.

This year, in 5th year, a few lucky students were allowed to embark on a fantastic project whereby we made our own canvases from scratch and then proceeded to recreate a past master's work upon them. In the beginning, I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of sawing up the timber planks, whacking them enthusiastically with nails and hammers to construct my enormous canvas frame. The process transported me back to my grandfather's garage as a child. He was a carpenter, and after retirement created a workshop in his garage. On occasion he would let us make something from scrap timber in there. The carpentry work reminded me nostalgically of this precious time in my youth. I love the way Art at The Institute showed me how your best work is made through emotion and memories.

Moving on to cutting, sizing, and attaching the canvas to the frame. I underestimated the difficulty of pulling the canvas material tight enough to avoid creating a billowing sail instead of a sturdy painting surface. It involved much trial and error but with guidance and patience I succeeded with it. I especially liked this stage for the opportunity to connect with peers. Stretching a canvas is not a one man job, so conversation with new friends was inevitable and much enjoyed. Finally the painting could begin. Five weeks of staying late after school, of painting through lunchtime, of juggling study and painting, trying to decide which to prioritise. Honestly, despite how difficult, how frustrating, and how much I learned from mistakes in the process , I loved every single second. Painting my recreation of Sargents "Lady Agnew of Lockshaw", taught me more than I could have imagined. I learned how to produce sfumato with acrylic instead of oil. I discovered the power of a good quality brush.

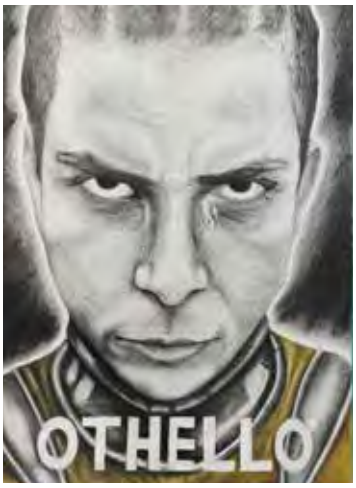
One could even go as far as saying that painting became my form of relaxation. Through painting, I cried, I laughed, I shared an outrageous quantity of malteasers with my peers, who also persevered to finish their work, but most importantly, I was reminded of why The Institute is so well renowned. It's not necessarily the amazing Maths teachers, or the fantastic Science department, it's the students who understand that it's all a privilege. It's "us". We acknowledge that this is special, and so we seize every moment. We push ourselves to exceed expectations and reach our utmost potential. There is no doubt about it, the facilities that The Institute's Art department have are unmatched, but it is most important to remember that the passionate students and priceless guidance from our mentor, Declan, is what sets our experience of Art apart.

Sarah Gordon 5th Year



THE ART ROOM

Finished Pieces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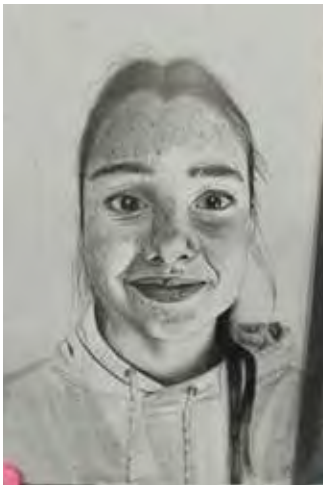
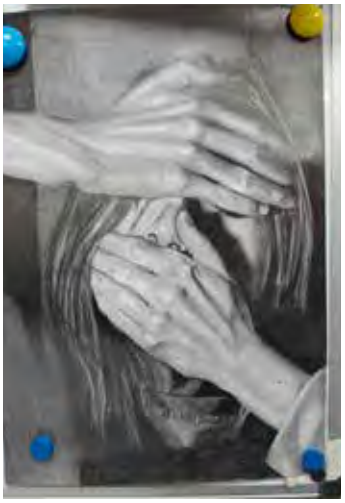




BLUE VELVET

THE ART ROOM

Finished Pieces

GERMAN

Evan Turbitt 5th Year

When I joined The Institute last year, I was looking forward to continuing with my German language studies. When I chose German for my Junior Cert; I thought it would be an interesting choice as most people choose either Spanish or French. I progressed well throughout my Junior Cert with German, learning the basics and I thought I was well versed. It was not until I joined 4th year in The institute that I realised, I had merely scraped the surface with what German language studies truly was.

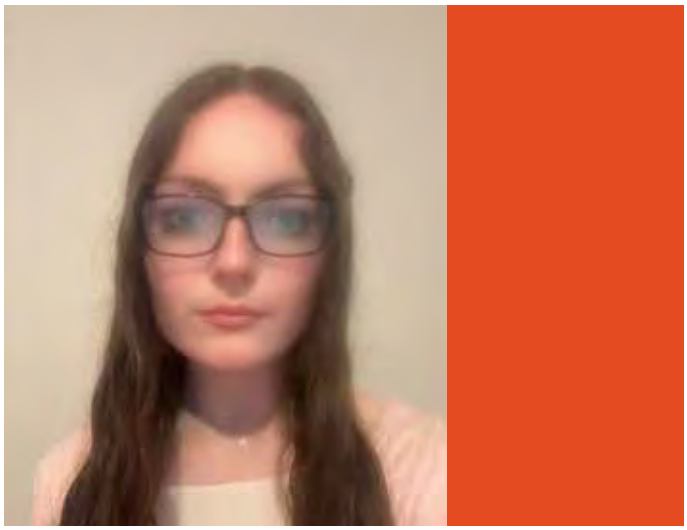
All the different verbs, nouns, and various Grammar rules, that I had no idea existed and even if I did, I had barely covered them up until that point. It was all very daunting at first, but luckily, I had Orla as my teacher. Her way of explaining things made what seemed impossible when I started, possible. She taught me the ins and outs of each component, using excellent examples that made them easier to understand.

Now that I am in 5th year, I see how beneficial that extra year to improve my German language skills truly was. That year to focus on the little things has allowed me to put more time into learning the key components of the Leaving Cert like the role plays and picture sequences for the oral, exam techniques for tackling the written and aural sections and picking up good words and phrases that I can use in my written, as well as spoken German.

As a subject German does not just teach you about the language, it also teaches you about German culture. You learn about German cuisine and customs. We also lean about how the German school system works and the geography of Germany.

Learning German is great because it will allow me to study and live abroad in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, or any other German speaking countries. This is something I hope to do in the future, as I think it would be an excellent opportunity to improve my German further as well as meeting new people.

Learning German in The Institute has so far been a wonderful experience, and I now look forward to continuing it in 6th year and the challenge of the Leaving Certificate.



Aine Mc Polin 5th Year

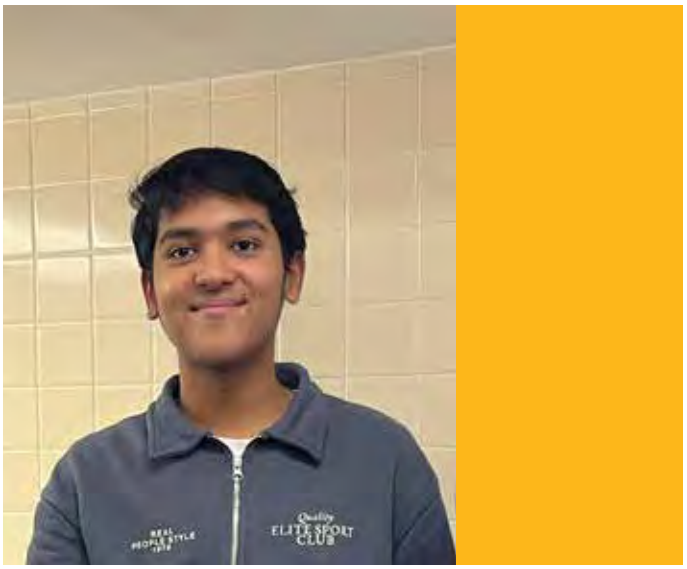
Learning German in The Institute for 4th and 5th year has truly transformed my German, and been one of the most enjoyable parts of my school experience. I can hardly recognise my current competence compared to my former clumsy and basic grasp of

the language. Falling in love with the language along the way is just an added bonus.

Learning German is really a doorway to another culture and way of communication and thought. Nothing can compare to the satisfaction of recognising the patterns, mastering word orders and watching your ability progress. All the study and late nights are really worth it for those little moments of independent German, like casually reading street signs or deciphering directions.

German will always be an invaluable skill in my life, something I will always bring with me whether in work, travel or personal growth. More than just a language, it's a lasting reminder of what I can achieve with dedication and drive.

Of course none of this would be possible without Orla's stern, intense, yet rewarding teaching. As Orla loves to say, she loves a worker and she really strives to get the best out of every one of her students. With her incessant motivation I've gained so much confidence in my abilities and improved beyond my wildest dreams. German is no longer just a Leaving Certificate subject to me, it's something I genuinely enjoy and will carry with me through life.



Daivik Singhal 4th Year

Hi, my name is Daivik and I am a 4th year German student in The Institute. I have been learning German for 4 years and am sitting the 4th year Fit In Deutsch A1 exam in May. Learning German these past years has been a unique experience for me. It was quite daunting for the first few months - when we were expected to understand a whole paragraph of German when I couldn't even decipher what half of the words meant.

Over time, however, I learned that it is definitely the most logical language I have spoken. Although grammar and pronunciation can be tricky at times, the feeling of satisfaction I felt when I first wrote down a perfectly structured sentence was unbeatable. More than that, I love how the language forces you to be patient, often by putting the verb of the sentence or a separable prefix at the very end. Overall, I would highly recommend giving German a try whether you want to challenge yourself mentally or unlock a whole new side of European culture and learn the 2nd most spoken language in Europe!

The Fit In Deutsch exam is a practical, functional German exam assessing 4 key aspects of the language – reading, listening, writing and speaking. Students undertake the exams through The Goethe Institut. It's the perfect way to test your German as a 4th years student, when you have some extra time on your hands. It is also great for CVs as completion of the exam is an internationally recognised achievement proving your fluency in the language. Whether you want to improve your pronunciation, get a real qualification in German, or just boost your confidence, the Fit In Deustch exam is a great way to set a rewarding goal in 4th year and add another achievement to your end of year ceremony!

ENGLISH

Leafless

Jump into the skies' flushed tint,
And let your heart
Fall.
Into the welcoming bellows of the deep,
Clinging onto a helping hand of a friend,
That stayed.

Do not be afraid of the leaves that leave dew,
For it holds light,
And rest between the valleys,
The hummingbird's song,
A mother's lullaby.

Let the butterfly free,
Tomorrow is a mystery.

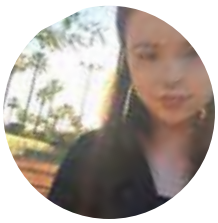
Ann Cantwell 6th Year

Eden

I never thought Eden was real,
until I laid eyes on you,
my perfect place of sanctuary,
the person I pour all my secrets into.

You're the constant
I never thought to be true.
I want you to stay my Eden forever,
and never banish me
to an Earth so cruel.

Maya Lunev 4th Year



Happiness

Hope lies deep within us all,
Aiding our dreams so they can grow tall.
People often don't see,
Possibilities await when you're happy.
If the right mindset is achieved,
Nothing is too hard once you just believe.
Each goal created should burn that fire,
Supported by joy will help you acquire,
So smile my dear, that is your heart's desire.

Alanna Crean 5th Year

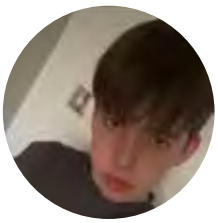
Rose Of A Thorn

My love for you is selfish.
I hate to see you happy,
For when you're away my silent heart aches.
No beat, no pulse. But a soft hum.
My sorry sleeve's fabric is soaked today.
Tears of love, I swear. It's real.
I plead with my brain.
To stop this hum, but silence never comes.
I prance and I shamble, yet I'm the one to 'dance'.

I'm not sad.
No. Really, I'm not.
But my selfish heart can only hum so much.
Before that hum sounds like a tremor.
The world I see is only so small,
But you dance throughout my mind.
Swanning the expanses of my selfless brain.
Squeaking and cleaning, what you see fit.
Stop that now, I'm happy with it.

You find me cruel, sometimes so mean.
I would never want to be torn apart.
Because I fear ever so deep down,
It is you who gave me this selfish heart.
The gaze you give, is ever so reminiscent.
For it's mine I see, only through another lens.
Once I take off those glasses.
The world just isn't as rose.
Because nothing is like a mother's love.

Finn Fitzpatrick 6th Year



Introspection

My persistent and constant flow of thoughts
Confuses the search for meaning.
I think my best at certain times
But the words may never align.

I feel through my soul,
My body imitates art, my mind mocks my body
Shadows and light engulf the brain
No way of knowing what's just.

Uniqueness is explained with words
Yet nobody can be defined,
The soul and brain are intertwined
With nowhere to travel to
The body is flesh but appears of glass

A thread keeping everything one?
Je pense donc je suis

Finn Fitzpatrick 6th Year

Tired Hands

Lift these tired hands, then;

Lift them asunder from inked pages,
Above and beyond,
Rejoicing as the arduous grey
That once burdened us;
Suffered us only fleeting glimpses
Of freedom's gateway,
Gives way now to a
Sovereign, indefinite beauty.

Stilled is the air,
Opened are the skies
To apricot rays beaming
Down upon us, their gleams
reflected in Joy's common
countenance;
Illuminating our way home
As one shared path.

The journey before us,
Kind to our disquieted minds;
Along which our thoughts,
disordered with irresolution,
bear, still, our earned
satisfaction,

How fortunate it is;
To realise the absence of
what the past compelled us to feel;
To be troubled now only with
Capricious worries,
Subdued with ease
By whims of joy,

Free;
Faced only are we with the
Wonderful unknown.

Christopher Kavanagh 6th Year

Seventeen

Seventeen, so young and free
My world consisted of myself and he.
That softened smile,
Those dark brown eyes,
Made me think that I was falling for him.

Seventeen, so bright and bold
I moved back home to where it's rainy and cold
And whenever I'd feel a drop of rain on my face
It would instantly make me numb to the pain
That I felt because of those disappointing grades.

Seventeen, so passionate yet shy
The seat he'd sit on would be opposite to mine.
And as the sun brushed my skin with its rays
I'd catch a glimpse of him trying to praise
How strong I've become,
And maybe he was right.

How would I know the beauty of life,
That comes with its lows and highs
If it wasn't for the sadness?
If it wasn't for the mistakes?
How would I have grown,
To become a better version known,
If it wasn't for the sacrifices?
I wouldn't.

And so, I follow the train's timeless tracks.
The sky turns gold from what used to be black,
The trees stand tall and emit emerald green,
The birds chirp and sing in harmony.

As for me I,
I still think about my cats
Who live three oceans away.
Their fluffy grey fur always made a place
At the edge of my bed,
At the heart of my head.

They'd look at me with those innocent eyes
And rub their nose against mine
Made paw impressions on our glossy table
Those were the days, nostalgic and stable.

I could reminisce all I must but
For now, all I know is that I am Seventeen
And to savour it is to live a dream.
So embrace all the laughs, the jokes, and cries
Because you never know where your train track lies.

Faria Hasan 5th Year

The Morning Train

When grey clouds part across the sky,
And sunlight through them breaks,
I come to lay a mournful eye,
Upon the town that wakes.

Up winding stairs the people walk,
To take the train away
To nearby towns of which they talk,
Around the sea-swept bay.

The platform where I sit and wait
Is graced by passers-by,
Who give their tickets at the gate
With an impatient sigh.

A glowing warmth within my soul,
Which makes me feel alive,
Removes the aching, empty hole
In me when you arrive.

With the grim fact of consciousness
I'm ill-equipped to deal,
Without your heartfelt graciousness
That can my deep wounds heal.

My morning journey on the train
Is every day worthwhile,
When your face through the windowpane
Regards me with a smile.

Tom Hayden 6th Year

ENGLISH

Essay Competition 5th Year

The Institute's 2026 essay writing competition for 5th years was fiercely competitive this year. Over forty students entered the competition, and the finalists were judged by an external examiner. Students showed creativity, innovation and skill, and the standard impressed the external judge - well done to everyone who entered. A sincere thank you to Emma Grealy for organising the competition this year.

First place: Molly Beecher (short-story)
Second place: Maksim Snegnur (personal essay)
Third place: Aoife Laffan (short-story)
Highly commended: Mylana Kulia and Neil Richardson

Our winners are pictured below from left to right Aoife Laffan, Maksim Snegur, Molly Beecher, Mylana Kulia and Neil Richardson.

Students were given a variety of prompts to choose from. Read on in the following pages what prompts our three winners used and the stories they inspired them to write.

Writing Prompt chosen by first place winner Molly Beecher:
Write a short story, set in a railway station, in which a passenger off the overnight ferry from Fishguard in Wales plays an important role. It may be amusing or menacing in tone.

Molly Beecher 1st Place

Idris stared at the wall in front of him, and had the creeping sensation that hundreds of eyes were staring back at him. The wall's surface was covered in a thick layer of grime and white paint cracked at the edges, exposing the harsh stone beneath. All along it, hung missing persons posters. Some were clearly new - crisp and white, with dates from the last few months plastered on them - while others were crumpled and stained by time. His landlady had told him that, over the past decade, countless security guards had passed through the halls of this railway station. Each one had quit within a matter of weeks. Idris was the latest victim. He had arrived from Wales on the Fishguard - Rosslare ferry early that morning, and had only had time for a brief rest in his new lodgings before trudging to the local station to work the night shift.

He had come to Ireland for a change of scene, a chance to escape the monotonous life he had been living in the Welsh valleys. Now, staring at the missing person posters under the eerie, green glow of the fluorescent lights, he was starting to question his decision.
As soon as the Station Master saw Idris, he beckoned him over, a warm grin on his face. "You must be the new recruit, eh?"
Idris offered a sliver of a smile in return. "That's me."
"Well boy, welcome to Knockcailleach station. Now, you don't have too much to worry about - as I'm sure you've already noticed, we're not too busy. Just avoid Platform 4, yeah? It's closed for maintenance."

Having left the Station Master in the comfort of his office, Idris started to wander through the decrepit station, attempting to familiarise himself with each narrow, shadow-choked corridor and rusting staircase. It was silent apart from the hum of failing lights, the scurrying of rats and the echo of his footsteps. Every so often, a distant rumble and low wind would surge through the station, announcing the arrival of a train. Idris would watch as the train pulled in and the doors creaked open. One weary straggler would step out, maybe two, but never more. They took no notice of him as they passed, their faces blank and turned to the ground, they simply walked straight out of the station and were swallowed by the night.

After a few nights of this, Idris had explored almost everything the station had to offer. He had counted bricks and traced cracks along the walls, allowing them to take new shapes in his mind - distorted faces, strange creatures, melting clocks. This was undoubtedly the most tedious job he had ever had.

One night, he was leaning against a wall, counting seconds under his breath, timing the intervals of a light bulb flickering in the distance. He found himself being drawn to the flashes, and began to edge towards the light. It hung at the start of a corridor leading off the main hall and, as Idris got closer, he realised that other lights further down the passage had begun stuttering too. The corridor was blocked by yellow caution tape which stretched from wall to wall, and above the entrance hung a sign that creaked as the breeze caused it to sway. Its letters seemed warped, as if they were melting, and it felt as though they shifted each

time Idris blinked. Yet, he was still able to make out the message written on it: 'Platform 4'

Idris ducked under the tape and followed the flickering lights down the corridor, which seemed to stretch far longer than it should have. Tiles stained the colour of rust appeared under his feet and water dripped somewhere in the distance, matching the rhythm of his footsteps. A musty, damp scent clung to his throat. A ceiling light buzzed, sputtered, and died as he walked beneath it, plunging him into darkness. Goosebumps crawled along his arms and a cold shiver slid down his spine. The urge to keep going pulled at him, but he turned back, the Station Master's warning echoing in his mind.

Idris returned to the station the following night. He had no intention of entering the corridor to Platform 4 again, and he spent most of the night on the same cold, decrepit bench he had frequented for the past week. He glanced up at the main clock that hung above the tracks, only to realise that the hands had stopped moving. He got up to investigate, but was distracted by a light scattering of footsteps behind him. He spun around, expecting to find a child darting through the columns that stood around the edges of the platforms, but what he saw instead was a shadow. It was distorted, and seemed to change shape each time it passed behind one of the columns. Idris trailed cautiously behind it, watching as it guided him back to the corridor leading to Platform 4. His heart hammered against his ribs like a beating drum, but still he stepped into the darkness.

The silence was broken by the sudden crackling of the intercom coming to life. Idris glanced over his shoulder, but the sound was not coming from behind him. A low hum filled the air, followed by a short click. A voice began to form over the static buzz, but it did not sound fully human. The sound was distant and every syllable wavered in and out of clarity. Idris' brows knitted together as he tried to decipher what the voice was saying. As he walked further down the corridor, the transmission became louder and clearer. The voice repeated only one word: "Idrissss.'

He thought that he must have been imagining it, that the intercom was just omitting a hissing noise. Platform 4 was closed for maintenance after all, was that not what the Station Master had said? This time, he let his curiosity lead him further down the corridor. Where the lights had flickered was now nothing but a blank stretch of darkness. He traced his fingertips along the wall, keeping close to the cold, uneven stone, and reached into his pocket for his phone. He froze, then jammed his hands into all of his pockets, searching desperately for his one light source. He realised he must have left it on the bench in his hurry to follow the shadow. His hands started to tremble, and he curled his fingers into a tight fist, but he knew, frightened as he was, he had to find where the transmission was coming from.

Idris forced himself to take a deep breath and continued cautiously down the corridor. Every step felt disconnected, as if his body was no longer his. He hadn't noticed that the sounds of the station had slowly disappeared, only that at some point they were gone. The electric hum and rattle of trains he had become so accustomed to had faded away, and even the sound of his own footsteps was now dull and muffled. As he neared the final bend, the intercom was all he could hear. Everything else, even his own breathing, vanished. Until he turned the corner. Children's giggles, snippets of conversation, the blare of a horn, all came rushing at him. Platform 4 was suddenly there, as if it was hidden behind a veil he'd unknowingly passed through - but this platform was certainly not under maintenance. Idris slowly crept around the corner, trying to get a better look at what he had discovered. From the clamor, he had expected to find the platform full of people waiting to board the train but, just like the ones above, it was completely deserted. He inched forward in an attempt to locate the source of the noise. His eyes widened, trying to make sense of the scene before him - hundreds of passengers were crammed inside a train carriage. At first, they appeared almost normal, but then he noticed that their faces were all pressed against the glass, their eyes wide and unblinking, their lips pressed into sinister, hungry smiles.

Idris did not have time to think. He ran back through the corridor. His legs burned with each stride. His lungs screamed for air he could not get fast enough. The space blurred around him, the lights and shadows flickering incessantly. Behind him, the noise from the intercom grew louder, closer, as if it was chasing him. He burst into the main hall, his eyes darting desperately around the building trying to find the Station Master.
He felt a tap on his back and let out an involuntary yell.
"It's ok boy, calm down. What's the matter with you?"
He turned around to find the Station Master staring at him, his face full of concern. Idris' breathing was panicked ."It's Platform 4. You have to go down there. Or call the police. Or something. Anything. Just help me. Please."
"Alright son, take a breath. What did I tell you about Platform 4? Just leave it alone. You must be wrecked. Now, you go on away home for the night and think no more about it - I'll wrap up here."

Idris walked home as the sun rose, his body still trembling. He knew he had to go back to the station - knew he had to get some sort of proof of what he'd seen. Those had not been random people on that train. He had recognised them. Every single one of them. He had stared at them every day for the past week. Their faces covered the walls of the station, placed there by sobbing relatives and tired policemen. They were the faces of every person who had gone missing in this town in the last ten years.

That night, Idris planned on going straight to the corridor, but the Station Master lingered in the main hall, not letting him out of his sight. Idris sat on his bench, waiting for a moment when the Master's eyes would leave him. He couldn't explain why he felt so compelled to return to Platform 4, but he felt something drawing him down there. When a train arrived, causing a distraction for just a moment, Idris seized his chance. He ran to the corridor, letting terror grip him for just a moment before he stepped into its dark embrace. As soon as he entered, his movements slowed from their frantic pace, becoming almost mechanical. He could hear the intercom hissing his name, but this time it sounded even further away than it had before. The lights flicked on as he passed them, guiding his way to the platform. He walked, as if in a trance, around the bend, almost forgetting why he had decided to return at all. The train remained at the platform, but now its occupants sat quietly, barely moving. As Idris approached the train, the hissing of his name grew louder and louder until it reverberated through his skull. The train door creaked open, welcoming him in. He stepped onto the train without hesitation and, as the doors sighed shut behind him, the thought of turning back faded away.

Morning came, and the station opened just as it always did. Sunlight and footsteps filled the main hall as the wall of missing faces looked on. Among them, freshly hung but already indistinguishable, was Idris - another face waiting to be forgotten.

Maksim Snegnur 2nd Place

Writing Prompt chosen by second place winner Maksim Snegnur: Write a personal essay in which you reflect on some of the aspects of life you find puzzling.

There is a particular kind of confusion that does not arise from ignorance, but from seeing too much at once. It is not the confusion of someone who lacks information, but of someone who begins to notice contradictions that cannot be easily resolved. In recent years, I have found myself increasingly confronted by this kind of disorientation. It is not that I understand nothing; rather, I understand fragments, sometimes even quite clearly, yet fail to assemble them into a coherent whole. Life, in its local manifestations, often appears manageable, even predictable. However, when I attempt to grasp its global structure, its underlying logic, if such a thing exists, I encounter something far more troubling: a system that functions without ever fully justifying itself.

To begin with, one of the most perplexing aspects of life lies in the contrast between the physical and the social world, though even this contrast begins to dissolve the moment one looks closely enough. What I once took to be the honesty of the physical world now seems far less secure. It is tempting to believe that nature operates according to clear, intelligible laws, that it offers resistance which, if met with sufficient rigor, yields truth. Yet this confidence begins to fracture under scrutiny. As Immanuel Kant argued, what we call "laws of nature" may not belong to things as they are in themselves, but rather to the structure of our own cognition. We do not encounter the world in its noumenal depth, but only as phenomenon - already shaped, filtered, and organised by the conditions of our perception. The so-called necessity we observe may not be a property of reality, but a feature of how we are compelled to experience it. This suspicion deepens when one considers the problem of causality. Empirical science relies on repetition, observation, and inference, yet, as David Hume famously noted, no amount of repeated correlation can logically guarantee necessity. We never perceive causation itself - only sequences of events, habitually linked in our minds. Thus, even the stability of physics – the material world may rest less on ultimate certainty than on highly refined models, internally coherent but never fully grounded. I used to believe that physics offered certainty in a way human life never could. Yet the more I learned about how scientific laws are constructed, the more I began to suspect that what I was trusting was not reality itself, but a remarkably successful language for describing it.

However, when we turn to the social world, even this fragile sense of structure seems to collapse. If physics operates within the immanent limits of cognition: bounded but internally consistent, social life appears to lack even that degree of consistency. Its laws, if they can be called such, are social norms, expectations, roles, and narratives. They function as a kind of phenomenological framework, analogous in form to natural laws, but radically different in substance. Where physical laws aspire to universality, social norms are contingent, shifting, and often contradictory. They are not discovered but negotiated, not stable but performative. One may follow every visible rule and still fail, because the rules themselves are neither fixed nor transparent. Conversely, one may violate them and succeed, because what appears as deviation in one context becomes innovation in another. This is what, personally, renders the social world not merely complex, but genuinely puzzling. It is not governed by an unseen necessity, but by a fluid interplay of interpretations, power structures, and collective fictions. If the physical world conceals its noumenal ground behind stable phenomena, the social world seems to lack such grounding altogether. Its reality is immanent in a different sense: not as a structured field of possible experience, but as an ongoing construction without final coherence. In this domain, unpredictability does not emerge from hidden laws, but from the absence of any law that could claim universality. What remains is not freedom in any meaningful sense, but a kind of existential instability - a continuous negotiation with forces that are real in their effects, yet elusive in their origin and logic.

This sense of instability becomes even more unsettling when I begin to examine not only how individuals are integrated into society, but how deeply that integration may define what we take to be our "self." I find myself increasingly unable to answer a seemingly simple question: to what extent is my identity truly my own, and what part of it has been quietly constructed by forces I neither chose nor even perceived? From an early age, a person is placed within systems: family, school, and eventually work, - that do not merely shape behaviour, but infiltrate the very architecture of perception. What appears later as a personal preference, a belief, or even a conviction often has origins that are obscured by time. When I am asked whether I like something, I usually respond without hesitation. Sometimes I can even justify the answer, but more often than not, I find myself at a point beyond which explanation fails - a kind of "it just is." And it is precisely this "just is" that I find most disturbing, because it suggests a layer of formation that is both fundamental and inaccessible. I sometimes notice this most clearly in small moments. When someone asks me why I prefer one subject over another, I often respond confidently at first, only to realise that my explanation stops very quickly. Beyond a certain point there is nothing but habit, familiarity, or something inherited long before I began to question it. Sometimes I realise I cannot tell whether a belief I hold is something I chose or something I absorbed. The possibility that many of our preferences are formed in early, unreflective stages of life, when we are most susceptible to influence, introduces a troubling ambiguity into the notion of individuality. Every interaction, every repeated pattern, every emotional association becomes a subtle act of programming. What we later call "ourselves" may, to a significant extent, be the sediment of these accumulated impressions.

Even more unsettling is the realisation that the very tools through which we attempt to understand ourselves: language and morality, - are themselves products of this same social process. Language, while enabling thought, also confines it; it provides categories that both illuminate and restrict. Concepts such as "justice," "success," or "failure" are not discovered in isolation but inherited, internalized long before we are capable of questioning them. In this sense, even our most intimate reflections are not entirely private. The inner dialogue we experience as our own may, in fact, be a continuation of the social world -

a conversation that society conducts with itself within the boundaries of our consciousness. This does not render individuality impossible, but it complicates it to the point of near paradox. Education, for instance, is often presented as a means of cultivating independent thought, yet it operates through systems that reward conformity to predefined standards. I have often sat in a classroom, feeling my own critical thoughts being pruned to fit the rigid boundaries of a marking scheme. Deviation is tolerated, even celebrated, as long as it remains legible to the system. Beyond that, it becomes a problem. I cannot help but feel that what is being produced is not so much genuine independence as a controlled simulation of it - a form of individuality that remains compatible with the structures that generated it.

This pattern doesn't end at the school gates; it follows us into the corridors of the working world. Employment is often framed as a realm of opportunity, where individuals can apply their skills, realise their potential, and pursue meaningful goals. Yet, in practice, work frequently reveals itself as something far more constrained - a necessity dictated by survival rather than a genuine expression of self. Even when thinking about future careers, I often notice how quickly practical necessity narrows what initially felt like open possibility. The freedom to choose one's path is not absent, but it is heavily conditioned by economic realities, by one's prior formation, and by the ever-present urgency of earning a living. In such a context, the distinction between choice and compulsion becomes blurred. One may technically "choose" a job, but this choice often resembles selecting among variations of the same constraint, rather than exercising true autonomy. This ambiguity becomes sharper when viewed through a broader structural lens. What is often described as a free labor market begins to resemble a more subtle form of dependency, something akin to neo-feudalism, where formal freedom masks deeply entrenched hierarchies. Instead of land-bound serfs, we have economically bound individuals; instead of lords, corporations and institutional powers that mediate access to resources. The individual is no longer owned in a literal sense, yet remains functionally dependent on structures that dictate the conditions of survival. Karl Marx argued that under capitalist systems, labour becomes alienated: not only from its product, but from the worker's own essence. However, what feels particularly unsettling in the contemporary context is that this condition no longer appears confined to a single class. While inequalities undeniably persist, there is a sense in which nearly everyone is embedded within the same system of production and reproduction. Even those who occupy positions of relative power remain constrained by the logic of the system itself, compelled to maintain stability, growth, and efficiency in order to preserve their status. For me, this leads to another puzzling aspect of life: the relationship between freedom and necessity. We are told that we are free, yet much of our existence is governed by conditions we did not select. At the same time, we are held responsible for our choices, even when those choices are heavily constrained. This duality creates a sense of unease. It suggests that freedom is not an absolute state but a relative one, existing within limits that are both visible and hidden.

In addition to structural constraints, there is also the issue of meaning. Human beings appear to have an inherent desire to find purpose in their actions and experiences. However, the systems that organise modern life do not necessarily provide such meaning. They offer efficiency, productivity, and measurable outcomes, but these do not always translate into a sense of fulfilment. One may function flawlessly within a system and still feel that nothing of substance has been attained, for knowledge and achievement do not automatically carry significance. "Existence precedes essence" - ultimately, individuals are left to construct their own meaning, drawing from personal values, relationships, or creative pursuits. This autonomy can be empowering, but it introduces a profound burden. If meaning is not a fixed attribute waiting to be discovered, but something generated through the act of engagement itself, then it requires constant participation to exist. Phenomena remain inert until they are lived, interpreted, or felt. This implies that life does not carry inherent meaning in any accessible sense; its value emerges only through the way one relates to it. The challenge, therefore, is not simply to create meaning once, but to sustain it. Because it is a construct rather than a given, there is no guarantee that the meaning one creates will feel sufficient or remain stable over time. It can shift, dissolve, or lose its intensity. In this light, the search for purpose becomes less about discovering a final answer and more about maintaining a certain mode of being, in which life is not merely endured as a sequence of occurrences, but consciously inhabited and reaffirmed in the face of persistent uncertainty.

In conclusion, the aspects of life that I find most puzzling are not isolated problems but interconnected tensions: between knowledge and uncertainty, freedom and necessity, individuality and conformity, connection and isolation. These tensions do not appear to have definitive resolutions. Instead, they form the background against which life unfolds. While this may initially seem discouraging, it can also be understood as an invitation to think more deeply, to question more carefully, and to engage with the world in a way that is both critical and open. If life cannot be fully explained, it may still be experienced, and perhaps that is where its value ultimately lies.

Aoife Laffan 3rd Place

Writing Prompt chosen by third place winner Aoife Laffan: Write a short story, set in a railway station, in which a passenger off the overnight ferry from Fishguard in Wales plays an important role. Your short story may be amusing or menacing in tone.

The ferry wailed as it was pressed against the pier, a long exhausted exhale spilling over the murky water. The waves slammed against the worn iron front, ropes flung and caught with practiced hands. A whistle hissed, signalling the safety of landing. Passengers spilled out eagerly, their leather boots stomping on the damp worn timber. No one bothered with conversation. The eerie aura of the harbour mixed in with the sea sickness spoke for itself.

Across the harbor, the city waited. Slate skies hung low over columns of soot dark rooftops and skeletal cranes. Iron tracks laced through it like exposed veins. It stunk of damp.

"Looks like they're clearing up" Sloan said, stepping onto the pier and stretching his neck as if he could read something in the sky by the stretch alone.
The clouds didn't answer. Beside him, Victor didn't either.
His coat hung too loose on his frame, as if it had been bought for someone broader, someone who actually filled it properly. The collar was turned up high and the brim of his cap cast a shadow that swallowed most of his face. He moved with a strange rhythm steady, but slightly out of sync, like a man walking half a step behind himself.

Sloan glanced at him, then away.

“You still renting that place by the marsh?” he tried again, lighter this time, as if his tone alone could coax conversation into action.
Victor’s mouth twitched, almost forming a smile before abandoning the idea. “Not for long,” he said. “I’m… thinking about moving inland.”
They made their way down the sloped exit towards the street, boots thudding softly against wet wood.
“Good move,” Slaon said. “Cold out there. As me mother would’ve said, damp gets into your bones.” He shoved his hands into his pockets. “You ever get used to the quiet?”
Victor’s gaze drifted out over the water for a moment before following the path ahead.“I like quiet,” he said. “It keeps things still.”
“Still?”
“Still means safe.”

The way he said it was so… flat. It made something in Sloan hesitate. But the moment passed as they reached the road, where the sounds of the city began to replace the hush of the harbor.
Cars slid by, tires screeching over wet asphalt. Ravenous seagulls hovered above, scouting their next victims. A streetlamp flickered once, twice, then held in place.
They walked side by side towards the station. The ferry behind them released another long groan before settling into silence.

Sloan cleared his throat.
“You know,” he began, carefully casual, “people at work were wondering what happened with Mary and the kids. Haven’t heard from them in months.”
Victor’s step faltered, not enough to stop him, but enough to break his strange rhythm. His breath caught, so subtly any normal person would’ve missed it.
For a moment, Sloan thought he might pretend not to hear. Or brush it off.
“They’re gone,” Victor mumbled. His voice was soft and perhaps a little too steady. “She took them with her. Moved back with her mother. It was for the best.”
Sloan nodded, slowly. “Must’ve been rough.”

Victor let out a quiet breath almost like a chuckle though it held no warmth. “It’s funny”
They reached a crossing and paused as a car rolled past, its headlights slicing through the growing dusk.
“Even now,” Victor continued, “they’re there.” Sloan glanced sideways. “What do you mean?”
“I hear them at night.” Victor’s gaze had dropped to his calloused hands. He rubbed his thumb along the side of his ring finger, over and over, as if feeling for something that wasn’t there. “Just… moving around. Plates clinking or floorboards creaking. Little things to let me know they’re there, you know?”

Sloan frowned faintly.“You mean like memories..?”
“Maybe.” Victor said.
They began walking again.
“Or maybe it’s just them.”

A faint wind picked up, carrying the briny edge of the harbor with it. It slipped through Sloans coat and settled somewhere cold inside his chest.
“The house still smells like her stew,” Victor went on. “She used to cook it every Sunday. Same thing every time. Potatoes, carrots. Salted beef when we could afford it. She had a way of letting it simmer all day. Said the flavor needed time to settle through the veg.” His voice softened, not quite with affection but something stranger. “For our wedding day she gave me her recipe, God I cherish it. Even now.”
Sloan forced a small smile. “Sounds nice.” “It was,” Victor said. “At first.”
They passed beneath a row of streetlights. One flickered, then settled, casting A long, narrow shadow that stretched ahead of them like something out of ‘the exorcist’
“The scent never leaves,”Victor continued.“Not even after you scrub the walls.”
Sloan slowed slightly, feeling a puddle of sweat build up on his nape.
“The walls?”

Victor didn’t answer right away. Instead, he stopped.

Sloan took another step before realising, then turned back. The streetlight above them buzzed faintly, its glow dimming for a fraction of a second before returning.
Victor stood very still. Rain began again, not heavy, but a fine drizzle that seeped into their coats softly.
“She just never stopped talking” Victor drawled. His voice had altered now. Lower, thinner. “None of them did. Not when I asked. Not when I begged.”
Sloan’s mouth went dry. “Victor…”
But the name didn’t seem to reach him.

Victor’s gaze had long drifted past Sloan, toward the tracks ahead. In the distance a pair of lights flared into the view, the train approaching through the haze.
“She said I’d rot without them,” he muttered. “That I wouldn’t last a week alone. Said I was a soulless being who couldn’t ‘be still’”

“I tried,” he went on. “I really did. Sat there at the table, listening. Plates scraping, their whiny voices always asking for something. Always waiting for an answer.
Sloan felt his pulse in his throat.

“You’re just….hearing things” he said, though he knew the words lacked conviction even as he spoke them.
Victor turned and smiled then. A small, private smile that didn’t reach his eyes. “Am I?”
The train whistle cut through the air, long and sharp, echoing off the buildings.
Victor took a slow step forward.
“She was wrong, you know,” he said. “About me.” Sloan didn’t move a muscle.
“I didn’t rot.” Another step.
“I just adapted.”

The train roared closer now, its large, metal bulk emerging from the mist. The tracks began to hum beneath it as the platform vibrated in sync. Victor turned his head slightly, just enough that Sloan could see the smug expression beneath the brim of his cap.
The train pulled in with a long, grinding, squeaky hiss, wind rushing ahead of it as it swallowed the platform with the light.
The doors slid open without a pause.

Victor stepped forward, calm, unhurried, and crossed the threshold into the carriage. “I took them with me,” he said.
The words hung there, fragile and heavy cementing Sloan in place. “Every bite.” he grinned. For a moment, nothing existed but the sound of the pounding rain.
Then the doors slammed shut with a pneumatic hiss.

MUSIC

It has been a wonderfully busy year in the music department. Over one hundred 6th years recently completed their Leaving Certificate music practical exam and the standard as always was exceptionally high.

Students were very well prepared for these exams thanks to the introduction of one to one practical tutorials with our new music teacher Jane Wade, a fantastic addition to our department! The tutorials offered valuable opportunities not only to develop performance skills, but also to engage in thoughtful discussions about repertoire and all aspects of the practical examination.

We have showcased some of the school's musical talent throughout the year at a number of memorable events, with beautiful performances at the school Open Day, Christmas carol singing and concerts to celebrate Wellbeing Week and Culture Day. The school choir have been working hard throughout the year in preparation for Graduation Day, and a group of ambitious 5th years have started a school jazz band, a school first! Jazz Band is open to all years.

Some of our individual students have enjoyed exceptional musical success over the past twelve months, with Feis Ceoil wins for Joanne Shaw (viola), Christopher Kavanagh (piano), and Sinéad Glynn (piano). Sinéad was also recently awarded first place in the O16 piano solo at the Wesley Interschools Music Festival.

Finally, 6th year Nayan Levy has attended a number of trumpet masterclasses at home and abroad, and has been accepted on to the degree in trumpet performance at the world renowned Amsterdam Conservatory. We are so proud of Nayan and all our music students and wish them every success as we say goodbye to our 6th years.

Alice Kent 5th Year

This year welcomed the start of the new Institute Jazz Band! We started the band as a way to have a musical outlet during the school week, but over time it's become much more than that. We have all sorts of instruments in the band: drums, piano, guitar, saxophone, violin, French horn, and we've played all kinds of music, from Stevie Wonder to Miles Davis to Laufey. The club is a really good way to de-stress during the day, because everyone can bring their own style to the music, and we only play songs that everyone has an interest in. The Jazz Band has definitely been one of the highlights of my year!

4TH YEAR

Our 4th years have enjoyed an exceptional year, with more activities, modules, and trips added to the schedule than ever before. Their itineraries were so full that we couldn't capture everything in this yearbook, but we have listed them below and you can read on in the following pages for a glimpse into some of the items in their busy year.

Alongside all the 4th year specific activities listed here, students kept up with their studies across a choice of 28 subjects and got involved in our schools fantastic range of extracurriculars and lunch clubs, where 4th years excelled in everything from MUN and Debating to Robotics and Volleyball.

Modules:

Bridge ● Computer Science ● Craft Workshop
Crochet ● Drama ● First Aid ● Fitness
Global Conflicts ● Journalism ● Linguistics
Meditative Drumming ● Mythology ● Negotiation Skills
Photography ● Research Methods
Science Competitions ● Self Defence ● Sign Language
Stocks and Trading ● Sustainabilty Studies
Theatre & Drama Studies ● Table Tennis ● Yoga

Programmes and activities in the school:

Accenture AI Workshop
A Day in My Wheels for Spinal Injuries Ireland
Bake and Craft Sales
Barista Training with Dublin Barista School
Big Legal Q&A
Careers in Film and TV Workshop
DIY Workshop
Duke's Careers Assessment Day
Duke's Acing Assessment Centres
Duke's Careers CV Workshop
Irish Sign Language Course
Mock Trials
RCSI MiniMed Online Course
Trinity MiniMed Tallaght University Hospital Series Online
Volunteering for school Open Days & Wellbeing Events

Organised via the school and held externally:

Accenture Girls in Analytics - Accenture Offices, Dublin
Canter Fitzgerald - Cantor Fitzgerald House, Dublin
Creative Connections - St. Mary's College RFC, Dulin
Daffodil Day Support - City Centre, Dublin
European Youth Parliament - Leinster House, Dublin
Girls in ICT - Trinity College, Dublin
iWish Women in Science - RDS Main Arena, Dublin
Kilkenny Gift Wrapping - Kilkenny Design Shop, Dublin
Look into Law - Distillery Building, Dublin
Lifesaving Course - Mespil Pool, Dublin
'Light Up A Life' Our Lady's Hospice - Harold's Cross, Dublin
Mock Trials - District Court, Dublin
Mondello Driving School - Mondello Park, Kildare
RCSI MiniMed - Royal College of Surgeons Ireland, Dublin
Trinity MiniMed - Tallaght University Hospital, Dublin
Sailing Course - Howth Yacht Club, Dublin

Trips:

Causey Farm Trip
'Bullied' in the Sean O'Casey Theatre
Lighthouse Cinema Christmas Trip
Rome Trip
Carlingford Overnight Adventure Trip
Emerald Park end of year Trip

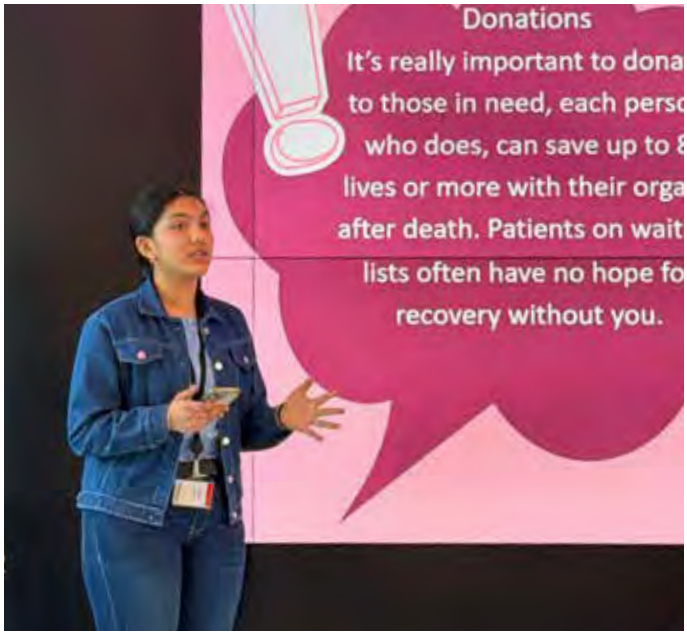
Extra Language Exams and Qualifications:

CEFR International Language Exams
DELF French Proficiency Qualification
DELE Spanish Exams
Fit In Deutsch German Exams
TEG Irish Certificate of Competence

Work Experience & Study Abroad programmes:

With access to live and recorded online classes, our 4th years were able to take part in exceptional opportunities both in Ireland and abroad while staying on track with their studies.

ACCENTURE



Rachel Lin 4th Year

When I first heard our Year Head Dee, talk about Accenture Girls in Analytics, I found it quite empowering. It highlights the fact that women can undertake careers that are painted to be in supposedly 'male dominated' fields. It inspired us to put our best foot forward with this project.

Katie, Aadya and I agreed that we should work on a topic in healthcare, specifically on organ donation. We gathered data through apps such as Tableau and Kaggle, which were presented to us through our mentors in Accenture. We decided to research the reasons why there is such a difference between organ donation in different geographical areas. We were introduced to many ideas and factors that we had no idea about before.

To sum it up, we found the project intriguing, we discovered things that we would not have known if we did not apply to Accenture. For me personally, it pushed me to use my public speaking skills. I realised that everyone was in the same boat, there was nothing to be afraid of and gave a presentation. We were ecstatic when we placed 1st runner up/ 2nd place, we felt that the judges could tell how much work we put into it.

Rachel is pictured top left, presenting their topic at Accenture Offices, Dublin.

CAUSEY FARM TRIP

Alex Prior 4th Year

At the start of the school year in September, we took a coach to Causey Farm where we took part in an array of group activities. The first activity was baking traditional bread. As a first activity it was a great choice as it helped us to learn new names and create some early bonds. After leaving the bread to bake we were taken to a place where we took part in maze games. The next part of our time there was seeing the farm and some commonly found farm animals. And finally, we went to the bog where we were able to jump into the muddy swamp and have a laugh with the people who dared to jump in.

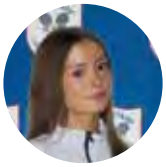
I chose this experience because I think it was vital for breaking the ice with the other students and finding friends that I still have today. Without going to Causey Farm, becoming familiar with the other students, would have been a much harder process. Causey Farm allowed us to become friendly with each other much quicker. It went better than I expected, I thought people might be shy and a little bit hesitant but surprisingly it was seamless and we were all in groups and chatting as if we had been friends for years - within minutes of meeting each other.

The day really made me optimistic about my years ahead in the school, purely from experiencing everyone's attitude, happy spirits and friendliness. I learnt a lot about others on the day like the simple stuff such as their names and where they are from but also their passions for sport etc. I think I gained quite a lot of confidence from the short trip and really improved at teamwork and working with people I didn't know very well. Initially I was nervous and slightly shy but I overcame that fear by realising that these are my classmates for the next three years and by being shy and not being myself I would just make life harder for myself. This mentality really worked as for the rest of the trip I was interacting with everyone, felt like I was being myself and became friends with lots of people over the course of the day.

I really recommend going to Causey Farm because of how much it benefits you. It allows you to learn names, understand your social environment and made making friends at the start of the year, so much easier. If I had not gone, I'm not sure where I would be today, I would probably not be as close with my friends as I am. I wouldn't have as much confidence in meeting new people and in being myself no matter where I am or who I am around - which is really important and beneficial to life in general, inside and outside of school. My biggest takeaway is definitely the importance of being yourself and being open to other people. I learned that being closed off due to worry, embarrassment or fear doesn't get you anywhere. How, you should always just be yourself no matter the circumstances - because people should be friends with you for you - and if they are friends with you for any other reasons then they are not real friends. I'm grateful my friends are friends with me for me and nothing else. Another takeaway was that nothing worth doing comes easy. If I had of opted out of the trip due to fear and worry - it would just be kicking the stone down the road. Whilst everyone else would make friends on the trip, I would be a little bit left behind or just a little bit late to the party, which would just make my life harder.

Causey Farm

Causey Farm



Lilly Kenny Scott 4th Year

In my opinion, the highlight of 4th Year occurred at the very beginning of the year, when we followed The Institute of Education 4th year tradition by going on the annual trip to Causey Farm. I remember waking up to a downpour of rain and undergoing the journey to school with my friend, as we battled, for one of the first of many times, against the wind and rain - feeling like Dorothy's house in the Wizard of Oz, about to fly away at any moment. After arriving at school soaking wet, yet still in high spirits, my friends and I appealed to Angie Crowe's mercy and managed to jump into a bus all together, immediately undergoing what could be described as nothing less than the 10 metre Olympic sprint to the back of the bus.

The moment the wheels of the bus started to move with the intention of reaching our destination, so did The Institute 4th year sing-along. Music of all different genres blasted from a tiny speaker, from Sabrina Carpenter and Bruno Mars, to EsDeeKid and 'Let it Go' from Frozen, all songs accompanied by off-key teenage singing of course! Upon arriving at the farm we followed our guide to an intricate set of tunnels, each ranging in size, and we were challenged to army-crawl our way through them. I remember scurrying through the tunnels, like a badger in a burrow, my hands sprawled out in front of me to prevent me from banging into a wall. I must have repeated these tunnels over ten times, giggling with my friends until finally we were told we could only do one last crawl. Due to the fact I was the quickest out of my friends, I was sent out first with the others following behind. As my hands stretched out into the pitch black abyss, suddenly I grasped a foot. I began shaking it back and forth and called out 'Heyyy! Who is this?' 'This is your Maths teacher' a voice replied. I died. I had just vigorously shaken my teacher's foot after a week of being acquainted with him. The entire line behind me burst into laughter and looking back on it, a smile can't help but crawl across my face, that is a memory I will never forget!

Next, we were brought to a small cottage, where we washed our hands and entered the kitchen. We began making bread from scratch, everyone working together, yet also competing to decipher who could make the best baked goods. Each pair's consistency was different, some pure liquid, others rock solid, all delicious. We began our trek, past the goats, horses, and pigs, to the chicken coup. In the pouring rain, we were arranged into small groups, and were told to sacrifice one student from each team to act as a statue, but not just any statue, a statue which holds as many chickens as humanly possible. We were thrust into the coup with the clucking chickens and began chasing after the soaking, orange birds as they attempted to flap away from us.

'JUST GRAB THE THING IT DOESN'T BITE'

'GET THE ROOSTER IT'S WORTH DOUBLE'

'THAT'S ON SIR! I PUT IT ON BEFORE THE TIMER! THAT'S A POINT FOR OUR TEAM'

Shrieking and giggling were all you could hear for the duration of the challenge. I am incredibly proud to announce that my team managed to fit 8 chickens onto my friend's body, although the poor girl had chicken feet all over her clothes for the rest of the duration of the trip!

Finally, we were transported on a tiny yellow trailer to the bog, teeth chattering from an impending feeling of nervousness but also butterflies from excitement. When the plane of brown, sticky mud came into view, the 4th year students started cheering, counter-intuitive right? A group of teenagers are OVERJOYED with the prospect of getting covered in muck! We stripped off our shoes and socks and dashed down the plank of wood connecting solid land to the bog, slipping and sliding as we went. Sheepishly, one by one, we began leaping off of the elevated land into the mud. The jumps began cautiously, until suddenly students were doing large run-ups and leaps of faith into the bog below. Friends wheezing with laughter as they contorted their bodies to help drag their entrapped classmate out of the mud, students rolling in the soil in pursuit of reaching land to complete the cycle and jump in once again. It was a truly bizarre and yet wholesome and joyful sight. We said our goodbyes to our chicken-sole-mates and Causey Farm and mounted the bus, new friendships and unforgettable memories made.

Bog

Causey Farm

WORK EXPERIENCE

Eldana Heffernan 4th Year

On November 30th 2025, my mum and I travelled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The purpose of this trip was to volunteer in a local school, Kidane Meheret School. We were there to help teach English to primary school kids, but it was so much more than that. As soon as I set foot into the school I got such a strong sense of family, welcoming and happiness. The classrooms were nothing like what we have in Ireland or Europe but the kids were the same.

All smiles, laughter and playfulness. I soon realised that their levels of English were not very high but I knew we could help with that. Teaching them basic sentence structures, telling stories, learning songs in English and role playing all helped so much to improve their English. Over time we built connections with the students and teachers and made friends for life. It was so rewarding seeing the children excel. Sometimes they would even incorporate English into normal conversations outside the classroom. That was the best bit.

As well as helping in the classroom my mum and I helped in the children's home next door, both the school and the home are run by Sr. Lutgarda and Sr. Camille. Two nuns who have dedicated their life to helping children in need. They are truly inspiring. We helped organise their admin and documents, tidying and cleaning playrooms and bedrooms. It really made such a difference for them to have a few extra pairs of hands. In the children's home they are constantly looking for sponsors, people who help pay for one of the kid's education for that year. We decided to sponsor a young boy called Teddy. It was so heartwarming watching him find out someone decided to pick him. It really makes me think about how lucky I am, and I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to give back.

Phoebe Vogler Lotze 4th Year

I worked alongside Professor Carlos Rocha (Professor in Natural Sciences and Geology in Trinity) in TCD. I was given a week to read papers on hydrogen and oxygen isotopes in the water cycle to understand what parts of the field I'd be working in. In the second week I was given my own project to research: find out the 'zones' for the eight tap water sources in Dublin.

I was given full lab and computer access for the project. I travelled around Dublin and (with the help of a few friends) collected 18 tap water samples. I then prepared and analysed them to find the results. Contrary to my hypothesis, I found out that Dublin (and the surrounding area) only has three distinct water 'zones'. This is due to the water likely mixing in the pipes. I will be heading back to TCD to present my findings to the professor within the next few weeks. I also had the opportunity to participate in field work in multiple locations across Ireland with the two PhD students on Professor Rocha's team. It was a great opportunity to get to know more about the work a PhD student does on a daily basis.

Elliot Guest 4th Year

I completed a week of work experience at Cherry Orchard Equine Centre. I got to complete a multitude of tasks, including grooming, tacking, feeding, etc. I chose to do work experience here due to my strong interest in horses and the equine industry. I got to meet loads of new people and spent plenty of time with the horses. Two particular horses I got acquainted with quickly were Dillon and Charlie. Charlie, despite being a gelded thoroughbred, was surprisingly calm and cooperative. Dillon was a pure sweetheart and incredibly clingy, other than Charlie I definitely spent the most amount of time with him when not busy. Over the course of the week, I learned many of the basics, whether it was getting their saddle ready or being as patient as possible to get them to lift their hooves to pick them out.

Overall, I learned so many valuable things when it comes to horses that I definitely wouldn't have had the opportunity to do so otherwise. I never fully realised how complex grooming and tacking was. I hadn't realised how many components there were to the saddle, and just getting the saddle on some horses proved to be a challenge. Thoroughly grooming a horse took a while too with all the different brushes and the varying sizes of the horses, it definitely took a while to get the hang of, especially with certain horses being far more cooperative than others. At the end of each day, I had to prepare the hay nets to feed the horses, which takes a lot longer than you'd realise. It was quite the trip to get to and from the centre every day, being over an hour away by bus, but it was 100% worth it each time. It definitely deepened my love and passion for horses and the equine industry as a whole.

Jennifer Zhang 4th Year

This year, I took part in a five-day cooking workshop which took place in Dublin Cookery School, led by a local chef. Each day, we focused on a new place: Italy, Mexico, India, France, and the Middle East. We learned to prepare traditional dishes such as pasta carbonara, tacos and pizza. We worked in small groups to cook, plate, and try our dishes. I chose this experience because I enjoy cooking at home and wanted to expand my skills. I expected it to be fun and relaxed, but I didn't anticipate how much I would learn about culture, teamwork, and even patience. One surprise was how challenging it was to follow recipes from different culinary traditions - each had unique techniques and ingredients. I also didn't expect to feel so connected to the other participants by the end of the week.

I learned a lot in these days - not just about cooking, but about people. From a practical standpoint, I developed knife skills, learned how to balance flavours, and became more confident in the kitchen. But more importantly, I learned about the cultural significance of food. I also realised how much communication matters in a group setting - especially when things get busy or a dish isn't turning out as planned. One challenge for me was the language barrier when a recipe used terms I wasn't familiar with. I also found it difficult at first to work with people I didn't know well. On the second day, our group struggled to agree on how to prepare a curry. Instead of letting frustration build, I suggested we pause and read the recipe aloud together. That small moment of leadership helped us refocus, and we ended up making one of the best dishes of the day.

I would definitely recommend this workshop to others. This experience has changed the way I think about food. It's no longer just something I eat - it's a way to connect with others and learn about the world. I now feel more confident in the kitchen and more open to trying new things. During the work experience, I think my biggest takeaway is that food brings people together. Over five days, a group of strangers became a team, and we shared not only meals but also laughter, mistakes, and successes. This experience reminded me that learning doesn't only happen in a classroom - it happens when you step out of your comfort zone and try something new.

BARISTA COURSE

Jim Morgan

4th Year

The Barista Course took place early in the school year in October. We spent the whole day learning how to make various types of coffees such as Espressos, Lattes and Americanos. We also learned about how to tell if the coffee is too coarse or fine and a small bit about the origin of coffee. We got to discover new Latte arts and different techniques to do with pouring. The instructors were very helpful and let us try some of the hot drinks at the end. I got a certificate emailed to me so that I can put it on my CV and hopefully it will come in handy when I'm looking for a job this summer.

I also got to connect with people I didn't really know before as I had only been in the school for just over a month - and a lot of fun was had. The company it was ran by, Dublin Barista School, were also running a similar course at my old school which was interesting to hear how they felt it went - but we all thought it was great! The Barista course definitely exceeded my expectations because everyone there was so professional but also fun at the same time.

Jenna Colgan

4th Year

One of the first activities we did in 4th year was the Barista Course. It was such a fun break from normal classes and gave us the chance to try something new. I had always wanted to learn how to make coffee properly, so when I heard the Dublin Barista school was offering a course for 4th years I immediately put my name down. I was really looking forward to getting a first hand experience and learning something different outside of the usual school subjects.

We headed down to the Home Economics Kitchen where the course was taking place. We were welcomed by two Italians - so we knew straight away the coffee was going to be top-tier. We started off the morning with some Espresso tasting and learning about the different types of coffee and how to make them. It was really interesting to see how much detail goes into something as simple as a cup of coffee.

Then came the highlight of the day, making the coffee. We learnt how to make so many different types of coffee like Espressos, Flat Whites and Lattes. My personal favourite was the Hot Chocolate. We were also taught coffee art which is a lot harder than it looks. Some of them turned out interesting to say the least, but it was really fun to try.

After we had perfected our coffee making skills we started making and delivering coffees to the teachers and our friends. It was a nice way to put what we learned in to practice and see everyone enjoying what we made. Overall, the course was such a great experience, it was also a really nice way to meet new people and I got to know a lot more people in the year. It is definitely one of my highlights of 4th year.

Coffee

Ziqi Han 4th Year

In February, I chose to do the 4th year Trinity Medicine Programme as I am interested in the field of medicine and wanted to understand the working environment and get advice for my future studies. Most of the activities of this programme were held at Tallaght University Hospital, except for visiting the Trinity College Anatomy Museum and Book of Kells on the second day. Every day, doctors from different departments gave us lectures. They told us how to transition from school to the medical field and showed us what it's like to work in various departments such as paediatrics and the emergency department. After the lecture, students were divided into groups to complete different skills training. I completed intubation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the use of AED, ultrasound, and even applied a plaster cast and fixed my cervical vertebrae using tools.

It helped me become more confident in communicating with others. Since intubation requires the joint effort of two people, trust and teamwork are indispensable. When handing over the equipment, we also need to clearly inform the other party what actions we were performing. When performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on patients, one person uses the resuscitation device while the other performs the CPR. The biggest difficulty I had was that I struggled to communicate with unfamiliar classmates and I was not confident enough speaking. However, every student received the greatest respect and everyone had the opportunity to undergo practical training, which has been of great help in boosting my self-confidence.

I learned that doctors should excel not only academically but also in interpersonal communication and self-improvement. We were also given the CAO Undergraduate Medicine Handbook, which shows the admission standards for the medical programs of relevant universities. This will help me prepare for my future study path.

During this experience, I saw that doctors often work under high pressure and witness death. But this did not affect my interest in a career in this field. Even though the admission standards for medical programmes are relatively high compared to other degrees, I still want to keep working hard in this area to achieve my goals. This experience has also taught me when to make more additional plans, such as for the HPAT exam. Overall, the biggest takeaway from this experience is that being a doctor is not only about academic excellence, but also about responsibility, teamwork, and emotional resilience. Before this programme, I mainly focused on the academic requirements of studying Medicine. However, after participating in the activities and listening to doctors' experiences, I realised that communication skills and the ability to stay calm under pressure are equally important. I also learned that confidence can be developed through practice and stepping out of my comfort zone. This experience has strengthened my motivation to pursue a career in medicine and made me more aware of the effort required to achieve this goal.

Eve Hodgins 4th Year

In March, I participated in the RCSI MiniMed 4th year programme that took place in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. I have always had a keen interest in Medicine, and I applied for this course to explore the medical field a bit more and to try and figure out if a career in Medicine was the right fit for me. And this programme did not disappoint at all. The course was only three days long, but it was extremely action-packed. We had lectures from healthcare professionals on all different fields of medicine, ranging from rheumatology and forensic pathology to neurology and orthopaedics. A few lectures really stood out to me, including paediatric care and sports medicine. We talked to a few different patients, including a patient who had a lung transplant a few years ago, and a stroke victim.

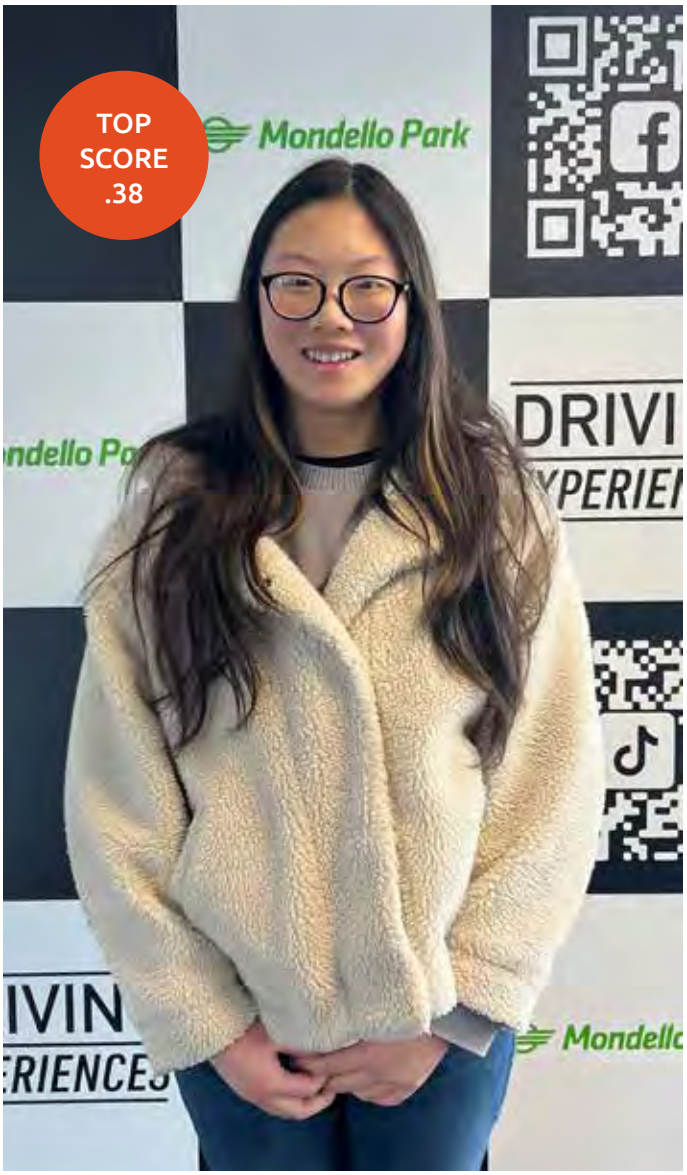
In my opinion, the highlight of the entire programme was the simulation training. On the last day, we divided into six different groups, and we each worked on mastering different medical or surgical skills. This included suturing (stitching skin), performing CPR, taking ultrasounds, providing oxygen and anaesthesia to patients, and inserting nasogastric tubes. My personal favourite activity was taking ultrasounds of each other. One of the most interesting things that we got the opportunity to experience, was witnessing real life surgeries. We viewed a laparoscopic surgery (also known as a keyhole surgery) of the oesophagus and a real-life Caesarean section, which were incredible to watch.

Throughout the course, I had the opportunity to listen and speak to a number of doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals, which was an invaluable experience. I got to listen to their personal experiences in medicine, and I was blown away by their hard work and passion. They were incredibly inspiring, and listening to these professionals talk, really inspired me to pursue my own dream of working in Medicine. However, my favourite part of the programme was not the simulations, or the lectures, or the talks with doctors or patients. It was all the people I met over the course of the week. I made so many friends over the week, and we shared many fun memories together. Many people I met also had my same passion for Medicine and helping people, and I hope to see them again in a few years, possibly as fellow Medicine students in the future. I would absolutely recommend this work experience to anyone going into 4th year. I learned so much about different specialities in Medicine and the road to getting there. I met so many amazing people, students and healthcare professionals alike, and I feel so lucky to have had this opportunity to take a look into the world of medicine. This course has inspired me to pursue my dreams of becoming a doctor and has been an incredible experience overall.

MONDELLO

Our 4th years had a fantastic time at Mondello Park where every student had the chance to hone their driving skills on the race track. There was also a host of great activities for students off the track, including a tour of the Park and it's impressive selection of cars, and a road ready session with tips for passing the theory test.

There was also a fun break reaction test in one of Mondello's race cars which got very competitive! It was won by Jenny Li (pictured below) with an impressive score of 0.38 seconds. Students also learned about road safety and the steps to apply for getting a licence. Mondello Park International Race Circuit is the only FIA Licenced Motor Racing circuit in the Republic of Ireland and was opened in its original layout in 1968.

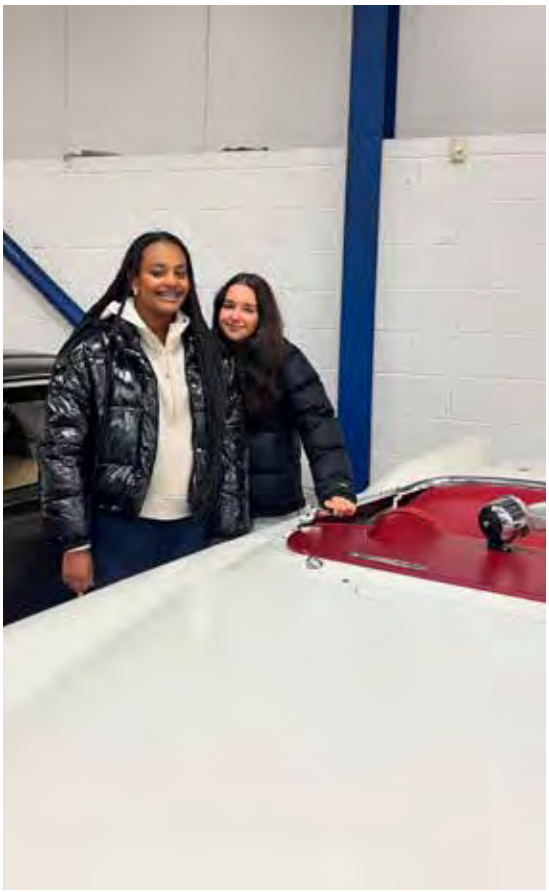


Dylan McMahon 4th Year

In January of 2026 we went on a trip to Mondello Park in Kildare. The initial event was driving an automatic car around a circuit whilst also learning how to parallel park, perform a backwards U Turn and how to park both front and backwards. There were three people per car and we had a driving instructor siting in the passenger seat, telling us what to do. This was so much fun and such an incredible experience that I will always remember it as it was by far my favourite of the three experiences.

The second experience was a tour of Mondello Park and the car museum, we saw the viewing tower for the park which offered incredible views all over the circuit and surrounding areas, and we got to see many rare and unique cars in the museum. This was extremely interesting and showed how cars have evolved over the years. We also got to try a break test to see how quickly we'd react to a light turning red which was a fun, yet stressful game.

The third and final event was a theory class and test. We were shown different road signs, given scenarios and how we should react to each of them and then finally given a test on what we had learned. We were also given drunk goggles and told to catch tennis balls to show the effects alcohol has on driving. Overall this was an incredible day out, was extremely fun and interesting and it's a day I will remember for the rest of my life.



DRIVING
EXPERIENCES

DRIVING
EXPERIENCES
Mondello Park

MOTORSPORT
RESCUE
SERVICES

DRIVING SCHOOL

Sophie Mahon 4th Year

One of the most fulfilling experiences for me in 4th Year was my opportunity to take part in the Mondello Driving Course. Before going, I didn't know what to expect. I wasn't sure what we would be doing or if the experience would enhance my knowledge of driving. Fortunately for me, it definitely did!

On a Wednesday in January, around 45 4th years got on a bus to Kildare where the Mondello Driving School was situated. Upon our arrival, we were split into three groups, which dictated the order of our daily activities. My group began with a historical tour of Mondello's car collection. We heard many interesting stories about the origin of these cars and took many pictures. Next up on the agenda was a brake test. We took turns stepping into a car to test how quickly we could move our foot from all the way down on the accelerator to hit the brakes. I found this an extremely fun and competitive contest. It was definitely challenging to get a good time on the brakes. The instructor who took us on the tour explained that drivers should be able to react in less than a half a second. When I first heard this, I thought the task would be impossible. Thankfully, I underestimated my, and my group's abilities.

After our brake test, the first part of our day was over. We retreated back to the lunch room for about 15 minutes until we were presented with the second part of our day. This was focused on theory. We learned the rules of the road and even took a short driving test as a group which we luckily passed. Next, we tested our hand eye coordination while wearing goggles that imitated our eyesight as if we were driving whilst intoxicated. We got into pairs to throw a ball at the other person while they wore the goggles. It was an extremely challenging task to catch the ball and from my memory, no one succeeded. However, I found that these exercises helped build my teamwork skills. Our group worked together great as a team to find the correct answer. Also, while trying to catch the ball, we were persistent and motivated, no matter the result. This assisted in building resilience while also educating us on the dangers of drunk driving.

The third segment of our day was by far the most exciting. We got to drive cars! We separated into groups of three that would travel in a car with a driving instructor. We would each have about 15 minutes to circle around the track. Here, we learned how to turn, steer and park smoothly. It felt like great preparation for our future driving test. The instructor had control of the brakes, ensuring our safety. It was a bit scary to be entrusted to drive a car but it was reassuring to have my friends in the back encouraging me. Driving was definitely the highlight of my day!

This experience has definitely influenced me in terms of my driving goals. I plan to take the driving theory test this summer, and once I'm 17, get my learners permit. The Mondello experience has provided a more concrete and straightforward path to learning how to drive and my goals are definitely more visible thanks to it. Driving built my confidence in my abilities which I found to be an astonishingly beneficial experience. Soon after our session, we had to get the bus back home. The memories from the day are some I definitely won't forget and will forever be invaluable to me. I would definitely recommend the experience to future 4th years!

Mondello Park
DRIVING
EXPERIENCES

Mondello Park
DRIVING
EXPERIENCES

DRIVING
EXPERIENCES

CHRISTMAS CINEMA TRIP

Miles
TELLER
Elizabeth
OLSEN
Callum
TURNER
You can only choose one.
Eternity

box office

TV, FILM AND THEATRE WORKSHOP

Joshua Hughes 4th Year

Attending the Careers in Film and TV Workshop was an exceptionally enriching experience that broadened my understanding of the creative industries significantly. Prior to the workshop, my understanding of film and television was comparatively narrow, largely centred on actors and directors. However, over the course of the morning, I gained a far more nuanced knowledge and appreciation of the many networks of roles and collaborative effort required to bring a production to life.

The workshop opened with an introduction to the various departments involved in film and television production. Through a combination of film clips and an engaging presentation, we were guided through the roles of the industry. Roles such as those in front of and behind the camera, including sound, costume, and lighting departments, alongside more specialised positions like the gaffer and key grip.

What struck me the most was the sheer level of coordination needed. Every role, no matter how minor, contributes meaningfully to the overall quality of a production. This initial session was not only informative, but also thought-provoking, as it challenged my previous assumptions and highlighted career paths I had never considered.

The use of visual material such as videos was particularly effective in expanding our understanding. Seeing these roles in action provided a tangible context that made the information more accessible. Additionally, the inclusion of interactive discussions ensured that we remained actively engaged throughout. Rather than passively receiving information, we were encouraged to contribute our own ideas.

The second half of the workshop offered a more practical and immersive dimension, which I found very compelling. We were divided into groups and assigned short scripts from well-known films, which we then had to interpret and perform. This exercise allowed us to step into the roles we had previously learned about and experience, first-hand, the challenges and rewards of working collaboratively in a creative environment. I found this aspect both enjoyable and enlightening, because it required not only creativity but also effective communication and teamwork.

Working within a group setting highlighted the importance of cooperation and adaptability. Each member contributed their own ideas, and we had to negotiate and refine our approach in order to produce a cohesive performance. This process mirrored the realities of a professional film set, where collaboration is essential and individual contributions must align with a shared vision.

Reflecting on the workshop as a whole, I feel that it has had a lasting impact on how I view the film and television industry. It not only introduced me to a wide array of potential career paths but also deepened my appreciation for the complexity and creativity involved in production. Even for those who may not pursue a career in this field, the skills developed, such as teamwork, communication, and creative thinking, are undeniably transferable and valuable in any context.

It was an engaging, informative, and highly worthwhile experience. It successfully combined education with practical engagement, leaving me with both a greater understanding of the industry and a renewed sense of curiosity about the opportunities it offers.

A DAY IN MY WHEELS

Aarav Kesare 4th Year

This programme was organised by the school as a fundraiser and also to raise awareness of how people live with wheelchairs on a day-to-day basis. All the proceeds from the fundraiser went to Spinal Injuries Ireland. We were invited to spend one class roaming around Leeson Street in a wheelchair.

I chose to write about this experience because it left a big impact on me. Before using a wheelchair, I thought it would just be a little hard, but when I did the activity my whole perspective changed. I found out when I was doing it how many things there are to look out for, such as potholes and bumpy pavements. One instance was when I was trying to move closer to the front gates of school only to find there was a little gap in the street, and I had to apply more effort to get out of the gap.

I was really surprised by how much effort it took for people in wheelchairs just to move around anywhere. I learned a lot from this experience, such as how we should all appreciate our lives and not complain all the time. It also made me realise how easy it is to take simple, normal things for granted - like walking or moving freely without having to think about it. Another thing I learned from this experience was to get out of my comfort zone and do things which might be a little uncomfortable and sitting in a wheelchair for 45 minutes was very uncomfortable!

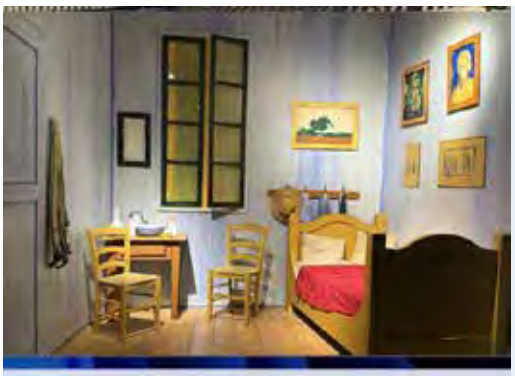
CANTOR FITZGERALD

Melanie Avoeva 4th Year

I recently had the chance to do a week-long work experience at Cantor Fitzgerald, a finance company, and it was a great learning experience. Each day ran from 10am to 3pm, and in the mornings, we heard from different people in the company who explained to us, what they do and the roles they have. We learned about everything from what brokers do, to how financial crime is tackled, and how investing works.

In the afternoons, we were split into groups of five to work on projects related to what Cantor Fitzgerald specialises in. My group focused on financial literacy for young adults. What surprised me most about the project was how simple and important financial literacy can be for young people - and I picked up a lot of useful skills that I can use in the future.

But honestly, the best part of the whole experience was meeting new people and working together on the project. I love group work, and it made the whole thing even more enjoyable. Before this, I didn't think finance was something I'd be interested in, but now I'm more open to the idea. My advice for next year's 4th year students is to just give everything a go during work experience. Even if you're not sure about something, you might surprise yourself and you never know what could end up sparking your interest.



Clara Lin 4th year

I had a wonderful opportunity to study in Germany this year. I stayed in Hannover with a host family who were incredibly warm and welcoming. From the very beginning, they treated me like their own daughter, which made me feel comfortable, safe, and truly happy in an unfamiliar environment. My host family always helped me whenever I had problems or felt confused. Their daughter was especially friendly and caring. In the first week, she took me to the cinema, and we watched Zootopia together. I really enjoyed spending time with her because she was patient and always tried to help me improve my German.

I went to a Gymnasium school called Albert Einstein School. At the beginning, I felt quite nervous because everything was new and unfamiliar, but the students there were truly kind and welcoming. They always wanted to help me, especially with my German. When I didn't understand something, they explained it to me patiently. Because of them, I became more confident in speaking German, and I tried to speak as much as possible, even though my grammar was not always correct. I chose journalism as my subject in school. Our teacher took us to a radio centre in the city centre, where we had the chance to create our own interview. The topic was about immigrants in Germany, which made me think deeply about society. It was a valuable experience because I learned how journalists work and also improved my speaking and pronunciation.

I also visited many interesting places during my stay. In the second week, my host family took me to a museum about Vincent Van Gogh. I saw many vivid and captivating paintings, and I learned more about his life and artistic style. I was deeply impressed by his work, and this visit made me more interested in art. We also travelled to Hamburg by train, and the journey took about three hours. Hamburg is an incredibly beautiful and lively city with many attractions. We visited a chocolate museum there, and it was one of my favourite experiences in Germany. I had the chance to try many kinds of chocolate, and they all tasted amazing. The food in Germany was also amazing, and I tried a lot of traditional German food. One of my favourites was Döner Kebab. My friends took me to a local shop, and it was delicious. This study abroad experience taught me many important things. I improved my German, learned about a new culture, and became more independent and confident. I also made many new friends and created unforgettable memories that I will always remember. In the end, my trip to Germany was one of the best experiences of my life. I will always remember my host family, my school, and all the wonderful people I met. I truly hope that I can visit Germany again in the future.

Sive Brosnan 4th year

As part of my 4th year programme this year I spent five weeks studying abroad in France. After a three day intensive preparatory course in Dublin, I travelled to Nantes and was met by my French coordinator. He dropped me to my host family in Fougeres, which is north of Rennes, where he introduced me to Rose, the girl who I would be attending school with. I enjoyed the first weekend getting to know my host family, who were very kind and welcoming. They were very patient with me in the beginning when I found it difficult to understand the French. On the first Monday, Rose showed me to our main classroom and introduced me to some of her friends. In France, school typically begins at 7:55am and finishes at 17:35pm, with a lunch break of two and a half hours from 11:00am to 13:30pm. I was in the year group "Seconde", which is the equivalent to 4th year in Ireland. They study a wide range of subjects, including Maths, French, English, Geography, History, Chemistry, Biology, Physics, a third language and PE.

After my first day of school, Rose introduced me to some girls who were also staying at the boarding school like me. We went to study, which took place every day for an hour before dinner at 7pm. Following dinner there was free time to hang out in the dorm until lights out at 10pm. I was sharing a room with three other girls, who were in my year. The thing that I found most different about school in France is that the lunch break is very long. Some people ate in the canteen while others went home to eat. I ate lunch in the canteen every day with some of my classmates. There was always a main dish, and a choice of different starters and desserts. They also serve all their meals with sliced baguette and salted butter, which is regional to Brittany.

Every weekend my host family took me to visit some local tourist attractions. We went to Mont Saint Michel, Saint Malo and Rennes. I got to try the famous Breton galettes and crêpes. I feel very fortunate that I had such an amazing family who went out of their way to ensure I had an authentic and enjoyable experience. To help improve my French, I met Gilles, my French coordinator, every Monday. He enquired about how my weekend went and checked in with me to see if I was having any difficulties. He assigned me homework which included exercises in grammar, comprehension and writing. We would correct this together and he would explain my mistakes to me. I think this was really beneficial as it gave me something to focus on during my study period and gave me more confidence in my written French. I thoroughly enjoyed my time in France and I'm looking forward to seeing Rose again this summer when she comes to stay with my family. À bientôt! Sive

DUKES ASSESSMENT CENTRE

Wanting Huang 4th year

The experience I want to share most is the day of the Dukes Assessment Centre. That was a day I strongly developed my personal abilities in interview communications, logical thinking, time management and teamwork - which are all very important for further university applications and work but aren't easy to teach from a book. It was on Monday 23rd February and we went directly to the RKH for the day.

The Assessment day was connected to the Dukes Career Courses we have during tutorial time. In the Dukes Career Courses we were taught many interview communication skills. At the Assessment Centre Day these skills were tested by mock interviews. We interviewed each other and got feedback from others, and we gained a deep understanding of what we did well and what we needed to improve. When interviewing others, I also learned to think from another perspective and understood what the interviewer wanted to hear. This strongly improved my communication skills for interviews. It solved my long-standing confusion about what I should say in interviews.

After the interview part, we did several personal tests for our personality, and logical thinking abilities. We did personality quizzes to find out what kind of personality we have internally and what our abilities were in regard to logical and critical thinking. This gave me a deeper understanding of myself.

The teamwork and skill development section was the most interesting part in my opinion. This section was separated into two parts. The first one exercised our time management skills, placing us in a busy working situation. After a while, we received new messages or notifications to get the new work done. We had to arrange the whole day's schedule according to the urgency and complete the replies. This let us practice real work situations and developed our multi-threaded work ability and time management skills.

The second teamwork part was product producing. We had to develop an idea to produce a new product, by considering the cost, material, feasibility, customer attraction, market, pricing and finally we had to make a report and design posters to use in our pitch to other teams. Although it was just a mock, our team treated it as a real product with real marketing. We wanted to develop a reusable and environmentally friendly mask. We had heated discussions about the material to use and deeply researched the market and technology. This developed our teamwork skills and helped us see other perspectives.

It was a fantastic day which improved my personal skills. As I am an international student and am very new to the Irish education system, I was confused by what characteristics an Irish or UK university may be looking for but I didn't know what I could improve besides my academic score. This day was a great help with that issue, I now feel like I know more about how to approach applying to universities. The day had a huge effect on my personal development, not just because of what I learned on the day but on how to further develop my abilities and on my plans of what I need to improve. I'm really looking forward to the next similar activity we get to do with Dukes.

SCHOOL TRIP TO ROME

Fionn Millar 4th Year

I went on the school trip to Rome as part of 4th year. It lasted four days in early spring, and we stayed in a hostel close to the Colosseum, which was amazing because we could walk to a lot of places (including trips for ice-cream at night). During the trip, we visited famous landmarks like the Colosseum, the Sistine Chapel, and the Trevi Fountain. We also spent time walking around the city, trying Italian food like pizza and gelato, and learning about ancient Rome from our teachers and guides and even at one point a self guided tour. Every day was extremely busy, with a mix of tours and some free time where we could explore in small groups.

I chose this trip as it was my first opportunity to go to Italy, and I thought it would be fantastic to see everything in real life instead of just seeing it on social media. Before going, I expected it to be mostly educational, with a lot of walking and listening to information. That was true, but I didn't anticipate how much fun it would be as well. I really enjoyed just walking around with my friends and stopping at small cafés. I was also surprised by how big and impressive the historical sites were. I learned a lot about Roman history, buildings, and culture. Visiting places like the Colosseum helped me understand how advanced the Romans were.

I also learned more about myself and the people I was with. I improved my teamwork skills by working with my friends to find places and deciding what to do. My communication got better too because we had to agree on plans and sometimes overcome disagreements. One of the biggest challenges was how much walking we had to do every day. It got really tiring, especially when it was warm. The streets were also very busy, which could feel a bit overpowering. Another challenge was staying organised in a big group and making sure everyone stayed together. Sometimes we didn't all agree on where to go or what to eat. I dealt with this by trying to stay positive and taking breaks when I needed to. We also communicated better and learned to compromise, which helped a lot.

This trip had an enormous impact on me. It made me even more interested in Italian culture and made me want to travel more in the future. I feel more confident now, especially when it comes to going to new and unexplored places. I became more responsible and better at working with other people. The biggest thing I learned from this trip is that learning outside of school can be just as important as learning in the classroom. Seeing everything in real life made History class much more exciting and easier to understand.

Maya Lunev 4th Year

At the start of this school year, we were all strangers to each other. We had no idea that months later, we would be close enough to travel across Europe together. Our year group had the amazing opportunity to travel to one of the most ancient cities in the world, Rome. It took place in early spring, warm enough to explore the city, but still quiet enough to enjoy the sites. Each day was filled with nearly 20,000 steps taking us all around Rome, from the Colosseum to the Vatican and all the way to Pompeii. Every day was filled with something new. Day one, started off with hectic scrambling around the airport at 5am. Once we landed in Rome, after a quick snack of course, it was straight to the Catacombes learning about the history behind the site, 2,000 steps later we were back on the bus going straight into central Rome. The streets were packed with tourists begging to get a glance at the history Rome holds. We toured the streets going from sight to sight learning and seeing glimpses of life from long before our time. The evening brought a long awaited dinner and the first glance of our hotel. Once we finally settled down in our rooms, everything erupted into chaos again, from playing UNO with so many people there weren't enough cards to go around, to bonding in the gardens under the orange trees.

Day two was the holiest of all, marked by our visit to the Vatican. As a Christian, this day was more special to me than the rest, I got to stand in a place that holds deep meaning for my faith. We were given time to explore on our own, finally. Me and my close friends went souvenir shopping, because apparently love must now be purchased. To keep our curiosity at bay we poked around a small chapel rich in local culture. Another 2,000 steps later, after reuniting with our group, we all got to visit the Vatican's infamous museum, which did not fail to amaze us. Day three felt like an endless drag, early start, long train ride, all to end up in Pompeii. The endless ruins and their legacies made the air feel thick, with the constant thought of the lives lost in the tragedy. A further 2,000 steps and gelatos later, we were back in our hotels too exhausted to even lift a finger.

Before we knew it, it was the last day. Sadness was quickly replaced by excitement for the events of the day. It started off with chaotic packing, trying to fit the various souvenirs we bought in our bags. Then it was straight to a tour of the Colosseum. It was so amazing seeing such an iconic site up close, the photos don't do it justice. Another 2,000 steps later it was back to the bus to visit Stadio Olimpico. The stadium was huge, it felt like we were tiny ants lost among thousands of seats. Leading up to the trip, I didn't think I would gain half as many new connections as I did. Or grow the connections I already had, with my friends. This trip brought us all together in a way that no one ever thought it would. The nights spent together gossiping about the events of the day, and the days in the gardens and on long bus rides spent connecting through past experiences.

Being in such an ancient city felt like a History lesson brought to life. Seeing all the monuments and being able to soak it up in such a hands-on way helped me understand history in a way that no textbook ever could. This trip showed me how different peoples strengths come out under pressure, how to stick to time frames, navigating an unknown city and choosing the best place to get food. One of the biggest challenges for me, personally, was the flights. I am a nervous flyer and having to get on a plane without my relatives was stressing me out. But I was lucky enough to be surrounded by all my closest friends during both flights there and back. They all talked me through the hard moments, and even made me laugh. The trip changed how I see travel, and helped my confidence in many aspects. It showed me how quickly friendships grow when you share something as memorable as exploring the most ancient city in the world. My biggest takeaway is that experiences like Rome bring people together and help you grow in ways you don't expect.

GELATERIA TRE FONT

CROCHET MODULE

Gwendolyn Ridgway
4th Year

Crochet was hands down the best module I did in 4th Year. As I was looking at the selection of our modules, crochet immediately caught my eye. I had always wanted to try it out and I was so excited to start and there really is no better time than 4th year to try new things.

One of the first things we learned to do was hold the hook and yarn properly. That is definitely the hardest part of crochet. The yarn kept slipping out of my hands and the tension was always too loose and everything didn't always look right but with the help of our wonderful teacher Mary, eventually I got the hang of it. From there I learned the chain stitch which I quickly learned is the foundation to almost all crochet items.

After learning the fundamentals, I quickly dove straight into blanket making and I couldn't stop. There was a good period of about a month where all I did was crochet in front of the TV. All of the blankets we made were for the Bumbleance which goes around Ireland collecting sick children and babies and bringing them to hospitals.

After blankets I moved on to making plushies, then hats then clothes and Mary helped me with all of it. She told me which yarn to use and how best to approach each item. I would have been so lost in crochet if it wasn't for her!

The Christmas market was the time where we got to sell our crochet items and it was incredible to see how much we had learned in such a small amount of time. We combined our items with the craft class and we sold them together in the break out area, it was very enjoyable.

My favourite projects were definitely my dress, the elephant plushie, the turtle, chickens, duck and my Culture day top. I decided to make my own outfit inspired by carnival and Trinidad and Tobago as I couldn't find any online, it took me about 2 days to finish and I loved it. There are definitely some things that I can improve for next year but I am really proud of how far I have come since September.

Crochet taught me a lot, patience being the main one. Unless you try and you work hard, you won't get to see the finished project, there is no fast forward button to put a scarf into your hands. Crochet at times can be tedious however the end result definitely makes up for that. Crochet is a life skill and I am forever grateful to my August self for choosing it as a module.

Kaili Guan
4th Year

The beginning of 4th year was really exciting for me. I was in a new school with new people and making new friends. Leaving my old school behind and the familiarity of the surroundings made me really question, did I make the right choice? And honestly, I'm glad I came here. I had the most wonderful year ever.

One of my most favourite memories from 4th year is the crochet module. My teacher, Mary Crowley was probably the best teacher I've ever had. I had so much fun in the module and she made everything even better. Learning from her and crocheting my first baby blanket, made me feel like I'd accomplished so much.

My fellow students were funny and kind. They made the class feel so warm, lively and welcoming. The Christmas market was definitely one of those times I've felt really happy that we managed to crochet so many items together. After seeing so many fellow students, amazed at our work as a group, it gave me a feeling of accomplishment.

After the first term of school ended, I didn't expect so much more students to join our crochet module. I didn't realise after the Christmas market, crocheting had gained the attention of so many students. It was a wonderful sight to see our original small group expand into a bigger one with new students at different levels of crocheting. Crocheting for me was an incredible experience.

If I asked my younger self, from 3-4 years ago, if I'd ever pick up crocheting my answer would definitely have been no! But now, apart from studying and homework, I've been spending my time either learning new stitches or exploring new patterns. I'm really glad that the school has brought in crocheting this year. I'd definitely recommend people to pick it up if they have patience and a lot of spare time on their hands. It was a really fun module and I hope we can still keep this crochet module for next year.

Skuzenger

DRAMA MODULE

Tavishi Mishra
4th Year

At the beginning of 4th year, we were given a template to choose our modules for the first term. The surprising thing is; I didn't pick Drama at the start of the year. It wasn't as if I hated theatre or film - but I mainly enjoyed watching them instead of participating. Drama sounded like something for people who were confident to be someone else, people who were social and loud.

But near the end of the first term, I ended up sitting in on one of my friend's Drama classes, and what I saw surprised me. The room didn't feel like a classroom with textbooks on filmography and re-enactments of Hamlet, rather, it was surprisingly lively. People were laughing mid-scenes, trying things out without worrying about getting it "wrong," and leaning into being a bit cringey without overthinking it. And watching them have fun, without any care as to what others thought of them, was definitely what persuaded me to choose the module in the second term.

I didn't expect it to become one of the best parts of my week, but it did. Slowly, it stopped feeling like just a module and started feeling like a space I actually looked forward to. Other than the fact that I saw my best friend at Drama every Friday morning, and that we all left the class half in tears because of how much fun we had, I began to enjoy Drama itself. Acting is not as 'corny' as other people make it out to be. It might be uncomfortable, it might be new, and it might be a very vulnerable experience for people who are used to keeping to themselves, but I promise you, once you join, you'll realise in time, how capable you are of letting go.

The more I participated in Drama, the more I realised that it wasn't about being the best or being the most dramatic - it was about participating, committing, and just going for it. A lot of what made drama club special wasn't even just the acting or the exercises - it was the people. Our teacher is basically a student with the way she engages with us. Doing Drama with my friends turned ordinary lessons into something else entirely. We'd mess up scenes and end up laughing for five minutes straight. We'd hype each other up before performing or completely forget our lines and just improvise something ridiculous.

I remember one particular improvisation game: 'Taxi driver'. During Taxi driver, one person would sit up at the front and be the taxi driver, and someone else would get in the back and act as another person. That person could be anyone; a celebrity, a singer, an artist- anyone. I remember one particular President that got in the taxi, that left me rolling on the floor laughing. Moments like that stick with you, regardless of how they came about.

Some of my funniest memories from the whole year come from that room in Convent Place, and looking back, choosing Drama felt like a small decision at the time. But it ended up being one of those things that you'll recall with melancholic nostalgia when you're graduating in 6th year.

Yule Qin
4th Year

When I first joined The Institute of Education, I wasn't in the best of spirits. In my previous school, my creative advances had been rejected and leashed because the school hyperfocused on sports. Not to mention the constant negative pressure brought on by school work, giving me no time to pursue what I actually wanted to do.

However, as I chose my subjects for my year as a 4th year student in The Institute, things became rather different. I had chosen Drama as one of my subjects. In that class, I found a group of people whose ideals matched mine, whose dreams were akin to mine, and whose abilities resonated with mine. It was a pleasant surprise from people who criticised me without any consideration.

In Drama, I saw everyone being themselves. And much more than that. They could be anyone. Anyone could be Sherlock Holmes, anyone could play Hamilton, and anyone could play Barbie. Even when we weren't doing serious work, we were constantly improving, and that is the magic. Through the little bits and bobs that we do, we are honing our skills, chasing our goals one small step at a time, because life is a marathon, not a race. Preserve your stamina. Don't get burnt out early. That's how you cross the finish line. And that's what Drama taught me.

And to whoever's reading this, keep your dream alive, that is one of the little favours you can do yourself. By setting yourself a milestone, you can fight for yourself. As for mine, and my place in Drama; what could be an actor's desire other than to entertain those watching them? What makes an actor happier than to receive applause for their performance?

Here, as a promise to myself, as well as yourself; let us climb the ladder of life, higher, never lower, and as we reach the highest point, we will break the ceiling and keep rising.

MYTHOLOGY MODULE

El Mendelssohn 4th Year

The Mythology module. What can I say? Never having studied Classics myself, I only really began to take an interest in mythology last year. Then, over the summer I discovered a new obsession in Epic the Musical (if you've never heard of it, go look it up, it's truly epic) and dove headfirst into the rabbit hole that is mythology. So, when I saw it listed as a module option, I knew I had to try it, and The Institute Mythology module rapidly became my absolute favourite class of term one.

You might be thinking, why would you choose Mythology? Why not just do Classics? But Mythology included things that aren't covered in the Classics curriculum. We didn't just look at the Greeks and Romans, no, we also learned about the Norse and their 'space cow' creation story, the Egyptians farming wheat in the afterlife as a form of eternal reward, Irish mythology, and even the Epic of Gilgamesh from ancient Mesopotamian mythology (believed to be the oldest known piece of literature, and recorded on clay tablets)!

In the Mythology module we learnt about and compared the creation stories of the Greek, Egyptian and Norse, studied cautionary tales with morals that were valued by those ancient societies, and explored the pantheons of the various mythologies. We even covered mummification when looking at Egypt, Ragnarok when looking at the Norse, how various ancient societies viewed death, and much more.

Studying ancient mythologies taught us so much about the ability of stories to develop and change, and about the societies who believed in them. Over time, as stories are passed by word of mouth across hundreds of kilometres, they evolve to become a version that's drastically different to the original tale. The stories we consider as mythology today were the religions of whole societies thousands of years ago, and from them we can infer a great deal about the people who lived in those societies, their priorities and their perception of the world. After all, myths originated from people attempting to make sense of the world around them, such as thunderous storms occurring because the god of the skies was enraged.

My favourite memory of the module, oddly enough, wasn't really an official part of any lesson. I remember towards the start of the year, when looking at Greek mythology, we spent a few minutes watching and analysing the first song of Epic the Musical. The teacher would pause it frequently to give us all sorts of facts about the characters being introduced, their actions and backgrounds, and how it all compares to the Odyssey - the story the musical is retelling. I found this extremely interesting and quite cool, and I hope it inspired some of my peers to go watch Epic themselves.

It's safe to say I enjoyed the Mythology module and would've been glad if there was an option to continue it in term two, for example studying Asian mythologies. I loved getting to talk to other students who were passionate or interested in mythology, animatedly discussing the class afterwards, and catching each other up on what happened if one of us was absent. During term one, I remember bursting into Irish class every Tuesday afternoon, enthusiastically rambling on about the module to anyone and everyone who would listen. No doubt my friends got sick of being greeted with "TODAY IN MYTHOLOGY....."

STOCKS AND TRADING

Alex Prior 4th Year

Stocks and Trading was a great opportunity to learn about a real life career path and look into such an interesting job sector. It provided us with so much information about what exactly trading is about and how it actually works. We got the chance to learn about Wall Street and how much trading has evolved over the years. From manual trading to competing at who can make the fastest computer, how just a fraction of a second can make a world of a difference. We looked at how computing has evolved to aid in trading speeds and it is so much more than just buying and selling stocks.

We also did a three week long game during the women's handball World Cup in which we bought and sold stocks that each of us were given for each team. This gave us a first hand experience of how demand affects the price, with everyone trying to buy Norway and France's stocks while Spain stocks were left worthless. Each week the amount of stocks sold for each team fluctuated based on the games that were played. We also learnt about strategy and how some people invested not just in the favourites but in the hosting team. Others played it risky and betted on underdogs which left everyone with different predictions on who was going to win. The tournament ended with Norway winning and those who played it safe and betted on the favourites were rewarded for their safe choice while the people who chose the weaker teams were disappointed. Stocks and Trading was overall a great class and an enjoyable experience. Brendan being a really easygoing teacher made the class much better as well and made the class really fun. If I restarted 4th year I would 100% take up Stocks and Trading again!

Bohan Zhang 4th Year

When I was first told about the module choices at the Open Day, Stocks and Trading immediately caught my interest. I've always enjoyed strategy games, like blackjack or chess, that required predicting what would happen next and calculating probabilities, this seemed like a fun way to practice that whilst learning a new skill. Quickly, this module became one of the highlights of my week. During the course of the first term, we learned about the history of the stock market and played games involving calculating probability and risk assessment. We started off playing basic prediction games with cards or dice, such as guessing if a card would be higher or lower than the previous card shown. I found the maths in this section very interesting and the games were engaging and sparked my competitiveness. Gradually, we moved up to larger scale games that spanned multiple weeks. During the final few classes, we played a competitive trading game against each other, simulating what the actual stock market would be like. This was personally my favourite part of the course. I loved the trading and negotiating, but also the social aspect of it, getting the chance to discuss my ideas with my friends and Brendan. It was a nice break from the rest of my more academic classes.

The history and theory part of the module was equally interesting. We learned about real examples such as Black Monday or Knight Capital, while also looking at examples in fictional media like The Wolf of Wall Street. We were also taught how the stock market functions. Brendan also told us about his own experiences working in the stock market, which I also found very interesting! I would strongly recommend this to any incoming 4th years.

PHOTOGRAPHY MODULE

Rian McCarthy
4th Year

When I looked through the previous yearbook during last summer the Photography module instantly caught my eye. I had always had an interest in photography and the minute it became available, I put it on my timetable. This class met every hope and expectation I had hoped for, through spending time with friends, taking unbelievable shots and progressing as a photographer myself.

This all couldn't have been possible without the incredible support and teaching from Babs. Through teaching me how to compose my shots, use editing software and teaching me what it means to be a photographer. I owe all the good moments in this class to her and the people she helped me connect with in the class. Through going into the city and taking photos with specific goals in mind such as, focus on shadows, colours or even people. To staying in the classroom and taking photos of my classmates while learning how to use external lighting. To then having step by step guides on how to use software such as Lightroom and photoshop. Each lesson was just as enjoyable as the last and it's the place where I felt I learned the most about how creative you can really be.

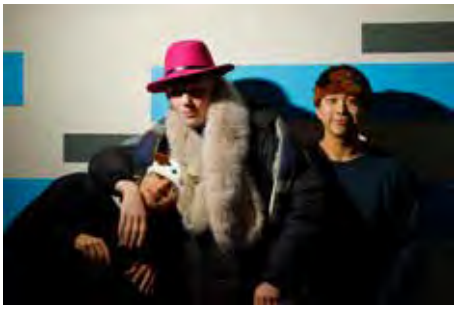
I remember a recent lesson where we went to the 1st floor breakout area with bottles filled with oil and water. Equipped with coloured lighting and my camera we took some incredible shots of the coloured oil moving around the water. This amazed me as with such simplicity as oil and water we managed to create some amazing photos. At Christmas for a full class we had a reflection on our progress throughout the first half of the year and looked back on all the shots we had taken. It really helped me see how much fun this class was, and how it consistently was one of the most enjoyable aspects of my week.

This class has thought me so much and has supported my dream of becoming a photographer myself, and how someone is not limited by equipment or access but rather their own expression of creativity. I would recommend this class to all upcoming 4th years as it's something that everyone can enjoy and learn important skills around photography. This holds my greatest memories of 4th year.

Thank you to Rian who took many of the pictures on this page including the fabulous Irish Wolfhounds top right. Rian also took photos for our 4th year Module's Newsletter, a working photographer already!

STALL IT

STUDIO AND SMALLRIG LIGHT WORK



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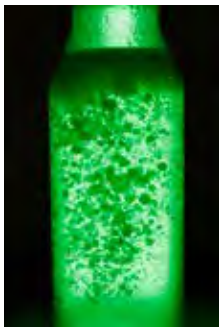

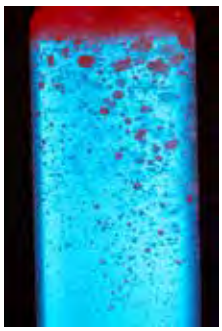

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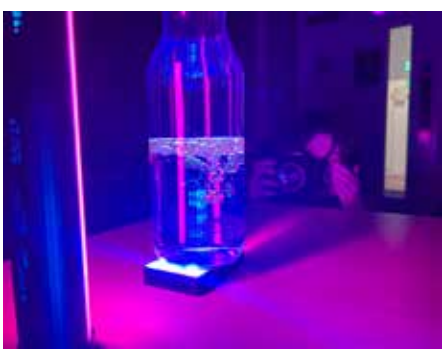


CARLINGFORD ADVENTURE

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

SPOTLIGHTS FROM MAY 2025 – APRIL 2026

British Biology Olympiad

Congratulations to our winners of the 2025 British Biology Olympiad (BBO) which took place in May 2025. 6th Year Yumi Xu (pictured right) won Silver and qualified for the prestigious BBO Science Camp in Beijing, China in August 2025. 6th Year Jin Qu (pictured left) also achieved an impressive result, winning a Bronze award. The BBO is one of the largest science competitions in the UK. The competition is open to students in post-16 education studying at school or college. The competition consists of two, 45-minute multiple choice papers to be taken online under staff supervised exam conditions. The papers can be taken together or on separate occasions. Students will be presented with topics and ideas which they are not familiar with, so will compete with their problem solving skills and understanding of core principles.

Eileen Chen 6th Year

Well done to 6th Year student Eileen Chen who received a Certificate of Appreciation by the European Society of Human Genetics (ESHG) in May 2025. This was for Eileen's essay *'Genetic diversity and the impact on modern individuals'* which was entered in the European DNA Day Essay Contest 2025. Members of the jury were impressed by the essay's originality, scientific content and the clear expression of the benefits and consequences for science and society. The ESHG sponsors a DNA Day Essay and Video contest in secondary schools all over the world every year for the last 19 years. The contest is meant as a learning tool and to promote knowledge of genetics. It intends to challenge students to examine, question and reflect on the importance and social implications of genetic research and its applications.

Sumeia Lloyd 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year Sumeia Lloyd who was selected for the U18 Ireland All Stars Indoor Hockey team. Sumeia travelled to Cape Town to represent Ireland and compete in the PSi (Pro Series Indoor) Nationals - the world's largest indoor hockey tournament - against teams from South Africa, Ireland, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and New Zealand, before continuing on to the Netherlands to play local teams in Amsterdam. Players were chosen based on their performance at the PSi Nationals in 2024, giving the best players from all over the world a chance to compete against each other to showcase this incredible game.

Yash Varadharajan 5th Year

We were delighted to hear that 5th Year student Yash Varadharajan was chosen as Bowler of the Year for the U15 Greystones Cricket Club this year. Yash played for both the Under -15s and the Development teams (a mix of adult and young players) last season. He took many wickets and also performed well with the bat. This trophy was awarded based on an analysis of bowling figures for all bowlers and recognises the best bowling performance within the club at Under-15 level. With a strong network of local clubs and youth teams, cricket continues to expand across the country, developing young players and contributing to Ireland's growing presence in international cricket. Well done, Yash. We look forward to hearing more about your future sporting achievements on the cricket pitch.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Christopher Kavanagh 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year student Christopher Kavanagh who was awarded 1st place in the Senior Pianoforte Solo Feis Ceoil Competition, taking home the Caroline Reilly Cup. Feis Ceoil 2025 took place in DCU All Hallows from the 7th - 15th of June. It is Ireland's leading classical music competition which has been running for 130 years.

Sinead Glynn 6th Year

We are delighted to share that yet another student had success in the same Feis Ceoil 2025. 6th Year student Sinead Glynn was awarded 2nd in the Junior Pianoforte Solo, Dorothy Stokes Cup Competition. Feis Ceoil showcases Ireland's finest young classical musicians in a vibrant festival atmosphere for performers of all ages, well done Sinead and Christopher.

Ryan McConalogue 5th Year

We are very proud of 5th year student Ryan McConalogue who represented Ireland at the European Kickboxing Championships which were held in September in Jesolo, Italy. The championship in Jesolo showcased the highest level of European Kickboxing and the prestigious event brought together over 1,800 athletes from 41 countries, setting a record for the number of participants. We wish Ryan the very best in all his future sporting endeavors.

Maeve Flynn 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year student Maeve Flynn who won the Class Finder 110m at The Irish Pony Club Show Jumping National Championships on Sunday the 7th of September at Coilog Equestrian, Co. Kildare. Maeve was also selected to represent Ireland for Eventing in the Nations Cup. The Nations Cup brought together the very best Pony Club event riders from Ireland, Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales in an exciting display of talent and teamwork.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Irish Society of Human Genetics DNA DAY Competition

Every year the Irish Society of Human Genetics (ISHG) awards best essay and best video for their DNA Day competition, open to all schools throughout Ireland. Incredibly, both categories were won by Institute students this year. Best Essay was awarded to 6th year Aditi Kadam (pictured above left). Best Video was awarded to 6th year Tudor Neacsu (pictured above right). The ISHG conference 2025 was held in Maynooth College on the 12th of September and featured keynote speakers from various institutions, including TCD and Newcastle University.

ISHG
IRISH SOCIETY OF HUMAN GENETICS

Kate Dunne 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year student Kate Dunne who represented Ireland at the 2025 International Beach Sprints rowing tournament which were held on Saturday the 20th of September 2025 at Narin Beach in Portnoo, County Donegal, hosted by Loughros Point Rowing Club. The event featured intense, fast-paced coastal rowing competitions between teams from Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.

Lexie Burke 6th Year

We were delighted to announce 6th year Lexie Burke won the ITF World Taekwondo Championships in October 2025, in Croatia. Lexie earned the title after facing top athletes from Ukraine, Spain, Romania, Scotland and Ireland. Lexie now holds two world titles, having first claimed Gold at the 2023 ITF World Championships in Finland. This is a remarkable achievement and a testament to her dedication and 15 years of training.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

John Locke Essay Competition

Well done to 6th Year students Andy Bian and Clementine Xu who were both finalists in the 2025 John Locke Global Essay competition. Andy was awarded a merit in the History Category and Clementine received High Commendation in the Law Category. The academic conference took place on Saturday the 4th of October 2025 at Grosvenor House, London. All of the essay prizes are judged by a panel of senior academics drawn from leading universities including Oxford and Princeton.

World Badminton Championships

Congratulations to our 6th year students, Nicole Joy and Senan O'Rourke, who proudly represented Ireland at the 2025 World Junior Badminton Championships in India, held from the 3rd to 17th of October 2025. This is the world's premier Junior Badminton Tournament for Under-19 players, making it a true "next generation" showcase. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and wish them every success in their future sporting endeavours.

SoBeyond Clothing Brand

6th Year student Ben Czerniak has had a busy year studying for the Leaving Certificate and creating his clothing brand SoBeyond which he launched in 2025. Fashion has always played a large part in Ben's life, inspired especially by his grandad who was a tailor. Ben designs the clothes in his sketch book by hand, then on Procreate and then finally he creates a tech pack. New releases for sale are dropped @s0beyond on TikTok and Instagram, you can follow Ben there to catch his new releases!

Institute Student Golf Outing

We held an Institute golf outing for our students over midterm on October the 30th 2025 at Newlands Golf Club. Despite tough playing conditions, some great golf was played on the day and students enjoyed lunch and prizes afterwards. Thank you to John Taylor for organising and accompanying the students on the day. Congratulations to our two winners on the day:
Category 2 Winner / Stellan Frost / 31 Points (above right)
Category 3 Winner / Conor O'Neill / 42 Points (above left)

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

AsIAm Charity Bakesale

Well done to our 4th years who organised a bakesale on Friday the 24th of October 2025 in aid of As I Am. A massive thank you to everyone who baked, worked, cleaned up and managed to raise €1,342.16 on the day, which was donated to Arthur Russell's 'As I Am' fundraiser. A special mention to 4th year Kate McConnell for her personalised cake for Arthur, which he is pictured holding above.

Arthur Russell also ran the Venice marathon on October 26th 2025 for the fundraiser. Arthur shares: "Why did I choose AsIAm? I first met Adam Harris (CEO) when he was a student in my Economics class in The Institute of Education and his drive and determination left a lasting impression. Years later I heard Adam speaking on the radio and it struck me that his Charity would be a truly worthy cause to support."

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Joel Emmanuel 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year Joel Emmanuel who represented Ireland at FIRST (For Inspiration & Recognition of Science & Technology) Robotics Global Challenge 2025, held in Panama City from the 29th of October to the 1st of November 2025. The Irish National Team ranked 8th out of 191 countries this year - the highest placement an Irish team has ever achieved in this global "Olympics-style" robotics competition. The theme always ties into real-world issues. This year's theme, "Eco Equilibrium" encouraged students to design robots and projects that help restore habitats, protect species, and model sustainable systems.

Harris Mirza 6th Year

Well done to 6th year student Harris Mirza who has once again made us proud, winning the Bronze certificate in the 2025 International Astronomy and Astrophysics Competition (IAAC). This placed Harris among the top 15% of over 12,000 participants worldwide. The IAAC is an educational science competition that enables students from all over the world to test their skills in astronomy and astrophysics. It takes this fascination-sparking subject and gives students the opportunity to challenge their knowledge and to learn more about this exciting subject beyond what the typical school curriculum has to offer.

Ruquiya El Bakr 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year student Ruquiya El Bakr who won second prize in The Global Leadership Link (GLL) Competition 2025. The GLL project addresses threats to intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Ruquiya's project was centred on the important role of the GAA in Irish cultural heritage. This year the GLL conference was held in Hong Kong and offered students the opportunity to share their views on the topic: 'Protecting the Legacy: Addressing Threats and Preservation Efforts for Intangible Cultural Heritage in your region'. Students entered their projects via video, allowing them to showcase their talent while sharing their passion with an international audience.

Institute Irish Debating Team

The Irish debating team took part in the Comórtas an Phiarsaigh debating competition on Wednesday the 19th of November 2025, for the very first time in the school's history. Three Leaving Certificate students: Aoife Duggan, Kitty Collins and Fintan Lydon, were arguing against Rathdown School for the motion "The Debs should be abolished." Aoife, Kitty, and Fintan did fantastic work in advance and conveyed their arguments with confidence and with accuracy on the night. They also debated against Blackrock College in November, against the motion "The people of Ireland take good care of our environment". We were delighted to have such strong representation.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Radu Pamfil 4th Year

4th year Radu Pamfil has had a fantastic year in swimming, not only with the school in the Leinster Schools competition but also in all of his other swimming commitments. Radu was selected by Swim Ireland in October 2025, to join the National Athletes Programme in the Junior Pathway Cohort 2025-2026. Athletes are selected to join the National Programme based on their results in the previous season. Radu has reached this level at just 15 years of age through hard work and dedication, managing to juggle school with his training, which is currently 8 times a week. Athletes chosen for the Swim Ireland National Programme should be on a performance trajectory for a 2028 and/or a 2032 Olympic Games qualification.

Radu also performed fantastically at the Irish Winter Nationals Swimming Championships held on the 13th - 14th of December 2025. Radu competed in six events: 50m Backstroke, 100m Freestyle, 100m Backstroke, 50m Butterfly, 50m Freestyle and 100m Butterfly. He did exceptionally well for a 15-year-old, reaching three finals and winning Junior Gold in the 50m Backstroke! Radu is pictured top right with his medal, and is also pictured on the right with John Shortt, the European Gold Medalist, after they swapped caps.

Kate McConnell 4th Year

A delighted 4th year Kate Mc Connell (pictured above and below on the right) and her Kilmacud Crokes Division 1 teammates won the Under-16 Gaelic Football Shield Final in Dublin on the 7th of December 2025. After a tightly contested first half against Fingal Ravens, the team pulled ahead and deservedly took home the Shield. Congratulations to Kate and all the Kilmacud Crokes.

Kate Dunne 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year Kate Dunne for her recent achievements in rowing. Kate represented Ireland at both The 2025 World Rowing Beach Sprints in Turkey and The Prince Albert Cup in Monaco. These two prestigious events were both held in November 2025 and both hold status as highlight events in the international coastal rowing season. Balancing school work with such dedication to sport is a fantastic achievement.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Marianne O'Farrell 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year Marianne O'Farrell (pictured above) who finished a superb 2nd at the Leinster Schools Combined Events. Marianne competed in 60m hurdles, high jump, shot put, 800m and long jump, achieving the exceptional overall score that secured her brilliant 2nd place finish and qualification for the All-Ireland Finals. Although injury prevented Marianne from competing in the finals, reaching that stage is a remarkable accomplishment.

Institute Bridge Competition

Well done to Alexa Murphy (above left) and Amelie Vrankova (above right), both in 4th year, on their victory in our Christmas Bridge Pairs competition! Bridge takes place every Monday at 3.30pm in room G-4 and is one of our most popular extracurriculars. It is fun, social, competitive and of course there are high-stakes chocolate prizes to be won. Thank you to Oliver Murphy who runs Bridge and organises two competitions annually so students can hone their skills.

Margaret McCabe Staff

At The Institute we are proud to work hard every day to support our students' success - nobody embodies that more than our very own Margaret McCabe. This year, at the Dukes Education Annual Awards in London, Margaret's tremendous work was acknowledged when she won the Customer Experience Award. It was a great trip celebrating her success. Our 6th years agree, as they report that they are always greeted with a smile and a lot of patience from Margaret! Well done Margaret, we are so proud to work alongside you every day.

Catriona Hendry Staff

Congratulations to Catriona Hendry who was shortlisted for the Stripe Young Scientist Educator of Excellence Award in the Technology category. This is in recognition of Catriona's established record of mentoring student projects over the past years. The award recognises teachers who have given outstanding support and encouragement to students participating in the competition. Well done Catriona on mentoring during the most successful period for The Institute in the history of the competition!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Light up a Life fundraiser for Our Lady's Hospice Harold's Cross 2025

Pictured are some of our 4th years, who supported Our Lady's Hospice Harold's Cross annual *Light Up A Life* fundraising campaign. It was held on Sunday the 7th of December. Thanks to their fantastic effort, energetic selling skills and community spirit, our students raised an impressive **€5,612** through candle sales on the day. The event was a truly heart-warming occasion, featuring wonderful musical performances of Christmas favourites, and concluded with the cherished tradition of illuminating the *Light Up A Life* Christmas tree. Thank you to our 4th years for supporting such a worthy cause.

The Irish Cancer Society

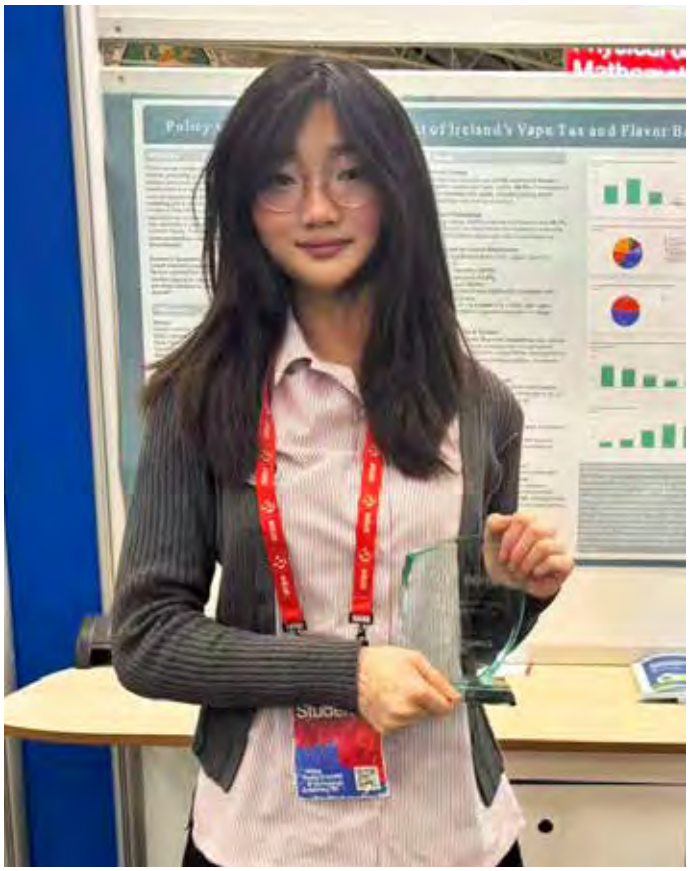
Well done to all of our 4th years who gave up their time over the Christmas holidays to volunteer as gift wrappers in Kilkenny Design, in support of the Irish Cancer Society. Volunteering took place throughout December, including weekends, right up until Christmas Eve. This commitment to helping others has been evident all year. Our 4th years have proven to have as much energy as generosity of spirit, running two bake sales, and a craft sale, in support of charitable causes between September and Christmas. On the final day of school before the holidays, they also led our annual Christmas Jumper Day collection.

Team Hope Shoe Box Appeal

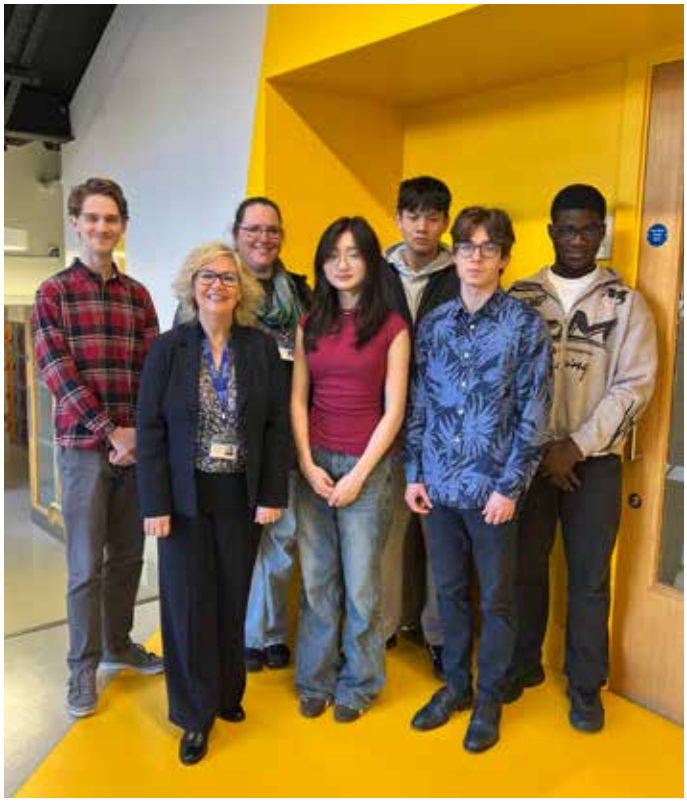
This year we also ran the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal in 4th year. We collected 66 boxes, despite having only three weeks' notice before collection, a number we hope to increase next year. We were delighted to see contributions from 5th and 6th years - especially as 6th years were in the middle of their exams! Thank you to our 4th years for organising, these shoeboxes are often the only gift that a child living in poverty will receive at Christmas - a truly worthy cause. Since 2010, Team Hope have delivered over 3 million Christmas shoeboxes to children affected by poverty across the world.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Stripe Young Scientist Exhibition 2026

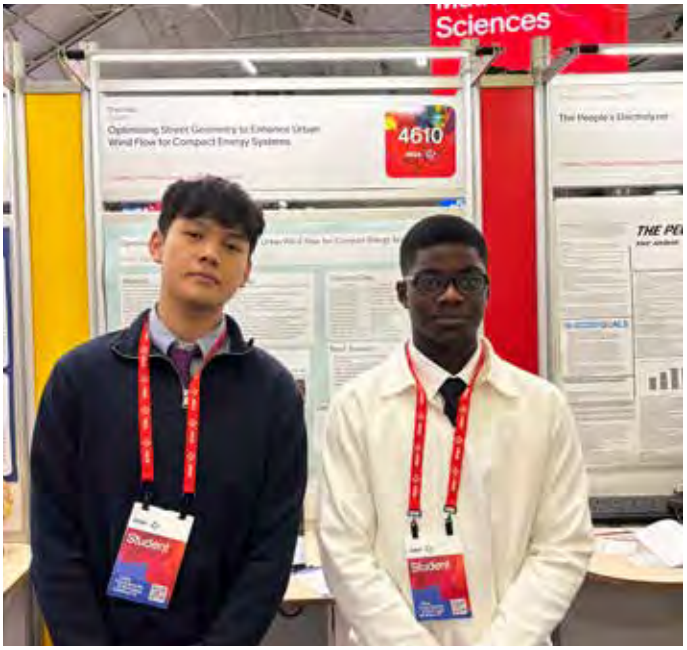


A massive congratulations to 4th year Katie Zheng for winning her category: Intermediate Individual in Social and Behavioural Sciences at the Stripe Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition 2026. Katie's work exploring the projected impact of Vape Taxation and Flavour Bans clearly impressed the judges.



We are incredibly proud of all seven of our students who showcased their outstanding projects at this year's SYSTE. Congratulations to Conor O'Neill, Alec Vysotski, Mark Fedorenko, Maksim Snegur, Daniel Ogundipe and Haowen Wang. Finally, a special word of thanks to Catriona Hendry for supporting our students with their projects.

Founded in 1965, the Stripe Young Scientist and Technology Exhibition (formally known as BTYSE) is a student showcase of original research projects. Each year, thousands of students submit proposals, with only about 500 projects selected for display at the four-day exhibition in Dublin - so well done on getting through everyone!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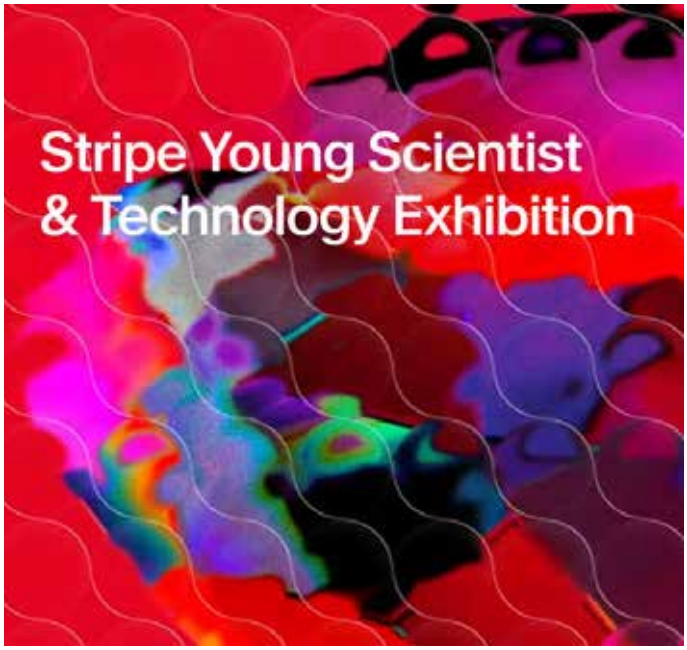
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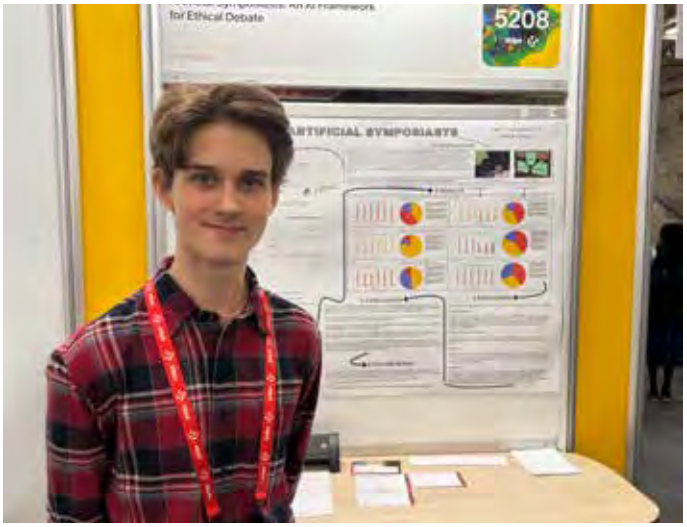
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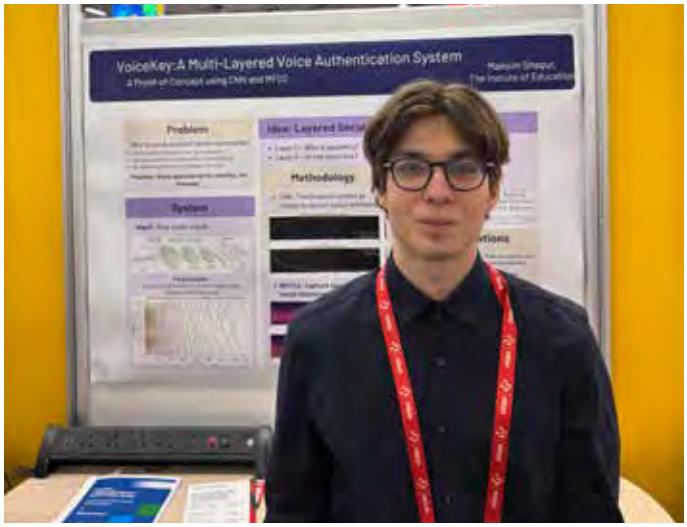
VoiceKey-A Multi-Layered Voice Authentication System
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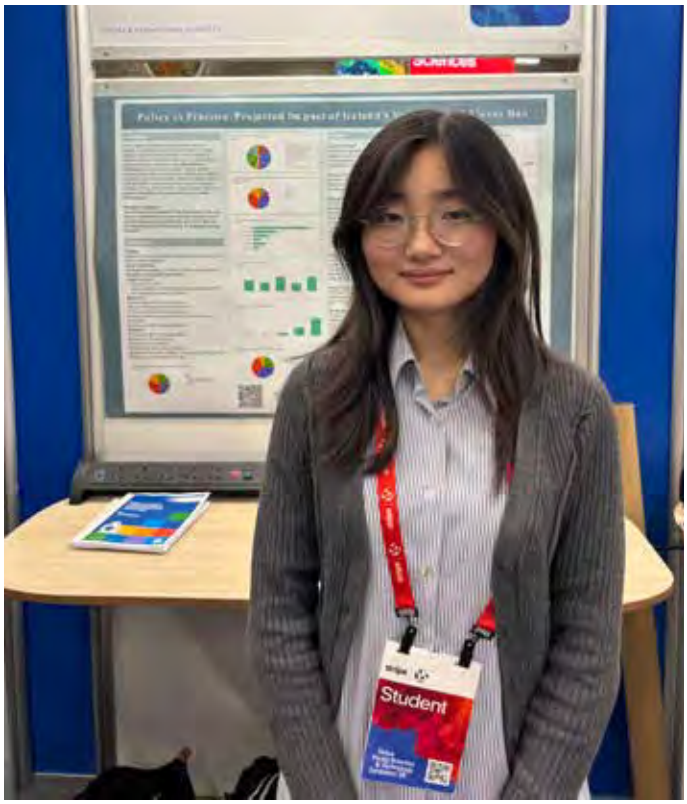

Student

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Khalid Omer Khalid 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year Khalid Omer Khalid who won the ATII Translation Competition for secondary school students in the Arabic Category. ATII is the Association of Translators and Interpreters Ireland and the competition asked Irish secondary school students to translate an excerpt from a novel or short story from one of eleven languages. The award ceremony was held in Trinity College in the Trinity Centre for Literary and Cultural Translation on the 29th of November 2025. A prize of €100 and a certificate was awarded for the best translation in each language. This hugely successful translation competition for secondary school students in Ireland is now in its tenth year.

Kirill Korostelev 6th Year

Well done to 6th year Kiril Korostelev (pictured above) and 4th year Aadya Krithika Santosh (pictured below), who progressed to the finals of the All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad (AILO). 940 students from 89 schools in 27 counties took part in February. Students were challenged to decipher text from a variety of languages ranging from Hausa, Kipsigis, Warlpiri, Yoruba and even the old Turkic script of Orkhon which was in use between the 8th and 10th century. The top 100 students were invited to the final in DCU in early March, from which four students will go on to represent Ireland at the International Linguistics Olympiad in Bucharest, Romania in late July.

Ishani Acharya 6th Year

We were delighted to learn that 6th year student Ishani Acharya has continued her work with Better Internet for Kids (BIK) this year, building on her fantastic contributions to the organisation last year. Ishani travelled to Brussels this year as a member of the BIK Youth Advisory Group, representing Ireland at the Safer Internet Forum. While in Brussels, Ishani hosted a panel discussion featuring Renate Nikolay *(Deputy Director-General of DG Connect)*, Niamh Hodnett *(Irish Online Safety Commissioner)*, Dóra Dávid *(Member of the European Parliament)*, and others (pictured below right). Ishani and the youth group also met with Henna Virkkunen *(Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy)* on the trip. (pictured below)

Liam O'Donoghue 5th Year

Well done to 5th year Liam O'Donoghue who dyed his hair pink to raise money for Breast Cancer Ireland. When Liam's aunt and cousin were diagnosed with cancer, Liam decided he wanted to do whatever he could to help out this cancer charity. Liam is pictured above with his aunt, you can donate and support Liam here https://www.gofundme.com/f/supporting-breast-cancer-ireland. Breast Cancer Ireland is a registered charity, established to raise significant funding to support pioneering research programmes nationally, as well as to promote education and awareness on the importance of good breast health amongst women of all ages. Their vision is to transform breast cancer from sometimes being a fatal disease into a treatable illness for all.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Leinster Senior Schools Swimming Championships 2025/2026

A huge congratulations to all eleven of our swimmers who qualified for this year's Leinster Senior Schools Swimming Championships which were held on the 8th of February 2026 in the National Aquatics Centre in Dublin. To get that far is an achievement in itself, well done to Mary Graham, Emilia Aherne, Daniel Liu and to the rest of our swimmers who are detailed below. The atmosphere and team spirit pool-side was electric, with Institute swimmers taking home The Overall Cup plus 4 Gold, 4 Silver and 4 Bronze medals.

Our Senior Girls team were the Overall Winners and were presented with Silverware by Leinster Swimming Chair Paul Daly. The team comprised of 5th years Chloe Dawnay and Fiona Weng and 6th years Caoimhe Smyth and Hannah Poynton.

We secured the following Individual medals in the intermediary category: Fiona Weng took home the Gold in the 100m Butterfly and Bronze in the 200m Individual Medley and 4th year Radu Pamfil won Silver in the 100m Backstroke. In the Senior category Individual medals were awarded to: Chloe Dawnay who secured Silver in the 200m Individual Medley and Bronze in 100m Backstroke, Hannah Poynton who won Silver in 100m Butterfly and 5th year Emilian Petrea who won Bronze in the 400m Freestyle and 200m Individual Medley.

The day ended with relays and the atmosphere poolside was phenomenal with each of the swimmers showing great support to one and another. Institute students took home 3 Golds in the Medley Team Relays (MTR) and 1 Silver in the Freestyle Team Relay (FTR). First up were the girls 200m MTR winning Gold with the team comprising of Chloe Dawnay, Caoimhe Smyth, Hannah Poynton and Fiona Weng. Next up was the Mixed MTR Gold for Chloe Dawnay, Emilian Petrea, Fiona Weng and Radu Pamfil.

Final Gold of the evening in the Open 200m MTR went to Radu Pamfil, Emilian Petrea, Sean O'Rourke and 6th year Alex Li. The final race of the night was the 200m Mixed FTR. It came down to a nail biting finish with the team narrowly missing out on Gold, but taking home the Silver were Hannah Poynton, Caoimhe Smyth, Sean O'Rourke and Alex Li. This meant our relay swimmers qualified for the Irish Senior Schools Relay Championships, which were held on Sunday the 22nd of March 2026 in the National Aquatics Centre.

Lara Elkadi 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year student Lara Elkadi who competed in the Freestyle and Majorette Cup and International Trials for Baton Twirling in December 2025. Over the course of two action-packed days, Lara was awarded 4 Gold medals and 1 Silver medal. Lara also qualified to represent Ireland in the European Technical Championships in Eindhoven, Netherlands in April 2026. The Freestyle and Majorette Cup celebrates dedication, creativity, and athleticism, offering spectators a vibrant and dynamic display of twirling excellence. This exciting national competition brings together talented baton twirlers and majorettes from across Ireland to showcase skill, artistry, and performance at the highest level.

Samaira Ahluwalia 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year student Samaira Ahluwalia, who was honoured with the Division 4 Top Bowling Award (Best Bowler of the SportsHub Division 4 Women's League) in recognition of her outstanding performances during the 2025 season. The award was presented at the Cricket Leinster Awards Night and Gala Dinner, held on the 30th of January 2026 in the Round Room at the Mansion House, Dublin. Samaira delivered an exceptional season, taking 26 wickets across 16 matches to finish well clear of the rest of the league. Samaira was also the only female or youth player from her club to receive an award on the night, competing against more than 500 women aged 14–35.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

VEX V5 Robotics Ireland National Championships 2025/2026

Congratulations to our Robotics Club who qualified for the VEX V5 Robotics Ireland National Championships which were held in MTU, Cork on the 24th of February 2026. Our students competed in the regional round in Tullamore, Offaly in January 2026 making it through to the finals where they enjoyed an unforgettable experience engaging with some of the top robotics teams in the country. Alec Vysotski 6th year, Conor O'Neill 6th year, Sutlej Suresh 5th year, Jennifer Zhang 4th year and Mark Fedorenko 4th year had been building their robot since September. Throughout the process, they gained valuable hands-on experience in both mechanical engineering and coding as they designed, built, and programmed a fully functional robot. Well done to our students and to Adam Goodwin our robotics mentor for their hard work, dedication and excellent representation of the school at national level. This was only the second year we have had a robotics club and taken part in any competitions, a great achievement.

Matteo Matrangolo 5th Year

Well done to 5th year Matteo Ambrogio Matrangolo who was awarded Highly Commended in the Piano Solo O16 B at the Wesley College Interschools Music Festival. The festival took place over the 6th -7th of March 2026 and is an event for primary and secondary level students. It aims to give pupils the opportunity to perform, representing their schools within a musical forum. The competitions cover a range of musical genres including classical, rock and traditional.

Dublin Camogie A Team

Congratulations to our 6th year students Clodagh Hogan and Jocelyn Hanks who were selected to represent the Dublin Minor Camogie A Team this year. We are very proud of Jocelyn who is #9 and plays midfield and Clodagh who is #15 and plays corner forward, their work ethic and passion for camogie has earned them their places. We wish them and their team the very best of luck representing Dublin in the 2026 All Ireland Camogie Championship!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Irish Schools Sailing Leinster Championships 2025/2026

Congratulations to our Sailing team who came 2nd in the Irish Schools Sailing Leinster Championships 2026 on Sunday the 8th of March. We are very proud of our team - their hardwork and dedication truly paid off on the day. Well done to 6th years Brian Carroll, Ben Moreau, Sean Cronin and Peter Kenny, and to 5th years Kate Kenny and Zita Tempany.

Uilleann Blount 6th Year

Well done to 6th year student Uilleann Blount who whilst studying hard for his Leaving Certificate exams this year has stayed dedicated to his music and has played a number of gigs in Dublin throughout the year. Uilleann is looking forward to having the time to pursue his musical talents and play more gigs this summer when the exams are over.

Sarah Brazil 6th Year

5th year Sarah Brazil has had another very busy year with her violin. On the 19th of September 2025, Sarah performed Ravel's "Tzigane" as a soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland in the National Concert Hall on Culture Night. This Concert was broadcast live on RTE Lyric FM. Sarah also had the wonderful opportunity to perform on some highly valuable violins in the Royal Irish Academy of Music including a Stradivarius and a Guarneri del Gesu brought by the Guarneri Society of Switzerland. On the 6th of December 2025, Sarah gave her debut recital in the Whyte Recital Hall of the Royal Irish Academy of Music performing a programme of Beethoven, Debussy, Ravel, Brahms and Ernst. Sarah traveled to Vienna in March for master classes culminating in a performance in the Musik Quartier and in April she travelled to Oxford for the New Virtuosi Violin Master Course. Finally, Sarah was accepted to participate in the prestigious three week Keshet Eilon Strings Master Course in Altea, Spain over the summer. Well done Sarah, we look forward to seeing where your music takes you next year!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

4th Years Daffodil Day 2026

A big thank you to our wonderful 4th year students who volunteered for Daffodil Day on the 20th of March 2026. They were raising funds for the incredibly important work of the Irish Cancer Society, and we are so proud of their efforts. It was fantastic to see the sunshine out for the collectors - it definitely adds to the success of the day!

Noah Winston 6th Year

6th Year Noah Winston has had a fantastic year with Yu-Gi-Oh. Yu-Gi-Oh! is a popular Japanese media franchise featuring a strategic trading card game (TCG), which has become a global hit. Noah was the only player to reach the top 8 at all 3 Dublin-hosted regional events in 2025. Another highlight for Noah this year "On September 6th 2025, I took an unusual variant of "yummy" I had been experimenting with to the first Irish regional of the season. I ended up placing 6th place, landing me an invite to the European World Championship Qualifiers, making me the first European to top a regional with "Mitsurugi Yummy". My decklist was posted online and other people, inspired by my creative deckbuilding and technical card choices such as the addition of a "Samsara Sorrowcat" to make another "Herald of Arc Light" picked up my unique version of Mitsurugi Yummy, winning a large Yu-Gi-Oh championship series event with it. Decks inspired by my version of Mitsurugi Yummy went on to dominate the late 2025 format. Overall I am proud that as such a young player in the space, I was able to help define the Yu-Gi-Oh metagame with friends who supported me along the way."

Maya McLean 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year Maya McLean who received a Special Achievement Award in recognition of her work as a mentor with the Scouts. On Thursday, 23rd October 2025, the Dublin Scout Province presented its inaugural Youth Awards Ceremony. Hosted at the Mansion House by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Ray McAdam, the evening marked a milestone celebration of young people across the capital who have demonstrated extraordinary courage, leadership, and service within their communities and the Scout movement.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Vincent Ni 5th Year

Kuang Ze Vincent Ni is on the Irish Table Tennis National Junior Squad and has a had a very busy year. Vincent is a multi-title Irish Junior Table Tennis Champion whose talent and dedication continue to shine on the national and international stage. On the 13th of September 2025, he claimed victory in the U17 category and secured 3rd place in the U19 division at the prestigious Irish Junior Classification. Vincent has proudly represented Ireland at the European Table Tennis Championships for the past few years, showcasing his skill and sportsmanship among Europe's elite. In November 2025 Vincent represented Ireland once again at the Senior Home Countries International Championship, which took place from the 7th to 9th November at the National Basket Arena in Ireland. With a growing list of achievements and a passion for the sport, Vincent is undoubtedly one to watch in the future of Irish table tennis.

Kiril Korostelev 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th Year Kiril Korostelev who has won a place on the Irish National Linguistics Olympiad Team. The 23rd International Linguistics Olympiad (IOL) 2026 will be held in Bucharest, Romania, from July 26th to August 2nd, 2026. Four winners (Kiril and three others) from the All Ireland Linguistics Olympiad (AILO) National Final will represent Ireland at this event. The team will compete against top students globally in this prestigious linguistic competition. The competition hones students' problem-solving skills and fosters the next generation of multilingual technology specialists for Ireland. A 2016 survey showed that 95% of participants consider AILO to have enhanced their problem-solving ability. Many past participants have gone on to pursue careers in Computer Science, Maths and Linguistics (or a combination thereof) at third level - some of who have returned to tutor new AILO participants. We wish Kiril the very best of luck in August 2026!

Irish Senior Schools Relay Championships 2025/26

The Irish Senior Schools Relay Championships took place on Sunday, 22nd March 2026 at the Sport Ireland National Aquatic Centre in Dublin, featuring 50m relay action for junior, intermediate, and senior school teams. This event offers a rare opportunity for swimmers to represent their schools rather than their clubs.

The Institute had eight swimmers representing the school across four senior relay categories. They took home two gold and two silver medals - a phenomenal result!

First up was the Mixed Freestyle Relay, comprised of Hannah Poynton, Caoimhe Smyth, Alex Li and Sean O'Rourke. The team touched the wall in a time of 1:50.02 to secure silver.

The Girls' Medley Relay won joint gold in a nail-biting race. The team of Chloe Dawney, Caoimhe Smyth, Hannah Poynton and Fiona Weng shared first place with Loreto Abbey Dalkey, with all top four teams finishing within one hundredth of a second of each other.

The Open Medley Relay, made up of Radu Pamfil, Emilian Petrea, Alex Li and Sean O'Rourke, certainly stole the show. In yet another extremely close race, the team won silver in a time of 1:53.71, with Kilkenny College taking bronze in 1:53.77.

The final relay of the morning was the Mixed Medley Relay, where the team took home gold in an impressive win! Congratulations to our Mixed Medley team which consisted of Chloe Dawney, Emilian Petrea, Fiona Weng and Radu Pamfil.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Institute Chess Club Success

On Saturday the 21st of March 2026 we had our final game of this year's Leinster Schools Chess League. Our club performed so phenomenally that they will be promoted into the next division of the league. This is our first year in the league and for many students they only embarked on competitive chess this year, so this success is a testament to their hard work. The players over the weekend of the 21st of March were Alexey Golovanov, Yuxin Tian and Sergei Vasilev. Alexey and Yuxin are pictured above and our Chess Club is pictured below, we look forward to seeing where their division promotion leads them.

Maria Malas 5th Year

Congratulations to 5th year student Maria Malas who represented The Institute in the Qatar Foundation International's (QFI) Arabic Speaking Competition (ASC) 2025-26, where she competed against students from Ireland, Canada, Sweden, Italy, the UK, Switzerland and the USA. We are incredibly proud to share that Maria was awarded first place overall in this highly competitive international event. This is an outstanding achievement and reflects her exceptional dedication, talent, and hard work over a sustained period of time. Since its inception in 2021, the competition has grown from 48 entrants to 500 last year, offering a vital platform for heritage and non-heritage learners to showcase their skills. The ASC serves as a powerful catalyst, providing a unique platform for learners to engage with the language beyond the traditional classroom, fostering authentic use and skill development. It is designed to inspire and motivate students - to showcase their Arabic skills, creativity, and confidence, while supporting proficiency aligned with formal assessments such as GCSEs, AAPPL (ACTFL Assessment of Performance toward Proficiency in Languages), or OPIs (Oral Proficiency Interviews). In doing so, competition makes the language more relevant and accessible.

Pickleball Champions

6th year twins Dani and Beni Hajnal have had an incredibly busy year preparing for the Leaving Cert and travelling the world as pickleball champions. Dani had this to say about their year:

"They say twins share a secret language, but for my brother and I, that language is now spoken in dinks, drives, and the occasional overhead smash. Over the last two years, pickleball has transformed from a hobby into the defining rhythm of our lives, and into a constant reason to go abroad every few weeks. In the last year, we have played 22 international tournaments. We were in an airport almost every second week, travelling off to a different country to go play a sport we never thought would become such a huge part of our lives. A sport which my brother and I first played eight years ago as a joke while at a tennis camp and just laughed it off as "fake tennis," now has us travelling the world, making friends, connections and gaining sponsorships that we never imagined possible. In September 2025, my brother and I got the honour of being part of "Team Ireland," 18+ for the European Pickleball Championships. Reflecting back, I don't think either of us ever thought we would be where we are today, next September we are moving to separate countries, who knows what challenges are awaiting us along our pickleball partnership but whatever it is we are ready to take it head on and I hope anybody reading this will do the same whenever challenges arise - as the one thing historians and analysts haven't been able to predict yet are, 'surprises' and life is full of them!"

The twins are pictured above at the Reballution Cup Rota 2025 where they brought home a gold from men singles and silver from men's doubles and below at the Kukri Irish Nationals 2025.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

YEOTY Awards 2026

We were delighted to share that due to the hard work of our students pictured above, the school was awarded a national record of 15 gold medals in the Young Economist of the Year (YEOTY) competition 2026. Our students will compete in the National final which had not taken place by the time the yearbook went to print. It is being held in The O'Reilly Hall, UCD on Tuesday the 5th of May. Thank you to Rob Quinlan for supporting the students and for accompanying them to O'Reilly Hall for the finals.

A total of 24 of our students across all years, from 4th year to 6th year, won the 15 Gold medals on both individual and group projects. Congratulations on your gold medals and best of luck at the national awards to all our winners; Aadya Krithika Santosh, Daivik Singhal, Ryan Podder, Kate Meehan, Reuben Sadat, Sephie Hamilton, Alexandra Borza, Yuan Yin, Haowen Wang, Patrick Xing, Mylana Kulia, Harry Healy, Stephen Zhang, Alanna Crean, Sarah Brodie, Davide Scaringella, Luke Brodie, Daniel Liu, Shiqing Zhang, Seán Giles, Ali Hamza Asif, Yutong (Sallyanne) Yang, Xiaozhen (Alina) Yu and Roisin Bourke.

Rubik's Speedcubing

Well done to 4th year William Carey and 6th years Namuun Natsagdorj and Prabhav Rajaram Nayak in their speedcubing competition achievements. Speedcubing is a competitive sport in which the aim is to solve a Rubik's cube as fast as possible. There are many variations of puzzles that are held at official World Cube association (WCA) competitions. They have been attending competitions since 2019 with all three having over 70+ podiums each.

They have had huge success in the past few months with:

Namuun Natsagdorj

- Won Overall female of the 3x3 champion at the Irish championships
- And achieved a 2.88 National record single for 'clock'

Prabhav Rajaram Nayak

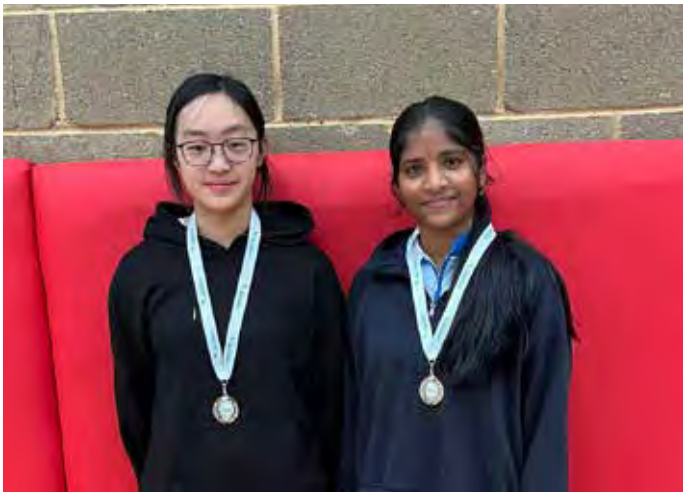
- Runner-up Irish champion in 'megaminx'
- And achieved a 30.75 National record average for 'megaminx'

William Carey

- Is the Irish Champion for 'skewb'
- And achieved a 2.39 National record average for 'skewb'

Badminton Success

6th year students Nessa Mooney and Akshita Ramesh and 5th year Winni Chan have all had a fantastic year of sporting achievements in Badminton. Akshita and Nessa represented Dublin in the highly competitive Inter-Counties U19, finishing as Runners-Up in the Division 1 Finals. Akshita and Winni were winners of the U19 Dublin Juvenile League Mixed Doubles. Akshita and Winni also finished as Runners-Up at the Westside Fest, where Akshita additionally earned a Bronze medal in Singles. Well done everyone, we looked forward to hearing were Badminton takes you all next year!



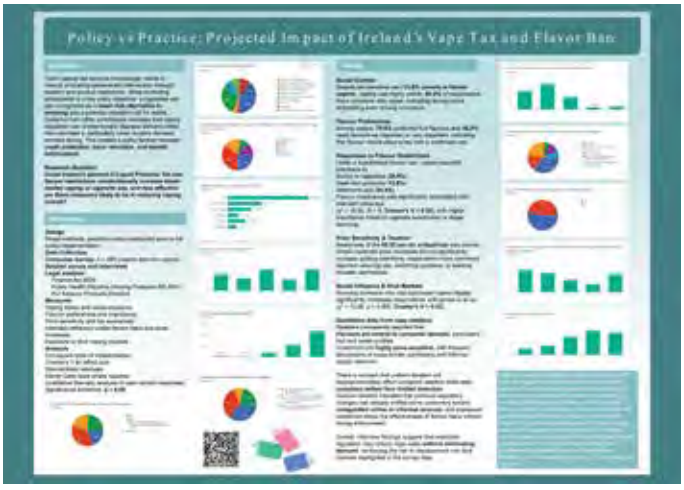
Ireland U19 Cricket Team

Congratulations to 5th year Genevieve Morrisey and 4th year Aisling Lawlor who were both selected for the Under 19 Irish Cricket Team this year. Throughout the year they have been going to camps and training three to four times a week to prepare for the tours this summer and then ultimately the u19 World Cup in January of 2027. It takes a lot of dedication to play at this level and commit to school work at the same time, and we are very proud of their achievements. We wish them the very best of luck in all their upcoming cricket competitions this summer and beyond.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Katie Zheng 4th Year

Congratulations to 4th year student Katie Zheng who won 1st place in the John Hooper Statistical Poster Competition for her infographic entitled “Policy vs Practice - Vape Tax and Flavour Ban”. The competition is one of Ireland’s most respected and prestigious schools competitions. The competition is named after the first Director of Statistics of the Irish Free State and has become hugely popular with both students and teachers alike. The competition provides an outstanding opportunity for students across the island of Ireland to showcase their data analytical and interpretation skills. From here, Katie is now eligible to enter the European Statistics Competition 2026. It is a phenomenal achievement, and we are delighted to see Katie do so well with her Science project.



Institute F1 STEM Team

Get ready.....because Team HEX is on the track. What do bees and race cars have in common? Speed, precision, and a team that works like a hive. We are your school’s STEM Racing team; designing, testing, and racing our own miniature F1 car, powered by teamwork and built for performance. We are built like a hive and racing to win. We are also creating exclusive HEX merchandise, so if you want to support the team and represent the hive, make sure to check it out via our social media. Join our Discord server and follow our TikTok by searching HEX (all capitals) to stay updated, meet the team and get involved. Our team consists of 5th year students Ronan Sugrue, Sarah Sherif Karam, Jennifer Fuming Zhang and Marta Villa and 4th year student Tracy Cui.

STEM RACING™ IRELAND

Sinead Glynn 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year Sinead Yangyang Glynn who was awarded first place in the O16 Piano Solo at the Wesley Interschools Music Festival. The Interschools Music Festival is a musical event for primary and secondary level students. It aims to give pupils the opportunity to perform, representing their schools within a musical forum. The competitions cover a range of musical genres including classical, rock and traditional. The festival which celebrates 50 years this year, provides a platform for young performers to gain confidence and experience in front of an encouraging audience. We were delighted to have Sinead represent our school at this event.

Nayan Levy 6th Year

6th year student Nayan Levy has had another incredibly successful year on his musical journey. Nayan has attended a number of trumpet masterclasses at home and abroad, and has been accepted on to the degree course in Trumpet Performance at the world-renowned Amsterdam Conservatory (CvA). The CvA offers world-renowned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Trumpet Performance, specializing in classical, jazz, and early music. The programme provides rigorous training - including individual lessons, orchestra projects, and masterclasses - to prepare students for professional careers, with admission based on digital recordings and live auditions.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to 4th year student Sarah McCormick who was awarded 3rd place in the features category (the most popular and competitive category) of Young Journalist Ireland 2026. Young Journalist Ireland is NewsBrands Ireland's Transition Year programme. NewsBrands Ireland, is the industry body for Ireland's national news publishers. Sarah's insightful piece on euthanasia impressed the judges, and we are thrilled to see her recognised among the best. Sarah received her award at the ceremony held in the Aviva stadium Dublin, April 2026. To win an award in the most competitive category of this national competition is a major victory, well done Sarah.

Young Journalist Ireland

Sarah is pictured above right at the ceremony and below right with her Journalism teacher Kate Lynch. Kate herself won 'Young Journalist of the Year' when she was a 4th year student in The Institute! This led to NewsBrands Ireland inviting Kate to attend their own national award's ceremony and through the connections Kate made there, she got an internship at the Irish Mail on Sunday in 5th Year. Straight out of the Leaving Certificate exams Kate was hired as a journalist by the Irish Mail on Sunday and is currently working as a Journalist, attending college in Trinity and teaching our current 4th years!

Doctor Warns of Impact of Euthanasia legalisation; “It’s choice for very few, for most, it is a pressure”

By Sarah McCormick

When I heard about euthanasia, it seemed simple - an obvious matter of bodily autonomy. I now realise how complex it is.

Euthanasia is intentionally killing someone who is suffering, at their request - an important question in legislation and ethics.

In Ireland, euthanasia is illegal, but there’s on-going debate surrounding it. Most recently the Joint Oireachtas Committee in 2024 reported on the matter. It’s opposed by various groups, with studies suggesting 67% of Irish medical consultants are against euthanasia, and only 14% in favour. However, a poll by lobbyists suggests Irish citizens, e.g., 59% of Dubliners, support euthanasia.

I spoke with Palliative Care Consultant, Dr. Faith Cranfield about her stance against euthanasia. She has advocated against legislation on TV and before the Oireachtas.

I couldn’t understand why she’d argue against euthanasia legalisation. As a palliative care doctor, surely she would be empathetic to those facing death and respect their autonomy?

She started with referencing Canada, where euthanasia is legal. Despite initially only allowing euthanasia for those with “reasonably foreseeable” deaths, the criteria were quickly expanded to include simply having “enduring and intolerable suffering”, by Bill C7. The Canadian government costed it: expanding eligibility saves $60million a year by euthanising patients, rather than caring for them. When paralympian Christine Gauthier, expressed distress at not obtaining a ramp to get outside her home, social services offered euthanasia. “It’s sort of dystopian once a state decides killing citizens rather than helping them is progressive”.

Dr. Cranfield explained people facing terminal illness can feel overwhelmed, not ‘themselves’ and express a wish for everything to be over. If we respond with humanity, respect and dignity, this feeling often passes. That is the compassionate response; offering death isn’t. She thinks the option of state-provided death would make it harder for that feeling to pass. It reinforces the idea that those facing death are of less value, because anyone else in society who seeks death to relieve suffering - those who are suicidal - are offered support. Society then divides into those we support wholeheartedly when suffering, and those we offer to euthanise.

We discussed why people request euthanasia.

The first reason is fear of loss of control. Euthanasia offers a sense of control, which Dr. Cranfield could appreciate.

The second is loss of independence. “Someone with terminal illness may need help with daily life. The disabled community lives like that every day. Do we consider disabled people’s lives of less value because of this dependence? Most people would argue we shouldn’t. But perhaps society does… perhaps ableism bias underlies people’s acceptance of euthanasia as a reasonable option to deal with needing assistance in illness. We must value each human as being of innate value, whether or not they’re incapacitated, which happens when people near death.”

Thirdly, patients struggle with feeling like a burden; “Nobody wants to be a burden. I could imagine my mother, if she got sick and needed help, would consider herself a burden. If legislation existed, she’d feel pressure to consider euthanasia. I don’t want that for her, I want her to understand she’s valued. While a welcome choice for the very few, for most, that choice is an added pressure. For those few, their wish means a risk to everybody, as anyone can find themselves ‘eligible’. The autonomy of the few must be restricted. The same way if you’ve a fast car, you can’t drive as fast as you want because you might hurt someone. It’s similar.”

Finally, I wondered how best to implement euthanasia.

She was clear. People must know: all initial, narrow eligibility criteria, that make the option of euthanasia - a state facilitated death - feel acceptable, will disappear in time. The slippery slope argument is simply fact in all countries where euthanasia is introduced.

She was adamant it shouldn’t involve doctors; “Ending lives is the opposite of what doctors do. You must imagine a doctor’s situation where you suspend everything you normally do and instead give injections to deliberately end a life. There must be an element of the doctor, thinking that it’s okay and agrees this person’s life is no longer worthwhile. Or they couldn’t follow through. This risks translating into caring for other patients.”

She explained it can affect trust in the profession. She described her friend, a German doctor, who had vulnerable Dutch patients visit him over the border, because they couldn’t trust their doctors, since “They were involved in ending the lives of some of their community”.

Euthanasia cannot easily be classified as morally right or wrong, yet after speaking with Dr. Cranfield, I was shocked, and moved. Euthanasia reveals biases in society; it has the power to provide choice, but its true impact is the risk of burdening everyone with this choice.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Water Polo Cup Winners

St. Vincent's Waterpolo Club has four Institute students on their team: 6th years Luka Cvetkovic and Ethan Noonan and 5th years Daniel Liu and Davide Scaringella. They had a great year, a highlight of which was winning the Irish Under-19 Waterpolo Cup in the UL Sports Arena in Limerick. The Irish Under-19 Water Polo Cup is one of the key national age-grade competitions in Ireland, bringing together the strongest club teams from across the country.

The Institute Rowing Team

Congratulations to The Institute rowing team, 6th year Ele Brady and 5th years Audrey O'Sullivan and Siún Mc Carthy. The team represented the school at the Schools Regatta 2026 on the 26th of April, at O'Briens Bridge. Ele and Audrey came 2nd in the Women's U23 Pair and placed 3rd nationally. Siún placed 17th nationally in Women's U23 Singles. The Schools Regatta serves as an important stepping stone for athletes aiming to progress into senior club rowing.

Institute Photo Competition

Well done to 6th year student Niamh Sheehan who was the winner of The Institute's annual photo competition 'Random Acts of Wildness'. A Random Act of Wildness is a nature-based engagement challenge. We run it in Spring to encourage students to get some fresh air and take a photo of anything that caught their attention outdoors. We all know the benefits of getting out - but sometimes it helps to get a little motivation! Student's photos were shared on the digi-screens around the school and Niamh received an Institute goodie bag!

Ella Wieckowska 6th Year

Congratulations to 6th year Ella Wieckowska who has been juggling her Leaving Certificate studies with her football commitments this year. Ella travelled to Las Vegas with her past academy team called DBS (David Berber Sports), after a series of trials over several weeks. They went to Las Vegas to play in the Majors Cup, which ran over eight days. They played a total of six games having a clean sheet in every game including the final. They won the final in penalties. Ella was captain over all games and had a total of five assists in all matches.

WELLBEING

Luke Rock *Head of Wellbeing*

This year we have continued our commitment to supporting students in developing life-long skills for maintaining positive wellbeing through our wellbeing programme. Students had the opportunity to take part in regular wellbeing events and initiatives to support their journey of personal and academic growth.

Our Wellbeing Committee played a core role in supporting our weekly events and our Social Club which allowed new students to meet each other in a friendly relaxed environment every Friday. The committee also took part in our charity collections on our Christmas Jumper Day and Culture Day.

Weekly wellbeing events and initiatives took place, supported by members of our wellbeing committee. This year's events included wellbeing talks with Head of Pastoral Care, Jane D'Alton. These talks focused on providing students with tangible skills for maintaining positive wellbeing with a basis in cognitive behavioural therapy. There were also meditation sessions with Stephanie Mulligan, sunrise walks, tea and treats in evening study, and meditations facilitated by Irish international athlete and our PE teacher, Brian Gregan.

Students spread positivity during our various competitions. Students shared their positive poems in our *Positive Poetry competition*, and demonstrated their photography skills in our *Sparking Joy*, and *Random Acts of Wildness* photo contests. Our *Two Sentence Horror Story* competition at Halloween returned with many spooky contributions.

Our annual Wellbeing Week took place in January to boost students' mood during the dark January days. This week included yoga, a sunrise walk, wellbeing talks, and a lunchtime movie. The week ended with a concert that showcased some of the fantastic talent of our students.

In March, we invited students to wear clothes from their own culture as part of our Culture Day. Throughout the day, we collected donations for EMBRACE Badjao and ran a bake sale to support 5th year student Sarah Gordon's aid trip to Zambia with Zamda this summer. There was also a culture-based quiz and students showcased music and dance from their culture in our after-school concert.

We thank all students for their support with this year's wellbeing programme and look forward to seeing all students at next year's wellbeing events in September!

Random Acts of Wildness

In March, students and staff shared photos from the wild, as we all supported and encouraged each other to get outdoors. What better way to practice your photography skills than by getting out into nature, enjoying some fresh air and exercise in the process. Thanks to everyone who submitted to our *Random Acts of Wildness* campaign and helped bring some nature into the school, we loved seeing all your photos on the digital screens. Every year there are beautiful skies, student's pets, the ubiquitous Dublin pigeon and a few surprises. Our winner Niamh Sheehan surprised us with a seal! Below and left we have shared some of our entries.

Isabelle McBrierty 6th Year *Under the rainbow*

Jiya Patel
6th Year

Aisling Wang
5th Year

Aoife Poulsen
6th Year

Ciara Cooley
6th Year

Lara Elkadi
6th Year

Holly O'Meara
5th Year

Niamh Sheehan
6th Year

Oisin Murphy
5th Year

Diarmuid Mullins
5th Year

Niamh Sheehan
6th Year

Diarmuid Mullins
5th Year

Isabelle McBrierty
6th Year

WELLBEING

Christmas Jumper Day

It is well documented that neurons in the portion of the brain associated with a sense of satisfaction start firing when we give back. We share an intrinsic motivation to make the world a better place. We could see this satisfaction amongst our students who happily volunteered to help deserving charities throughout the year. Read on for further details of some of this year's wellbeing initiatives.

In December, we held our annual Christmas Jumper Day. Students and staff alike donned their favourite festive attire in support of **Focus Ireland.** Collections were facilitated by our 4th year students and student volunteers who collected donations around the school. Well done to our 4th Years who also ran a bake-sale and a craft table on the day to raise funds. This year we raised an incredible **€6005 -** by far our best year ever!

All money raised went directly to supporting the outstanding work of Focus Ireland. The organisation provides advice, information, advocacy and help with finding a home – as well as a warm welcoming place to meet and have a low-cost meal. Since its foundation in Dublin, it has continued to grow and now has services across Ireland including in Waterford, Kilkenny, Cork, Sligo and Limerick. A special thank you to Luke Rock for organising the event.

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

FOCUS
FOCUS

Merry Christmas
CHRISTMAS QUACKERS

GRINCH

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

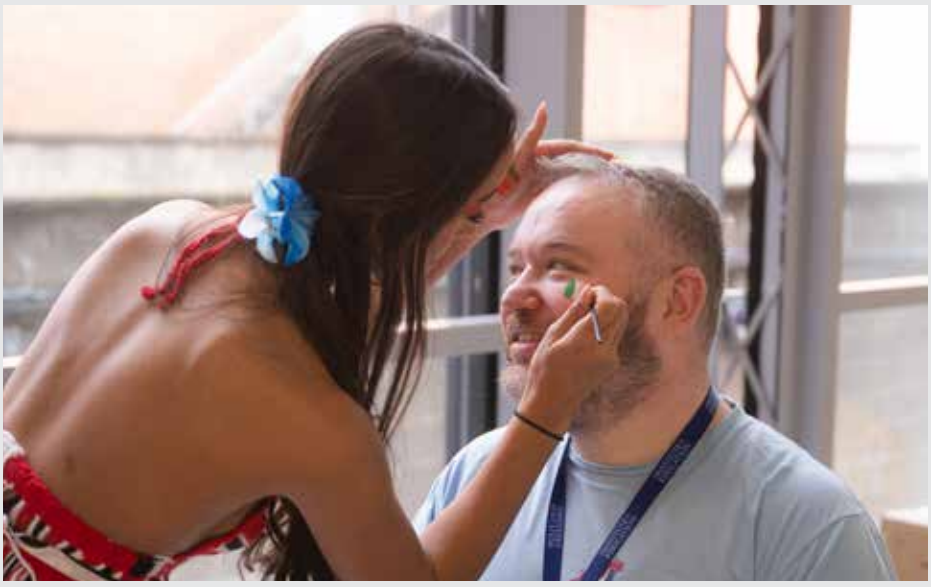
THE POGUES
And the Bells were Ringing out for Christmas Day

POKEMON

WELLBEING

Culture Day

In April we had a whole-school Culture Day to celebrate the diversity of cultures in our school community. Students wore clothes from their own cultures and shared aspects of their culture at our lunch-time cultural quiz. Students also had the opportunity to try food from other cultures, play board games, and listen to traditional Irish and world music. Collections on the day where for Embrace Badjao and **€1000** was raised - thank you to our 4th years for all their help with the collection.



CULTURE DAY

CULTURE DAY

EDUCATION
Office

Office

WELLBEING WEEK

January 12th - 16th 2026

Wellbeing Week began with tea and treats during Monday study for a boost to our students working hard after school. Students had the opportunity to attend daily events including wellbeing talks, mindfulness colouring, a sunrise walk (pictured below), a lunch-time movie, yoga and a concert. We were delighted to see students developing life-long skills for wellbeing by participating in the various events.

Throughout the week we ran a positive poetry competition and entries were shared on the digital screens around the school. Congratulations to Tom Hayden (pictured bottom right) in 6th year who won our competition with his poem *Winter Treasures.* Some of the other entries are also included on the opposite page and in our English poetry section.

The week was a great success, whether you prefer to relax with music, movies, yoga or by some mindfulness colouring - there was something for everyone! On the last day, students and staff came together to promote positivity by wearing bright colours. The week concluded with a student music recital coordinated by Ciara Coleman. Thank you to all the students who participated and attended and a special thank you to Luke Rock for organising Wellbeing week.

Winter Treasures

Walking through the frost-laden streets I hear,
The shovelling of snow by passers-by.
The sound of birdsong is ever near,
And the sun moves north in the winter sky.

Over my shivering shoulders I wrap
A red scarf to ward off the freezing sleet,
And with bitter-cold lips I start to lap
Up the brown contents of my coffee treat.

The warmth of the drink spreads straight to my core,
Flooding my body with heavenly heat.
My newly found strength has opened a door,
To the bright spring days that lie at our feet.

Tom Hayden 6th Year

Not a race

Lockers click and bells ring clear
Pens tap lightly, friends cheer near
Backpacks bounce down busy hallways,
the printer hums and paper calls.

Books stacked high and whiteboards bright,
Every class brings new delight.
It's not a race, there's nothing to win,
Just learning, laughing and breathing in.

Smile at a friend, share a kind word,
Notice the small joys you've earned.
Take a deep breath, enjoy the space,
School is a journey, not a race.

Celebrate today, the little things,
the scribbled notes, the joy it brings.
Step by step, at your own pace,
Every moment shines in place.

So lift your heads and let's all peek,
A happy, bright, wellbeing week.

Soha Izhar Ali 5th Year

You

At the end of the day,
The good and the bad,
All hope can seem lost,
And tomorrow seem sad.

You have failed and failed,
Over and over once more,
But this is the point,
Where you can overcome the war.

When all hope is lost,
And there is one final cost.
And you have to get through,
The hard times put on you.

Everyone has them,
Let's face the facts,
You're not alone,
But it doesn't last.

They eventually pass by,
And what's left,
Is changed for life.

You can become bigger,
You can become better,
You can learn to face any weather.

You can be faster,
You can be stronger,
You cannot feel the sting any longer.

Because the ones who succeed,
Are the ones who had to bleed,
But built up a scab,
So as they could grab,
Life's opportunities by the horns,
And heave themselves up from the thorns.

Be strong,
Not weak,
Stay where you are,
do not fleet,
That's what makes the hero
The ones who fleet -
They are the sheep.

Shauna Esmonde 5th Year

WELLBEING *Sparking Joy*

Sparking Joy Competition

Our annual photo competition *'Sparking Joy - something that made me smile'* took place in November 2025 this year. Students and staff shared photos of whatever sparked joy in their lives on the screens around the school and on our noticeboard for students' photos outside the first-floor office.

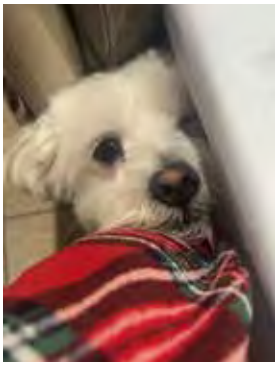
Congratulations to 6th year student Caitlin Lanigan, who was this year's winner. It was very hard to pick a winner but it is also very hard not to smile at Caitlin's photo! Thank you to everyone who entered, so many of your entries made us smile and we loved seeing everything that brought a spark of joy into your lives. From sunsets to coffee art, the photos were as lovely as they were diverse. Caitlin is pictured below receiving her prize and the winning picture is on the top right.

Caitlin Lanigan 6th Year - Winning Photo!

Zach Carroll 5th Year

Tom Hayden 6th Year

Ina Eustace 6th Year


Sarah Zhang 5th Year

Peter Cousins 6th Year

Honglin Chen 5th Year

Ryan Aleksiunaite 6th Year

Lauren Tyrrell Staff

Sarah Gordon 5th Year

Lauren Tyrrell Staff

Aisling Wang 5th Year

Angie Crowe Staff

Kethana Naidoo 6th Year

Adeena Amir 4th Year

Jahnavi Reddy Tuama 5th Year

Áine Kennedy 6th Year

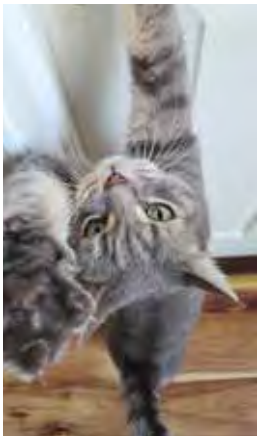
Oisin Murphy 5th Year

Jahnavi Reddy Tuama 5th Year

Áine Kennedy 6th Year

Kieran Tyrrell 6th Year

Lauren Tyrrell Staff


Samuel Meehan 5th Year

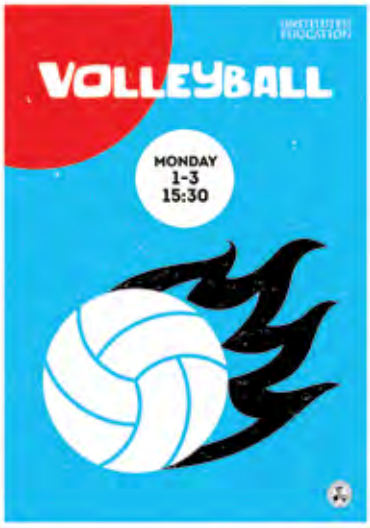
Luke Rock Staff

Kieran Tyrrell 6th Year

Scott Mc Cann 5th Year

Erin Doyle 5th Year

EXTRA CURRICULARS



OUR ACTIVITIES

Below is the full list of lunch clubs and extracurriculars we enjoyed this year.

Lunch Clubs

Drama
Film Studies
Fitness
D&D
Jazz Band
Meditative Drumming
Social Club
Strategy Games
Table Tennis
Yoga

After School

Bridge
Chess
Choir
Debating
MUN
Philosophy
Photography
Robotics

After School Sports

Athletics
Badminton
Basketball
Cricket
Fitness
Football
Table Tennis
Volleyball

EXTRA CURRICULARS

Chess Club

Alexey Golovanov 6th Year

When I came to The Institute of Education in 5th year I almost immediately started going to the Chess Club. I didn't regret it once over the two years in The Institute. I made a couple of friends, even with some 6th years whilst still being in 5th year. The most important lesson I learned was that you can enjoy playing something even if you loose. The difference in experience and skill between me and the top players in the club was very big. However, the best part of playing chess over a real board is that you can talk with your opponent. I learned a lot from different people at the club. They gave me tips, tricks, and advice. When I joined the club I was around 1000 elo. At the end of sixth year I shot up to about 1700.

Another benefit of being in the Chess Club was that I could play in the matches between different schools and clubs. This year we played in a league between the clubs. Our team had a very nice run and we even qualified for a promotion to the next division. It was a great way of testing out my skills against more people. In the most intense situations my heart rate went up to 100-120 bpm. The amount of energy a chess game takes is high but the satisfaction from beating your opponent is even higher.

Whenever I was tired of playing proper chess and discussing the theory behind the openings I could always set up the board in the most ridiculous way and play with someone. A hoard of pawns against a normal position was my personal favorite. You can also mix up the back row of pieces and play Fisher Random. Or you can put one minute on the clock and have a lot of fun playing with lightning speed. All those things lead to the most hilarious situations, chess can be a great laugh. Going to the Chess Club was also a nice way of getting distracted from school stress. I could always rely on it occupying all of my mind. It was a nice way to stop worrying about everything else, at least for a few hours. I have enjoyed every minute I spent in the club and I will be very sad to leave it behind at the end of this year. It has helped me in a lot of ways and I will always remember it.

Sergei Vasilev 5th Year

Chess Club was an incredible experience for me this year. I got so much joy from it. It was a really positive experience. It was competitive but also had a fun and relaxed atmosphere. I joined with an expectation that it would be a competitive and serious environment, given the reputation of the school, and that I might not be anywhere near the right level there. And instead, very quickly it became a very well-balanced club. There were people who were serious about chess and tried to play their best, but also people who were there for their friends and who just had fun playing chess for the sake of it. We would play both serious games with an unmeasurable amount of concentration, and then switch and play truly silly games, with three rows of pawns against a normal setup or pieces disappearing off the board during the match due to mystical spirits.

But we didn't just stay playing in the club amongst ourselves. We had a lot of competitive matches, hosted at home and away, with other schools and other chess clubs in Dublin. We outperformed our own expectations and had a spectacular record. We ended up with a solid competitive core who would take on different opponents. We even hosted a small tournament of our own at the beginning of the school year with several other schools.

All of this was mainly due to the dedication and involvement of our coach, Fiachra. He arranged games, made sure we had a team put together for them, provided very valuable feedback and motivated us every step of the way. He even arranged an end-of-season celebration for us due to our promotion to the next league in the Bodley Cup Central. I cannot thank him enough for all the work he's done. Before starting Chess Club

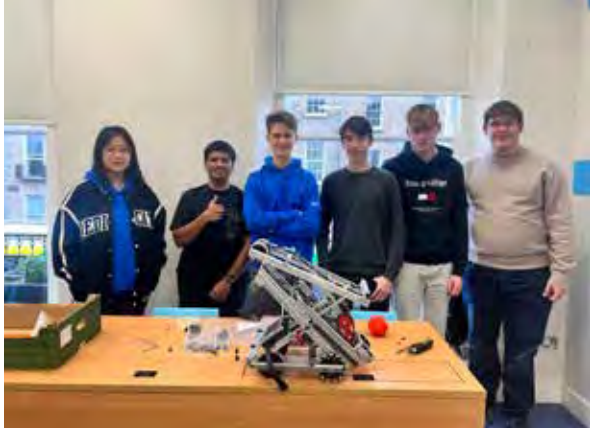
this year, I was mostly an amateur player, who only played online and didn't consider putting much effort into chess. But since then, I became part of a great team, friend group and almost a family. My chess improved immensely, I learned so much and now I have serious goals that I am confident I am well-able to achieve. I've met cool, interesting and very kind people there and became good friends with them. I'll miss the 6th years deeply next year and hope we keep in touch. I am certain that next year the Chess Club will flourish just as much as it did this year, and that I will do my best to try and be a part of it as I become a 6th year student myself.

Badminton

Phong Le 6th Year

I recall the day I was skeptical of joining the Badminton Club last year, probably due to a lack of skill and confidence. I hesitated, then joined. The club was competitive to some degree, but with the small club group everyone was welcome to play matches. I was welcomed, with my lack of skills. I grew skeptical, concerned my amateur techniques were the downfall of my team, or the match. Well, the secret for the fun of the game is not to worry whose skills are better. The competition was there to spice the game-play, as long as the fun was achieved by the end of the day, that was more important than who won.

The club is surprisingly calming, you can join any match. Nobody minded if the team became unbalanced or if someone quit. The matches are relaxing, we played 'hot potato' with rackets and shuttlecocks. Our coach Keith is friendly, fun and totally easy to approach. He's nice, supportive, and very sociable during and after the club hours. Often, an underwhelming team acquired him and the match became competitive fun. This year, the group has been growing, with people sometimes getting competitive. Despite new members, the club respects the old and traditional fun we all enjoy when playing badminton; because at the end of a day of classes, we want badminton, sport and fun!



EXTRA CURRICULARS

Dungeons & Dragons

Tudor Neacsu 6th Year

Where Stories Build Us

Often when I mention I run a Dungeons & Dragons campaign - a fantastical world of quests and sorcery - I'm met with real interest. Most people love the idea, but hesitate at the execution. All those dice, all those rules, and the pressure of speaking up can feel daunting for beginners. That's why I've found gentle introductions work best: sitting in with experienced players, testing the waters before diving in. There's something special about a Dungeon Master taking centre stage, painting scenes of verdant forests and snow-capped mountains. Doubt fades quickly, replaced by the thrill of possibility. Scepticism becomes a footnote as players bond through their cast of characters - whether stern heroes or complete oddballs.

In a world without limits, free from exams and real-world stress, you can be anyone, say anything, and form friendships without hesitation. That, to me, is the role of a Dungeon Master: not enforcing rules, but creating a space where people feel welcome to imagine.

Our campaign didn't start with world-ending stakes. It began with a village under threat - and slaying a manticore to restore its protector, a Forest Spirit disguised as a village elder. Then we left, stealing an airship from the island nation of Mars, ruled by the tyrannical dwarf lord Rodrigo and his cultist army. Soon after, we nearly crashed into a sky cave, accidentally skewered a wyvern in the propellers, and crash-landed in the kingdom of King Bacon III. By that point, things were already getting out of hand - but naturally, they escalated further. We uncovered a mind-control plot at court, teamed up with a wizard named Seagullus and his apprentice Zella, and became entangled in a conflict between the World Spirits. Now, we've been sent by the Air Spirit from the heights of the Nameless City to the depths of the Abyssal Sea, all to free the Ocean Spirit from the Obsidian Kraken.

Somehow, we've also been following the story of a wandering soldier named Jeff Bezos, who escaped a well, hid in the sewers, and - against all odds - tried to repair his relationship with his daughter, Zella. None of it should make sense. But somehow, it always does. That's the magic of it. In other campaigns, players have built explosive traps for pest control, explored forests where no one can die, and even role-played as lawyers, putting each other on trial. One group solved a ghostly haunting by tricking a player into signing a contract - only to bind them to a second ghost.

The creativity is endless, and the solutions people come up with are often brilliant. So if you've ever found yourself bored at lunchtime, I'd encourage you to give it a try. Players come and go, dropping in and out, and that variety is part of what makes it so meaningful. You might make some great friends. Or you might just have a really good laugh. In the end, it's not just about the story. It's what it builds between us.

Table Tennis

Kartik Joshi 5th Year

Coming from a school with a 30 minute lunch, I found it hard to get used to the hour-long break. That's when I found table tennis. The pathway to the Convent Place lighting up, the bat levitating to my hand, I remembered a wise person telling me, "It is always the bat that chooses the person, not the other way around." Obviously, this did not happen, but that was how it seemed.

It was a great way to spend my lunch and time just flew by in that room. It was difficult, accepting a loss almost each time, but I have improved. Unfortunately, so has everyone else. I love competition, and especially winning, but playing a table tennis match is like riding a wave: sometimes it's in your favour and sometimes it's not. It's made up of a collection of plays, some where you hit the ball perfectly into the corner, and some where you can't even return a serve. After you play a game, if you hit a nice smash or chop or spin, the outcome doesn't really

matter because you know that you have improved. Obviously, if you hit the shot and then win the game, it would feel much better, but that's how you start, and that's how I started.

As well as learning a new skill, I made many friends. As I challenged them, we had great fun, trying different serves and trick shots. Also, our coach Tibor helped us out, teaching us the right techniques. Playing table tennis is a truly enjoyable break between classes and afterwards I feel ready to focus on the work in front of me. Slowly but surely, it has permeated into my daily life. Whenever I scroll on the train (way more than I should), I enjoy watching clips of you-tubers such as Adam Bobrow or Pongfinity (not professionals, but very entertaining) and I try to emulate their moves and when I finally succeed it is very satisfying. Table tennis is the highlight of my Thursday, and I hope that if you do it next year, you will feel the same way - although if you see flying bats, please seek medical attention.

Sailing

Ben Moreau 6th Year

I joined the sailing team during my 5th year, shortly after starting at The Institute. It proved to be a fantastic way to integrate into the school community while representing The Institute on the water. Competing against other schools at both regional and national level provided an invaluable opportunity for all the squad to develop our team racing skills. We were very fortunate to have a very experienced squad with much individual competition-sailing experience. The team racing format allowed us to pool our sailing knowledge, refine our tactics and strategy while having great fun on the water.

Most recently, we competed at the Irish Schools Sailing Leinster Championship, hosted by the Royal St. George YC in Dún Laoghaire; familiar waters for most of the team. Despite the bracing cold, it was an excellent experience that allowed us to meet, compete and socialise with our peers from schools across the Province. Another highlight was our competition in the Fastnet Trophy this year; a three-day international event hosted by Schull Harbour Sailing Club with a very experienced and competitive field with teams from across Ireland, the UK, and the United States. The conditions played to our strengths and experience and ensured high-quality, high-speed racing with three days filled with loads of craic both on and off the water. We finished the event having gained immense experience, forged new friendships and truly solidified our bond as a team. I would highly recommend team-racing to anyone with a background in sailing.

Finally, on behalf of all the team, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to The Institute staff, members of the team, parents and everyone who assisted with the logistics and organisation of the team and supported us in coming together to represent the school.

MUN

Shauna Esmonde 5th Year

Model United Nations is an unforgettable experience where debating, networking, negotiating take place and above all - we have fun. Joining the Model United Nations club is something that requires zero initial skill, just passion, but will leave you with excellent skills that can be applied to so many areas of your life from public speaking and communication skills to your English writing abilities to your view on global politics in the world we currently live in.

This year's MUN Club travelled to six different conferences, each held over several days this academic year, each one bringing a new set of political debate topics to be dealt with. At every conference we hear inspirational words from people with real world political experience who have worked in the United Nations themselves as well as various humanitarian organisations across the world. Each conference allows individuals to pick a committee in which they work their best and use their existing knowledge as well as researching abilities to understand how to deal with the topic at hand. Not only that, but every Monday, the club meets to hold debates and develop new skills to hone our abilities when in a competitive environment. It is a fantastic way to meet new people and to learn something new each week. This year (2026) the inaugural IOEMUN will be held along with the twinning of another Duke's Education school in Lisbon. This is such a fantastic opportunity for us all and is sure to be an incredible experience for all involved.

We have been very successful this year at each conference, receiving a grand total of 13 awards across the six conferences, including the best in GA award at HFCMUN which displays how team work and communication with one another plays a huge role in MUN.

Some advice that I personally clung onto, that was reinterpreted by many experienced delegates, was that everyone who is now a confident and well spoken delegate, was once someone who didn't know what to say or didn't know if what they said would be "right". The most important thing to do is to try. Put yourself out there. Say something, even if unsure, the rest will follow. Someone who never made a mistake is someone who has never learned anything. I have found MUN to be such a wonderful way to meet like minded individuals and to learn so much, whether that be political rules and systems or how to negotiate for a better world. There is a place for everyone in MUN and everyone has something to offer or bring to the table and I am certain that next year's participants will have much to bring.

Here are some of the awards myself and my fellow Institute MUN Group won this school year, 2025/26:
TERMUN: Distinguished Delegate - Elliot Guest
BELVOMUN: Distinguished Delegate - Elliot Guest
ROCKMUN:Distinguished Delegate - Elliot Guest
Highly Commended Delegate - Shauna Esmonde
Highly Commended Delegate - Ríona McMenamin
Highly Commended Delegate - Sarah McCormick
WCDMUN:Distinguished Delegate - Shauna Esmonde
HFCMUN: Best Delegation in GA
SPECPOL: Distinguished Delegate - Ríona McMenamin
E&E: Distinguished Delegate - Sarah McCormick
SOCHUM: Highly Commended Delegate - Shauna Esmonde
ECOSOC: Commended Delegate - Lexine Marie Taran
UN WOMEN: Commended Delegate - Maya Ahmed

Michael Donnelly 5th Year

MUN is by far my favourite extracurricular I have done in school, even though I only started MUN in 4th year, after one of my friends kept insisting throughout our 3rd year that I should join our schools MUN club. I am truly thankful that they did, as I have gotten the chance to attend numerous conferences and make so many friends and memories. I still remember my first conference. I was thrown into it with practically zero information about what MUN was and even though it was terrifying to stand up in front of everyone with a hastily made speech about a topic I clearly didn't know enough about, I'm so glad I did as I was met with kindness and many tips on how to improve. MUN is a political simulator where students are assigned countries to represent and are tasked with debating a plethora of different topics. From global security to deforestation there is always a relevant and fun topic to debate. MUN has given me the opportunity to improve my debating, confidence, speaking and critical thinking skills. MUN is this weird mix of serious and fun - often it goes from debating an incredibly serious topic to singing "Wonderwall" - it is such a unique experience that I simply cannot recommend it enough. Often the most memorable aspect about a conference isn't the debate but the people you meet. MUN is truly an extracurricular I would recommend to everyone regardless of your public speaking ability. Being able to dress up for conferences and meet wonderful, supportive people is a one-of-a-kind experience. Everyone I have met at conferences are always incredibly warm, welcoming and helpful. All MUN needs is willingness to try, and it will be rewarding in so many ways.

MUN

Ríona Mc Menamin 4th Year

In September this year, I took up Model UN as an extracurricular. I'd never done debate or international relations before, so it was a completely new experience for me. Every week we debate a new resolution, while representing countries of our choice. The topics we debated were diverse and unheard of for me - the environmental impacts of chemical warfare and improving access to physical health education to name a few. These were topics I knew little of and cared little for, at the time.

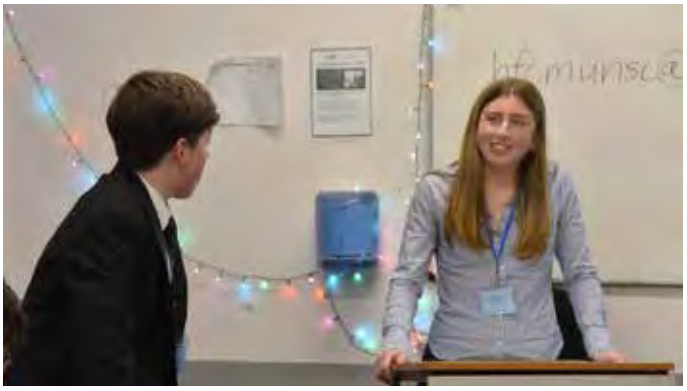
I attended my first conference in November, RADMUN in Rathdown School. Immediately I was given the opportunity for a speech in favour of a resolution, where the submitter of the resolution has the opportunity to 'yield' to another delegate at the end of their opening speech on the resolution they carefully compiled and submitted, with the aim of solving a given issue. The submitter yielded to me, and with my voice shaking I accepted. It was the first speech I had ever made in front of a real audience and I fumbled and stuttered as I tried to articulate reasons why the resolution was good while not fully understanding the issue it was combatting. From there, it only got better. I started to research the topics comprehensively and effectively, made speeches while still trembling, but trembling less. I prepared speeches, asked questions, yielded and was yielded to, and got to know the 'industry' that is Model United Nations.

At my third conference, ROCKMUN (Blackrock College), I won my first award as Highly Commended Delegate of the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (SPECPOL). At my fourth conference, Wesley College Dublin Model United Nations (WCDMUN, or as we pronounced it, wicked-mun) I passed my first ever resolution by an overwhelming majority in the Ecology and Environment Committee on the Question of Fast Fashion. At my fifth and most recent conference, Holy Faith Clontarf Model United Nations (HFCMUN) I won the Distinguished Delegate award, once again in SPECPOL. The awards were wonderful - it felt like flying to win for the first time ever, to finally have something I was particularly good at that I adored. Even now, I get a rush of adrenaline while speaking on important issues, while writing resolutions and even in political conversations with my peers.

I find it fascinating and beautiful that MUN has opened my eyes to the issues that I now care so deeply about but wouldn't have given a second thought to previously. I've had deeper, more informed conversations, I've gained so much knowledge about what is actually happening in the world around me, and I've acquired a burning passion for helping people via international relations and politics. I want to help people in Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), I want to educate the masses on the effects of fast fashion, and electoral interference, and above all, I want to make the world a better place by collaborating with people and taking action on crucial issues.

I have faced a great many challenges in my time participating in Model UN, and not just how to manage my nerves when making speeches (although that has been a formidable challenge in itself). I've been tasked with learning how to communicate more clearly and simply, as I often get ahead of myself. I've had to participate in teamwork as an individual who primarily works alone, and I've had to navigate a world in which a lot of girls my age feel is dominated by boys. I've fought for yields and worked hard to have my resolution chosen for debate, with the aim of inspiring more girls (particularly girls younger than myself) to participate in MUN.

I must admit I was initially intimidated by the proficiency of the students who'd been trained into the MUN world since they were in first year, the people who made speeches like it was breathing. Over time, I have found that there is more to MUN than trying not to be intimidated by these people, but by working with them we can achieve so much more. MUN is not just a competition in debate and international politics, it is a world where I feel at home and comfortable expressing myself in, an outlet where I can talk about issues I'm truly passionate about, and most importantly an excuse to dress up! I have really found a love for teamwork, speaking up and structured debate as a result of this opportunity, as well as meeting some of the kindest and greatest people in my life. I am eternally grateful for it.



BAHRAIN

Democratic
Republic of the
Congo

PANAMA

Photography

Carol Cheng 5th Year

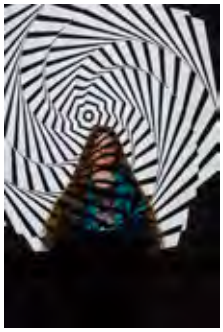
I first tried Photography as a module when I was in 4th year, I love art, Pinterest, and all kind of movies, and the fact that I have absolutely zero patience, photography seemed like a great new thing for me to try, and I was right, I adore it. I love hunting for the best angles for a photo, posing for my friends' shots, trying to take a focused picture of a flying bird and failing every time, and how I was still able to use my phone but be more focused on the world around me, than on social media.

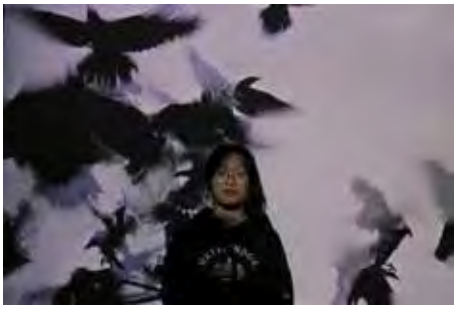
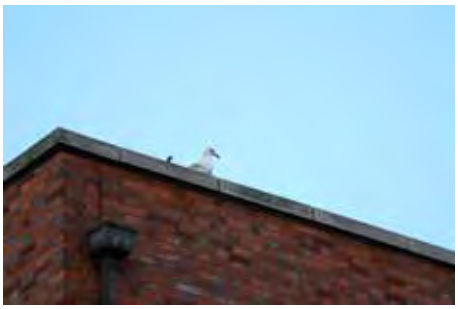
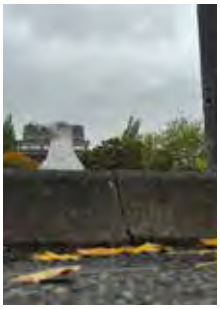
Needless to say when I heard about the afterschool Photography Club I was buzzing with excitement. We were lucky to have a professional photographer Babs, who always brings the best vibes to the classes, to help us through every step of the process. We spent two hours every Wednesday after school either outside with a theme for photos when the weather is nice, or different kinds of activity like light painting, where we using different colour lights to draw in pictures with slow shutter speed, and photoshop where we learned to use the Photoshop app for editing (that resembles a dashboard of a plane in my opinion). It was wonderful to go out around town or parks after a long day of schoolwork and studying, finding beauty around us instead of just staring at words and numbers on screens.

As someone who only operates on stress and anxiety, photography helped me to focus on the now instead of the result, like in Art class, everyone who has seen me in Art would tell you that I spend a good hour every time just stressing about the process, the material, the result, anything but just start working. In photography sometimes there simply isn't time for stress, the wind is always blowing, people walk by quickly, birds won't stop for you to take a picture. Since the process is just adjusting camera settings and pressing the shutter button, all my energy is put towards finding the picture using my eyes, composition, learning to find beauty from anywhere, anytime, even the smallest thing could turn in to a great photo, after that all I need to do is hold the up the camera and adjust a few settings and then boom, I have a photo. Look, point, shoot, it became a steady rhythm that keeps me grounded and alive in the present. It give me a feeling of appreciation and gratitude for the world around us, one I did not know I needed.

Another important thing I learnt from photography is how everyone sees things differently, and how to appreciate and learn from the differences. In a world that always feels like it is moving too fast for you to judge correctly, photography club lets you slow down, ask your friends to see their shots, you'd be surprised how different the photos of the same view would be when you compared them with your friends, and how much you can learn from them. It teaches you to appreciate your differences in a world that is too quick to judge, learn from it, even adapt to it if you want. In fact, I learnt so much from those two hours once a week, I somehow managed to convince my mom to buy me an actual camera (I still have no idea how I got her to agree to it, by the way).

And obviously to our lovely photography teacher Babs, who has brought nothing but unwavering support for any crazy ideas we have, who listened to our chats and rants with full enthusiasm, and who answered our many, many questions about photography - thank you for everything and I will definitely see you next year!



BEHIND THE SCENES

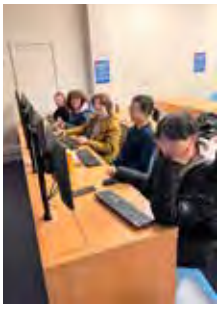
Photography

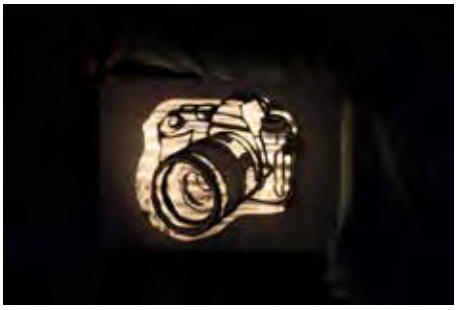
Diarmuid Mullins 5th Year

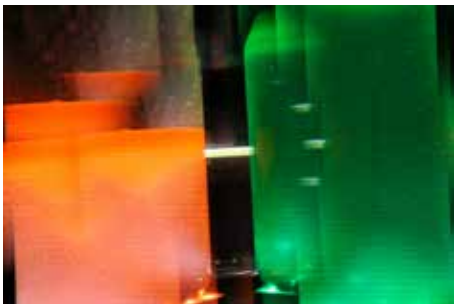
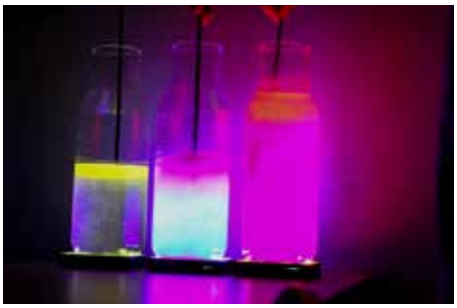
Almost everybody in the Photography Club began with very little experience. I personally began the course focusing on subject matter limited to ducks and squirrels. Throughout the year we experimented with different equipment to explore changing themes that would leave us perpetually in search of new inspiration. Gradually as we scavenged and posed and painted the air with light, we improved. We were suddenly working as a unit, swirling potions of oil and soap and coloured light to create abstract photos of bubbles frozen in time, and photographing the streets of Dublin laden with decorations of different holidays. With time, and great encouragement from our instructor Babs, we began to see our surroundings of everyday life in new framings, with each shadow and reflection representing new ideas that we were eager to capture.

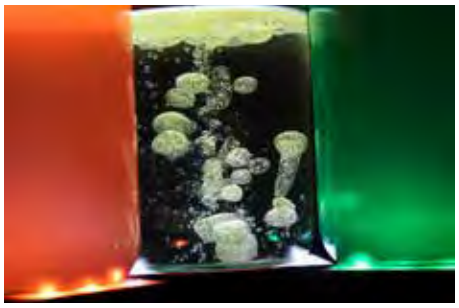
Every time somebody got a new piece of equipment, did something interesting in public or covered themselves in lights or flowers for a photo I was surprised and truly inspired by their earnest effort to realise their creative vision. It is rare to find a club, especially with people who are often just at the beginning of their craft and learning skills for the first time, where people are dedicated and confident enough to try new and difficult things. Throughout the year people stayed outside of class time to cut out stencils, practice with new equipment (helping others using their newfound knowledge) and consistently stayed overtime, after the club finished, even when it would lead to us getting locked out without our books or bags! It was through these acts of dedication that we were able to learn so effectively as a group.

It has been the only club in the school where people have regularly dropped out of active conversations to take pictures of a seagull (myself foremost among them) and gathered around as a group to admire somebody's work. It has certainly been a highlight of the year and I would encourage everybody to experiment with this craft and discover what it can teach you about your surroundings.







BEHIND THE SCENES

Debating

Congratulations to 5th year student Aneesh Garg and 4th year student Katie Zheng on their outstanding achievements in debating this year. One of those achievements was making it to the final of the Oxford Schools Debating Competition in Oxford in March 2026. The Institute was honoured to host the Republic of Ireland Regional round for the competition in January 2026. Some of the very best young debaters from around the country came together in pursuit of an invitation to Oxford. It was an exciting evening of vigorous debate and students battled over wide-ranging issues with only a meagre 15 minutes to prepare. When the dust settled The Institute's own Aneesh Garg and Katie Zheng would go to Oxford!

Aneesh Garg had this to say about his debating experience:

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished adjudicators and members of the panel. I would like to begin by giving you multiple reasons why This House Believes That (THBT) debating is by far the best use of your valuable time as Leaving Cert students. If you'd asked me what debating meant to me a few years ago, I probably would've said it was just a bunch of people yelling at each other. I stand here now to tell you - it is a lot more than that. Debating isn't loud or violent; it is very calculating and thoughtful. It gives you a voice in a world where external sources condition us to think in a certain way, behave in a certain way, and look a certain way. It offers an escape route where people can share ideas, learn from each other, and, most importantly, have fun while doing so. For those who are unfamiliar with the ins and outs of debating club at The Institute, we meet in the L-Block every Friday after school to have a fun-filled session of sharing ideas. We get 15 minutes to prep on a motion with a partner, after which we deliver a 5-minute speech full of our ideas and analysis. We listen to others, frame our responses and cordially oppose their arguments. Our expert coaches give us feedback, and we learn about current topics such as the impact of AI on the world around us, whether we should support the cordon sanitaire and even whether pineapple belongs on pizza!

Debating offered me a chance to break free from the routine homework-exam cycle and let my opinions out through words and argumentation. It offered me a chance to learn about current topics and expand my knowledge in the workings of the real world. Most importantly, it offered me a break. Fridays became exciting, and not just because the weekend was approaching.

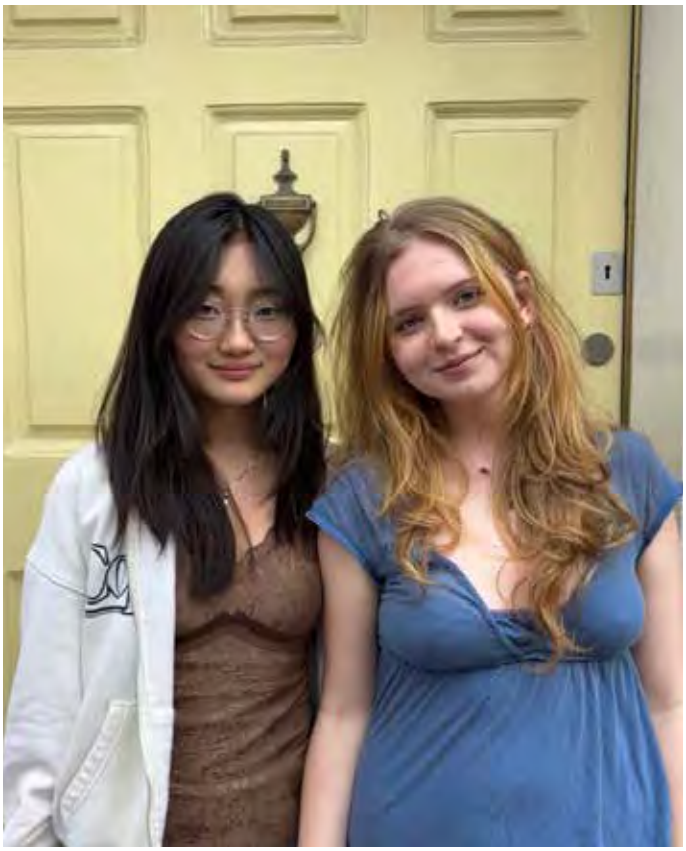
What surprised me most about debating was how difficult it is for people (including me) to have conviction and authority in their ideas and to even just voice their own opinion. Debating has enabled me to speak with authority, to think on my feet, and most importantly, not to be afraid of having dissenting ideas. It has helped me to manage my time effectively, deliver speeches under pressure, learn from others' strengths, and work on my own weaknesses. In my opinion, the biggest benefit of doing debating is the opportunities it brings you. I had the privilege of taking part in many competitions, making new friends and thinking more deeply about the world we live in. Looking back, every motion, every rebuttal, every piece of weighing or analysis taught me something new about the world; new ideas, ways of thinking and new opinions. This not only gave me better speeches, but more confidence, more perspective, and maybe a slightly sharper way of seeing the world.

In conclusion, debating didn't just teach me how to argue. It taught me how to think, how to question, and how to speak up for myself and others. And that's something I'll carry long after 5th year. Ladies and gentlemen, I have never been prouder to propose the motion This House Believes That, Debating Club is by far the best use of your time at The Institute of Education.

Team Ireland Debating 2026

A huge congratulations to 4th year Katie Zheng who secured a place on Team Ireland Debating 2026. The team will represent Ireland at the World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) in July 2026 in Nairobi, Kenya. The Irish team for the WSDC consists of five students selected through a series of regional and national trials. Katie is the only 4th Year on the team, an impressive achievement and we wish her the very best of luck with the competition in Kenya!

WSDC.KE 2026
WORLD SCHOOLS DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIPS



We were delighted this year to also celebrate 5th year Julie Diskin and 4th year Katie Zheng making it to the Finals Day of the Cambridge Schools Debates, which also took place in March 2026. They won their place in the event to represent Ireland after the Republic of Ireland Regional rounds trials in January 2025 which were also hosted by The Institute this year. Every year, thousands of talented debaters across the world compete for the opportunity to travel to Cambridge to participate in Finals Day. Thank you to David Connolly for organising the hosting of these events in our school and travelling with the students to Cambridge and Oxford.

Katie Zheng had this to say about her debating experience:

Debating at the Institute has been a wonderful, fruitful experience; it has created some of the friendships I hope I'll hold for life. Some of my closest friends were made through debate, formed all over the globe from Dubai to Delhi. There's a huge international debate community that is one click away. Online and in-person competitions mean you can meet all kinds of people, and there's nothing to make you bond more than a good argument with each other (seriously).

I was always a non-confrontational person, and you'd think debating is just arguing and shouting at each other until someone concedes — how would you even referee it like a sport? I'll admit, it has a scary exterior. I never knew the logic and beauty behind arguments until I joined competitive debate. Points and scorecards, the right arguments to use and how to prove your case in front of a judge, debate truly isn't just having a fight, it makes you a better, more empathic communicator. In the process of trying to prove your own point, you have to understand your opponents. It's made me more confident in my own voice, and more aware of the logic of the other side. It's easy to be dismissive when you think someone is utterly wrong, but debate teaches you that even the argument you think is the worst has its merits. There's always a point to be made and a discussion to be had, and I think that's really charming.

I didn't even think I would come to the club at the Institute when I transferred, it's on a Friday after school after all, and I had better things to do (like nap…), but I ended up deciding to go, and it was a choice that changed the trajectory of the rest of my school year. Competitions are scattered across the school year, culminating in a National Senior Final with shiny trophies for the winners. But beyond winning, debate is such an eye-opening experience, and a real bonding one. The trophies only hold meaning when you hear your friends cheer for you in the audience and your coaches give feedback after each round, and that kind of support in the community is worth far more than winning.

This year in debate I had the lucky chance to join the Irish national team, flying off to Kenya in July. We train twice a week, desperately trying to debate against university students — and failing most of the time — but getting to see what we could be, watching arguments made so flawlessly, is really inspiring. The trial experience was harrowing; the school did a round of internal trials before selecting people to go to regionals to try out for the team. The process of preparing was more work than I think I did for my Junior Cert, but it was truly so worth it. Debate is a skill the same as any other, and practice means you can hone the arguments you make.

From Oxford and Cambridge to the European Championship in Macedonia, debate has dragged me all over the globe, and has taught me more about it than I ever anticipated. You feel as if you know so much, until an opponent proves you wrong and you learn facts about isolated tribes and philosophers you've never heard of. Part of the joy of debate is learning new things about the world, with arguments challenging things you thought were the status quo — and this atmosphere was really fostered at the Institute. We have four wonderful coaches who genuinely have so much passion for the game that it inevitably rubbed off on us. It's hard not to feel ecstatic when your coaches invest so deeply in making sure we do our best on each competition day. If I could close this off with a little promotion, debate is an activity the school ardently supports, and the club would love to see you there. I promise you, it really will be worth your time.

The National Mace 2026

On Saturday 25th April 2026, The National Mace took place, a debating competition in which the best debaters from previous competitions all over the country - are scouted and invited. The event was held in The Sutherland School in UCD. The Institute had four students invited to take part: Brian Carroll 6th year, Shiza Waseem 6th year, Julie Diskin 5th year and Katie Zheng 4th year. After an intense day, our own Katie Zheng emerged as the champion of the day!

The National Mace is considered to be one of the highest standards of second-level debating in Ireland, allowing students to compete against peers from across the country. Organised partly by the UCD Literary & Historical Society, it offers a high-standard, fast-paced "mace" format for both senior and junior cycles. The mace format, involves quick 15-minute preparation times, designed to test original thought without external assistance. The UCD Senior School Mace - which our students pictured above took part in - is a prominent, one-day debating competition for 4th, 5th, or 6th year typically hosted by UCD, in Dublin.

Leinster Schools Debating

A massive congratulations to all our wonderful debaters, this year our Debating Club enjoyed great success with more Institute students than ever progressing through the Leinster Schools Debates.

Congratulations to Ananya Roy, Fiona Devlin, Jahnavi Reddy Tumma, Laoise Dennehy, Aneesh Garg, Brianna Crisan, Julie Diskin, Katie Zheng, Brian Carroll, Christina Chu, Anthony Chen and Soarla Mullarkey who made it to the quarter-finals on the 10th of February 2026, this is a significant triumph against formidable opposition in such a highly competitive event.

We then had seven students progress to the semi-finals which were held on Tuesday the 24th of February 2026. Well done to (pictured above from left to right) Aneesh Garg, Brianna Crisan, Julie Diskin, Katie Zheng, Brian Carroll, Christina Chu and Anthony Chen for all your hard work in the run up to the semi-finals.

Finally four students made it through to the finals on the 10th of March in Trinity College Dublin! The Leinster Schools Debates is the largest competition of its type in Ireland. Hundreds of teams compete over months for the chance to "break" (move into the finals) and we were delighted they got their break!

Furthermore one third of the finalists this year were Institute students and we were the only school represented more than once. They were:
Brian Carroll 6th year - Individual Speaker
Julie Diskin 5th year - Individual Speaker
Katie Zheng and Anthony Chen 4th years - Team

The motion being debated was: "This House Believes that it is in the interest of the people of Northern Ireland to reunify with the South". We had students both Proposing and Opposing the motion.

We were delighted to share the news that 6th Year student Brian Carroll won the Best Individual Speaker Award at the finals. Congratulations to Brian (pictured below) and to Julie, Anthony and Katie, who were also outstanding at the finals. Well done to everyone for representing the school at such a high standard. Thanks to David Connolly who runs our Debating Club for all his invaluable guidance and support to all our debaters throughout the year - and what a year they have had!

Brian Carroll 6th Year

Brian Carroll had this to say about her debating experience:

Debating has a reputation for being combative, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Behind all the jargon, debating is just stating an idea and giving reasons why it's true and important. All you have to do is stand up in front of other people and say those ideas out loud. What I enjoyed most about debating was this simplicity; it provided a much-needed break from the complexity of 6th year and an opportunity to meet new people from our own school and other schools around the country.

Two weeks before the Leinster finals, when we received the title for the debate, my initial reaction was: how could I possibly argue against something I so passionately believe in? The motion was "This House Believes it is in the interest of the people of Northern Ireland to reunify with the South." I was assigned to speak against the motion. However, I think this is what makes debating so important. It helps you to understand other people's perspectives when you're forced to defend positions that aren't your own, and in doing so, you end up understanding them better than you would otherwise ever have. In the end, I decided to make a simple argument about the economic harm reunification might cause.

With the help of our four incredible coaches, Oisin, Ziyad, Andy, and Nare, I was able to spend many hours practising the speech out loud and receiving their feedback on how to strengthen it and fit everything I wanted to say into the tight seven-minute window.

Above all, debating has taught me how little I actually know. The more I debate, the less knowledgeable I feel because there's still so much I don't know. That's why I love debating. It pushes you to contemplate ideas you've never pondered before, understand topics you've never stumbled across, and think from the perspectives of others. From topics about social media to more complex ones about humanity, I have always learned something new from others about the world after each debate. Debating has shown me a way of trying to understand things we cannot understand. The problems we talk about always come down to fundamental ideas of existence and happiness, and this teaches you to see problems you didn't see before, to listen, to be inspired by new ideas you never would have thought of, and to take those ideas and apply them to your own life.

STUDY SKILLS

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

A huge well done to all the students who have been working hard to improve their study skills throughout the year. It takes a lot of dedication to find a system that works for you. By staying organised and practicing focused learning, you are taking real responsibility for your own future and building a sense of inner confidence. Using Study Skills wisely will give you all the skills and techniques needed to recover any lost ground and to maximise your own learning between now and the start of your exams. Many students tell me it was not how long they had studied for but how they had studied that makes the difference!

In my experience most of the students I meet are much brighter that they believe themselves to be. They have great talents and are looking for the right reasons or motivation to fulfil them. Sometimes what's missing is the right focus. Good study habits are the key to finding this inner motivation to enable you to achieve your full potential!

Colman O'Flynn
6th Year

Looking back on the start of 6th year, it's clear just how much has changed - I've become significantly more disciplined and far more effective at managing my study and revision. The regular tests, combined with the structured and organised approach introduced during the study skills seminar, helped me stay consistently on track, giving me both direction and motivation to keep improving. This steady routine allowed me to build confidence in my abilities and develop a stronger sense of responsibility towards my work.

Orla's guidance was second to none; her focus on developing efficient and effective study habits truly made all the difference. She was always there to offer support and encouragement, ensuring I was prioritising the right tasks and making the best use of my time. Her emphasis on maintaining a balanced timetable helped me stay organised without feeling overwhelmed, and she constantly reinforced the importance of focusing only on work that was genuinely worthwhile and productive.

Amy Mc Namee
6th Year

Study Skills have given me life long lessons that extend far beyond the classroom. It's taught me how to ignite the fire that allows me to work towards my full academic potential and then fuel that fire so I can jump any hurdle I meet on the way. I'd like to share some of the things I've learned from Study Skills this year.

First and foremost, I got the chance to gain invaluable knowledge around refining and perfecting study schedules and methods. But one of the most valuable takeaways was the ability to couple my planning and preparation with something much more meaningful - like a dream, a will and a drive.

Through this, everytime I sat down to work, I realised I had to remind myself why I do it. Why I chose to chase this dream in the first place and why it is important to me. This is the first step to igniting the fire.

With the help of Orla and Study Skills, I learned the importance of believing in myself. Orla enforced the idea that achieving your potential lies in understanding exactly what you're capable of and trusting that you can achieve it. This involves eradicating any inklings of self-doubt and anxiousness that holds you back, and allowing yourself to strive for the maximum amount of achievement possible. One of my favourite quotes is 'Sometimes you have to sit back and allow it to turn out better than you could ever imagine'.

Finally, Study Skills have helped me to navigate the inevitable curve-balls and dips that happen along the way. When it feels like I've failed or met a bend in the road, I've learned to remind myself of that dream and why I started, and allow each dip to help me grow and develop, thereby using them to my advantage.

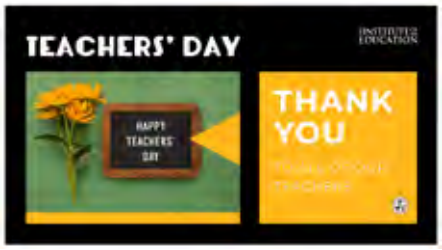
SEACHTAIN NA GAEILGE

Seachtain na Gaeilge is an international Irish language festival held annually in the beginnin of March. It is the largest celebration of our native language and culture that takes place in Ireland and around the world every year. Everyone is given the opportunity to enjoy the Irish language by participating in the festival, both native speakers, learners and those who only know a few words, by providing a calendar of entertaining and fun events for all types of interests and all age groups. Voluntary and community groups, local councils, schools, libraries, and music, sports, arts and cultural organisations are organising events in their own areas for Seachtain na Gaeilge.

This year we celebrated Seachtain na Gaeilge in The Institute with a range of activities from chatting circles and quizzes to a seisiún ceoil and céilí dancing. Students were encouraged to speak the language and we shared Irish proverbs on the digi screens each day. Our chatting circles had Irish games and books to get the discourse flowing and it was great to see so many students engage with the festival. Thank you to Ailbhe Nolan for organising the events. Beatha Teanga í a labhairt! - *the life of a language is to speak it!*

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

We strive to communicate clearly and regularly with students and to do so in the most engaging way possible. All year we have had a weekly newsletter, "The Buzz", which covers a wide range of school news to keep students and parents connected. We have a monthly calendar, so that students can easily track important information from study times to tests and masterclasses. Key calendar dates are also included in student's personalised homework journals. We also connect with students online, on noticeboards, on digital screens throughout the school and via text and email with highlights and reminders, of all matter of important activities in our busy school. Thank you to our Internal Communications Specialist Angie Crowe who is responsible for all Internal Communications.



THE BUZZ
NEWSLETTER @ THEINSTITUTEOFEDUCATIONDUBLIN
01.12.2025
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
Congratulations to 4th year Radu Pamfil who was recently selected by Swim Ireland to join the National Athletes Programme in the Junior Pathway Cohort this year. Athletes are selected to join the National Programme based on their results in the previous season. Radu has reached this level at just 15 years of age though hard work and dedication, managing to juggle school with his training, which is currently 9 times a week. Athletes chosen for the Swim Ireland National Programme should be on a performance trajectory for a 2026 and/or a 2032 Olympic Games qualification. We wish Radu the very best of luck with his current training, his upcoming international competitions and in all his future sporting endeavours.
4TH YEAR INITITAIVE
Well done to all our students who took part in the Team Hope Christmas Shoebox Appeal. We collected 64 boxes this year, despite having only three weeks' notice before collection. We were delighted to see contributions from 5th and 6th years - especially as 6th years were in the middle of their exams! Research shows that the part of the brain linked to a sense of satisfaction becomes active when we give to others as we share an intrinsic motivation to make the world a better place. We could see that satisfaction amongst our students dropping off their shoeboxes. Thank you to our 4th years for organising the collection, these shoeboxes are often the only gift that a child living in poverty will receive this Christmas - a truly worthy cause.

THE BUZZ
NEWSLETTER @ THEINSTITUTEOFEDUCATIONDUBLIN
20.10.2025
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
A huge congratulations to Lexie Burke who won the ITF World Taekwondo Championships 2025, held last week in Croatia. Lexie earned the title after facing top athletes from Ukraine, Spain, Romania, Scotland and Ireland. Lexie now holds two world titles, having first claimed Gold at the 2023 ITF World Championships in Finland. This is a remarkable achievement for an 18 year old, a testament to her dedication, resilience and 15 years of training. We wish Lexie the best of luck in her future sporting endeavours.
STUDENT SUPPORT
Every year the Irish Society of Human Genetics (ISHG) awards best essay and best video for their DNA Day competition, open to all schools throughout Ireland. Incredibly, both categories were won by Institute students this year. Best Video was awarded to 6th year Tudor Nescau (pictured above) and Best Essay to 4th year Aditi Kadam (pictured below). The ISHG conference 2025 was held in Maynooth College and featured keynote speakers from various institutions, including TCD and Newcastle University.

THE BUZZ
08.12.2025
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

2026
Happy new Year
& WELCOME BACK!

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL Women's DAY

2026
Happy new Year
& WELCOME BACK!

DECEMBER CALENDAR 6TH YEAR
THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SAT
SUN
GENERAL NOTES:

APRIL CALENDAR 4TH & 5TH
THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SAT
SUN
GENERAL NOTES:

MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SAT
SUN
MERRY CHRISTMAS
2026
HAPPY NEW YEAR

MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SAT
SUN

MASTER CLASSES AND

Patrick Fitzsimons

Ali Fox

Anne-Marie Walsh

Emma Grealy

Keith Hannigan

Rob Quinlan

Sean Delap

Luke Rock

Tara Lyons

Liam Dingle

Chloe Griffin

William Murphy

Róisín Doyle

Rachel Mahon

Nicky Dowling

Clodagh Havel

David Enright

Maria Fenton

Masterclasses

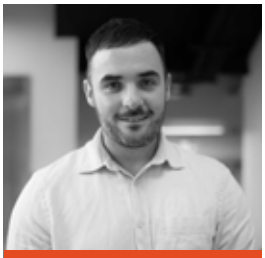
This year we had both online and in person Masterclasses. We also had more teachers than ever before hosting Masterclasses, so that more subjects could be covered. We had Masterclasses in English, Irish, French, Spanish, Economics, Business, Biology, Chemistry and History. They continue to focus on 6th years and the Leaving Certificate Exams but 5th years were also able to get some Mastery into their timetables by attending most of them if they wished to.

TUTORIALS

Jane Wade

Jean Kelly

Declan Kelly


Rob Quinlan

Róisín Doyle

Hilary Dorgan

Patricia Crowley

Catriona Hendry

Stephen Tonge

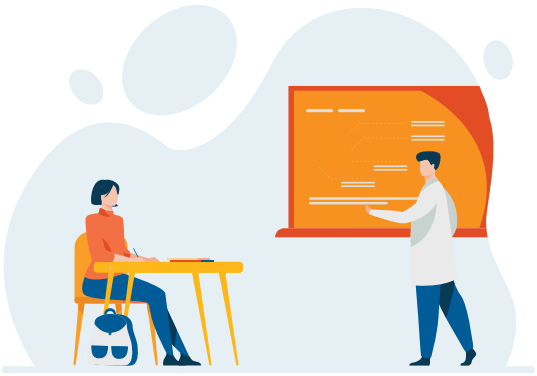
Aidan Roantree

Tutorials

Tutorials are available every week for students looking for extra help, they are during school hours and are in person. Tutorials are student led with students welcome to drop in to get help with their homework or in areas specific to their needs. We had tutorials in Maths, Applied Maths and Art.

Revision Classes

Revision classes are also weekly, in person, extra classes which students could just drop in to. Unlike Tutorials, revision classes are taught classes. We had revision classes in Maths, Biology and Economics.



Practicals and Projects

This year we added weekly drop in classes to support students with practicals and projects. They covered Music, History and Agricultural Science.

OUR TUTORS

6th Year Tutor Orla Ní Shúilleabháin

What a joy it has been to work alongside our 6th year students as part of the wider Institute community and see them grow and navigate their way as they face the challenges of what is possibly one, if not the most daunting years, of their lives. In my tutor role I was able to support students individually helping them maximise their academic potential or support them in any personal area they needed. The 6th year tutor role is supported by the Pastoral Care and Guidance Team as well as management and office staff to ensure our 6th year students reach their maximum academic potential in a happy and positive environment. Congratulations to you, our 6th years of 2026, on your outstanding achievements, your energy and determination and your drive, as you now enter the last but most important stage of the Leaving Cert year. Remember it is not a sprint but a marathon as many of you will have heard me say. So, your undoubted self-belief coupled with a real endurance will be the key ingredients to your success!

Mariam Khan 6th Year

Upon reflecting on my time at The Institute, one filled with a diverse range of experiences that both challenged me and shaped me to be the student that I am today, I am reminded of a particular poem I'm sure many of you have encountered in class: *The Forge* by Seamus Heaney. Similar to how Heaney was confronted with "a door into the dark", I was faced with the iconic yellow door of The Institute and the countless memories and opportunities that unknowingly lay beyond it. My journey from a timid student into a more confident and self-assured one can only be credited to the teaching faculty and their unwavering support. It was not only their dedication in drilling difficult concepts into my head, but also the extra pep talks in order to raise morale after a hard test that really stuck with me throughout the years.

Amongst many of my incredible teachers, Orla's constant support not only as my German teacher but also as 6th year tutor is something I have had the pleasure of experiencing. Whether it was organising study plans, going over oral scripts, or even reaching out for an extra hand, Orla's dedication to her students extended far beyond her German classroom, and her constant encouragement made a lasting difference in my learning and confidence.

Just like how the "[blacksmiths] new shoe toughens in water", each academic challenge that I encountered throughout my time here shaped me into a more capable and resilient student. While truthfully I might have been dismissive after receiving a bad mark in a test before, the teachers here encouraged me to confront my failures and to rise above them. I learnt the most important lesson: how growth is not instant but something built slowly through effort, repetition, and persistence. Looking back on the journey that once began at that iconic yellow door, I can see how much I have changed since first stepping into The Institute. Like Heaney's forge, 6th year definitely wasn't an easy process but a meaningful one, shaped both by challenges and guidance. What once felt unfamiliar and daunting has become a place associated with countless memories, friendships, and of course the occasional lessons learnt along the way.

Ciara Cooley 6th Year

My name is Ciara Cooley and I chose to do the one year course at The Institute. It was a leap of faith but became one of the most rewarding challenges of my young life. I was determined to do well in my Leaving Cert and knew I would be committed and dedicated to all the hard work the one year course entails; 5am alarm clocks, studying late each night. I am proud to say that not a day went by when I didn't give it my all.

The fast pace challenged me while encouraging me to get organised and stay focused. This year has helped me grow in confidence in my academic abilities and become more independent and responsible. The great support from the teachers reassured me I had made the right decision, their enthusiastic outlook and "you can do anything you put your mind to" spirit changed my perspective and helped me reach my full potential. The new friends I made and the friendly, energetic, positive atmosphere within the school have made this very pressurised year more enjoyable. Overall, the experience reinforced the importance of hard work and resilience and prepared me well for both my exams and future challenges.

5th Year Tutor Nicky Dowling

It feels like no time at all has passed since I first met this group of 5th year students on their orientation day. As I walked into the room, there was a clear sense of excitement mixed with understandable nerves. This first day was the beginning of something new and unfamiliar. I reminded students that feeling uncertain at times is a completely normal part of stepping into new experiences. Time has gone by so fast, and it's been wonderful to see that initial uncertainty turn into confidence and maturity as the year has unfolded. I am very grateful to work in such a collaborative and supportive environment, where my role as form tutor is strengthened by the guidance of the year head, as well as the ongoing support of

the teaching staff, the pastoral and guidance teams, the office staff, and school management. This strong sense of teamwork plays a vital role in ensuring that students feel supported, encouraged, and valued.

As tutor, I encouraged students to see the year as an opportunity for a fresh start - a chance to challenge themselves, explore new subjects, and develop new approaches to their learning. Just as importantly, I encouraged them to build connections and to step outside of their comfort zones. It has been very rewarding to see how positively they responded to these challenges. I have greatly enjoyed my role as 5th year form tutor. Getting to know students beyond the classroom and supporting them as they grew in confidence and independence has been particularly fulfilling. Guiding them in developing effective study habits and helping them to strike a balance between academic demands and personal wellbeing was an important part of the journey.

It was encouraging to see so many students engage with this process, seek support when needed, and show real determination to improve. I'm really proud of the way students took responsibility for their own learning. They showed initiative, independence, and a genuine commitment to improving. It has been a pleasure to work with such a respectful, hardworking, and positive group. As they move into 6th Year, I wish all the students every success and happiness.

Piotr Majchrzak 5th Year

Having completed 4th Year here at The Institute of Education, I already had a strong understanding of how the school operates, and I felt ready to take on the new academic year and all the challenges that came with it. I was excited to make new friends, as the previous year had already presented me with an opportunity to meet so many new people and I felt primed to tackle any assignments given to me, knowing how amazing the resources are and how kind and approachable the teachers are.

However, despite how prepared I was, I still had to overcome academic obstacles, the largest one by far being the brand-new Science in Practice investigations. Their introduction this year for the first time ever had me unsure on where to start, to say the least. However, I can proudly say that thanks to my teachers and peers, this muddle of confusing demands and concepts quickly became simple and even fun to work through. From discussions with teachers about how I could make my work the best it could be to comparing ideas with classmates, it really was a meaningful learning experience and one I will never forget. Overall, this school year was a fantastic experience and I can't wait for 6th year, knowing that it will be just as rewarding.

Parinita Gupta 5th Year

At the start of 5th year, I was naturally very nervous joining a new school. My old school had been a very small all-girls school, so coming to The Institute of Education was a big jump in terms of the amount of people alone! I came into the school thinking that it would be difficult to make friends in such a big school. However, I was quickly proven wrong and have made so many close friends within the year. Not only was there a big jump in terms of the number of students, but there was also a huge jump in terms of what was expected academically compared to the Junior Cycle.

At the start of the year, I definitely found it slightly overwhelming to cope and organise myself with the newfound workload. However, the school offered so much guidance in overcoming this. My subject teachers are so helpful and are considerate when assigning homework and tests. Our 5th year tutor, Nicky Dowling, in particular really helped me with my study skills and organising myself.

The friends I have made during the year have also really helped me laugh and get through the general stresses of the Leaving Cert. While the year has been undeniably challenging mentally, it has definitely taught me the value of hard work and the importance of asking for help when it's needed.

5th Year Tutor Luke Rock

It has been a pleasure to support the 2025/2026 cohort of 4th year students as their tutor. This year saw the growth of the 4th year team. Alongside myself and year head, Dee Kelly, 4th years are now expertly supported by 4th year coordinator, Lauren Tyrrell. It has been a pleasure to work alongside the 4th-year team in supporting all students and working to provide them with the best 4th year experience possible. This is my 5th year in the role of form tutor and it continues to be a rewarding experience seeing the journeys of personal and academic growth that our students embark on each year while navigating the challenging transition from Junior Cycle to Leaving Certificate.

4th year in The Institute offers students a unique opportunity to get a taste of the Leaving Certificate while undertaking personal development modules, work experience, outings, and various co-curriculars. In my role as 4th year tutor, I have the privilege of supporting students through their 4th-year journey, primarily helping them to seek out and obtain the work experience opportunities that interest them. These opportunities are then relayed to students by Lauren Tyrell in students' weekly tutorial classes, a class which also provides students the opportunity to get to know other 4th years. This year's 4th years have engaged in a host of exciting work experience opportunities including time spent in companies such as Cantor Fitzgerald, KPMG, Pfizer, and PwC. Others have spent time in The Royal Hospital Donnybrook, St. James's Hospital and Tallaght University Hospital, or completed the RCSI MiniMed and UCD 'So you want to be a Doctor' programmes. Our 4th years have taken full advantage of the opportunities on offer, completing over 360 total placements throughout the year!

Welcoming 4th year students at their orientation in August is always one of my favourite days of the year as I get the opportunity to meet our incoming 4th years and begin to see the varied talents and passions they have. This year's students have demonstrated their talents throughout the year both in academic settings and in various extracurricular areas. It has been a privilege to share in students' achievements this year including sporting triumphs, the BT Young Scientist, Accenture Girls in Analytics, debating competitions, and Model United Nations. I have every confidence that this year group will continue to excel and I wish all students the best as they embark on their Leaving Certificate journey in September!

GUIDANCE

Jane D'Alton

Liz Carey

John Curran

Helen Casey

John McGinnity

Sarah O'Brien

Pastoral Care and Guidance – End of Year Reflections

Pastoral Care and Guidance Team. In a school that strives to be both academically ambitious and personally supportive, the wellbeing and development of every student remains central to all that we do.

Throughout the year, the team has provided a wide range of supports - from our carefully curated annual Futures Fair, guidance meetings, and weekly talks, to ongoing support for students' emotional wellbeing and personal development. We were also delighted to welcome Sarah O'Brien to the team this year. With over 20 years' experience in guidance, Sarah has made an immediate and meaningful impact, bringing a positive, solution-focused approach that encourages students to believe in their own capacity to overcome challenges.

At The Institute, we recognise that academic success and personal wellbeing are closely connected. Students who feel supported and understood are far more likely to engage fully in their learning and approach challenges with confidence. Whether helping students navigate exam pressures, explore future pathways, or manage the everyday complexities of teenage life, the team has worked consistently to ensure that no student feels alone. These supports are not simply reactive; they are embedded in the daily life of the school, forming a proactive and compassionate framework around each student.

Yvonne Ginnelly and Leanne Hutton have also played a vital role in supporting our international students, helping them to adjust to life in a new country while ensuring their academic experience is both fulfilling and enriching. Their student-centred approach and dedication to wellbeing have been a significant asset to the school community. This year has once again reminded us that meaningful relationships are at the heart of education. The connections formed between students and staff are deeply valued. While we offer guidance and support, we also learn from these interactions. Each conversation and shared experience adds to our understanding of the young adults in our care.

Above all, it is our students who inspire us. Your resilience, curiosity, creativity, and determination bring energy and life to the school each day. Across the year, we have witnessed many moments of growth - quiet increases in confidence, important turning points in self-belief, and acts of kindness and support between peers. While these moments may not always be visible in exam results, they are the foundations of long-term success and wellbeing.

It has been a privilege to support our students throughout the year - to listen, to guide, and to encourage. As we look ahead, we do so with great confidence in your future. Those moving on will go on to achieve great things in many different fields, and we hope they carry with them the values of respect, empathy, resilience, and integrity fostered during their time here.

We are proud of each and every one of you. While we will miss those who are leaving, we look forward to following your journeys and celebrating your future achievements.

To all our students - thank you. You are the very heart of this school, and everything we do is built around supporting you to grow, succeed, and realise your full potential. We believe deeply in our students - not just in your academic ability, but in who you are and who you are becoming.

Your strengths, your character, and your individuality matter here. As you move forward, know that you carry with you the unwavering support and belief of this school. You will always have a place here, and a team that stands firmly behind you, confident in the difference you will make in the world.

FUTURES FAIR 2025

In October, the school hosted the annual Futures Fair with almost twenty colleges from across Ireland in attendance. The evening provided an opportunity for 6th year students to attend two talks of their choice from a range of over twenty course presentations in areas such as Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Business, Engineering, Science and Architecture, which were held in classrooms throughout the school. Of note was the quality of the speakers which the Guidance Department were able to welcome to the school based on the relationships they have established with a diverse range of colleges. A sample of the colleges in attendance were TCD, UCD, DCU, UU, TU Dublin, MU, UL, IADT, NCAD, SETU amongst many others.

There was also an international dimension to the evening with staff from Eunicas (studying degrees through English in European Universities) and Study Medicine Poland available so that students could explore potential study options outside of Ireland. There was a wonderful energy around the school that evening with everyone looking to the future and planning their next steps beyond The Institute of Education. Exciting times ahead for our students as they move on to the next chapter in their lives.

GUIDANCE

THURSDAY TALKS 2025/26

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

3.9.2025 (Wednesday)	UCAS 1st Deadline	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
8.9.2025 (Monday)	Queens University Belfast	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
18.9.2025	Medicine	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
25.9.2025	Law	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
2.10.2025	Engineering	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
9.10.2025	Business / Commerce	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
16.10.2025	UCAS 2nd Deadline	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
23.10.2025	Futures Fair (no lunch-time talk)	17:00	RKH (Talk locations will be emailed)
	Mid-term Break		
3.11.2025 (Monday)	CAO (multiple days, details on calendar)	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
13.11.2025	Computer Science	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
20.11.2025	Physiotherapy	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
27.11.2025	ATT & Pharmacy	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
4.12.2025	Actuarial, Finance, Economics, Maths	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
11.12.2025	Science	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
	Finished until after Christmas Break		
8.1.2026	Architecture	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
15.1.2026	Social Sciences	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
22.01.2026	Psychology	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)
29.01.2026	Biomed / Human Health & Disease	12:30	Room HG-1 (Recording on Moodle)

Students are encouraged to bring their lunch and attend the five sessions as often as possible. There are guest speakers and college students at many of the talks and it is a great opportunity for discussion and question time. See you all there!

A busy year as always

The Guidance team have had a busy year, as always, between individual student help, seminars, events and hosting weekly talks for all years. The school year brings many challenges from CAO and UCAS deadlines and choosing the subjects that will help students on their educational journey to the smaller details and stresses of the day - the Guidance Team supported and helped the students through all of it.

We were available from 9:30am to 3:30pm every day by appointment. The appointments couldn't be easier to make using the QR Code system. We also had a drop-in service every morning from 8:30 - 9:30am, five days a week for unscheduled sessions whenever they needed them. Students were encouraged by email and The Buzz every week - to make the most of this excellent service and make as many appointments as necessary.

Thursday Talks 6th Years

A weekly highlight from September to January was the expert speakers, from an array of colleges, who came in each week to present to our 6th years during their lunchtime. Areas such as Medicine, Architecture, Social Science, Engineering, Law, Business and others were unveiled weekly. Each presentation was recorded so that it can be viewed back by all our students in 4th, 5th and 6th year. The series was student led and we were delighted to respond to requests from students and to have speakers from the fields of study of interest to them. Importantly the speakers were drawn from a range of colleges to give our students a range of perspectives. Based on the array of presentations there is now an archive of very informative recordings on the Guidance Moodle folder which students can use as a resource in their research on potential courses.

Talks 4th & 5th Year

From February to May this year, we began our series of Lunchtime Talks for our 4th and 5th year students each Wednesday. This allowed students to choose the courses and colleges they are most interested in researching and afforded them an opportunity to hear from expert speakers, alumni and student liaison officers from various colleges and universities. This series of talks was hosted by UCD, Trinity College, University of Galway, Maynooth University, DCU, Ulster University and RCSI and gave our students a great insight into the educational and career paths available to them after the Leaving Certificate exams.

Our guest speakers also gave the students useful guides, resources and contact points to help them with their decision-making and application processes. Our guest speakers were most generous of their time, remaining after the talks to answer many individual questions from the students. We were also delighted to welcome four researchers from Trinity College Dublin who spoke to our students about their career paths in the areas of Biology/ Medical Biology, Physics/Engineering, Chemistry and the Social Sciences fields. These talks have all been recorded and can be accessed by students on Moodle.

I have received offers to study architecture from several UK and US universities including the University of Edinburgh, Carnegie Mellon University, Rice University, USC (University of Southern California), and UCL, which ranked 1st in the world QS rankings for architecture this year. I'm still undecided on which offer to accept yet.

1. What steps did you take in your career exploration journey? Did you consider a range of colleges and courses?

I have grown up with a love for visual arts of all kinds from painting and sketching to sculpting and 3D-modelling. As well as this, I began to develop an interest in STEM subjects throughout my years in secondary school through participating in the Young Scientist competition and joining the Walton STEM club in Trinity College. Naturally, architecture emerged as an obvious choice to me, as it is very much an interdisciplinary subject that bridges the gap between my creative and analytical interests. I have always wanted to move away for college and explore new and unfamiliar environments. As a result, I looked beyond local options and researched the UCAS and US Common App systems, specifically looking at which programs offer the best global opportunities for my course.

2. Getting a range of college offers is an incredible achievement – to what do you owe your success?

The people around me have led me to all of these once unimaginable opportunities. I have received constant support from my inspiring friends, who have always been the biggest supporters in my artistic endeavours and helped me keep my motivation when times get tough; my teachers generously lent me their time to help me practice for interviews; and my family, who have done all the behind the scenes work. Beyond that support, a key factor was simply planning ahead and utilising my time wisely.

3. What are you most looking forward to after your Leaving Certificate?

I am most excited about travelling to China and Japan with my friends during the summer. I cannot wait to experience both the modern skyscrapers and traditional vernacular architecture, wander around art galleries, and most of all, try all the different kinds of food!

4. What advice would you give to students following your footsteps?

Firstly, if you are applying to a course that requires a portfolio of any sort, I highly recommend completing it before 6th year starts. A rushed portfolio can ultimately compromise your application, especially for portfolio-heavy colleges like UCL, where the creative submission aspect is often the deciding factor. Furthermore, the key part about applying abroad on UCAS or US systems is accumulating a rich CV that has many extracurriculars that are specific to your area of interest - whether that is work experience in a hospital, taking part in school debating, maths competitions, or volunteer work in the National Gallery - then reflecting on how each of those have shaped you. Colleges want to see genuine interest in the subject you're applying to that is proven through your actions.

1. What steps did you take in your career exploration journey? Did you consider a range of colleges and courses?

Coming into 5th Year, I didn't have a clear idea of what I wanted to do; I just knew I was interested in something in business. Meeting regularly with the guidance counsellor helped to widen my horizons, encouraging me to look beyond courses and colleges in Dublin and consider options across the country. I also applied through UCAS on John McGinnity's recommendation, which opened up a range of prestigious universities across the UK, as well as many unique courses, which I discussed thoroughly with both John, the guidance counsellor and my parents.

2. Getting a range of college offers is an incredible achievement – to what do you owe your success?

Receiving conditional offers from colleges across the UK was a definite confidence booster. Spending time on the application was crucial; I spent many evenings working on my personal statement, making sure it related to all my course choices. Meeting with my guidance counsellor was also a big help, as he corrected my errors and showed me where I could improve. Since this was the main way to showcase my personality and interests to the colleges I applied to, it was vital that I completed it properly, it definitely played a role in my acceptance.

3. What are you most looking forward to after your Leaving Certificate?

I'm honestly just looking forward to taking a break, going away for a couple of weeks and switching off from everything school-related. I'll finally be able to do the things I love without the Leaving Cert at the back of my mind, like playing sports or finally having the time to go out with friends.

4. What advice would you give to students following your footsteps?

Being organised in 5th year plays a big role in how you perform by the end of 6th year. Keeping track of your notes from the start will definitely pay off when it comes to revising them later. I'd also say that good attendance from the beginning of 5th year is key. Putting effort into every class test and studying consistently most nights will be rewarding in the long run.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU *Chats with the Staff*

Favorite album/film/book (or all three)?

Adam Goodwin 12 Angry Men

Tadhg MacHugh The Lord of the Rings

Stephen Tonge Dark Side of the Moon / Shawshank Redemption / Peter the Great

Brian Scully U2 - Achtung Baby / The Godfather / Crime & Punishment

Rob Quinlan Happy - Derren Brown

Erika Capello I love thriller books and crime podcasts, my idea of a "relaxing moment" is someone whispering "the body was never found"

Brian Gregan Album Sam Fender (Hypersonic Missiles) / Film - Arrival / Book - The Stormlight Archive

Emily Brady The Holiday

Tara Lyons Album - currently it's anything from the 80s so that I can relive my youth. Book - recently it's The Bee Sting. Film - Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (original only!)

Jean Kelly Anything by Fleetwood Mac. Changeling and Pretty Woman. I've only read two books in my 50 years, my favorite book is Rachel's Holiday

Seán Delap Album: U2 Boy / Film: Mississippi Burning / Book: Dúil-Liam Ó'Flaithearta

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin Living Untethered by Michael A. Singer

Louise Boylan Bob Dylan Live at Budokan / Back To The Future

Jane D'Alton Album: Ray LaMontagne "Trouble"/ Film: Empire Record s/ Book(s): Albert Camus "The Stranger" or Russell Banks "Rule of the Bone"

Oliver Murphy Album: Rumours by Fleetwood Mac; Film: One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest; Book: The Remains of the Day by Kazuo Ishiguro

Nicky Dowling Sinéad O'Connor - The Lion and The Cobra

Jane Wade A music teacher's most dreaded question. Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge by My Chemical Romance (it was never just a phase, Mom). Also, Believe by Justin Bieber deserves an honourable mention

What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Adam Goodwin Success is a function of time and effort, and nothing else

Tadhg MacHugh Be on time, do a little more than you have been asked and keep your mouth shut

Stephen Tonge You cannot demand respect you have to command respect

Brian Scully Free yourself to be yourself

Rob Quinlan It's true what they say, life really does fly and if you're not careful, it will pass you by

Erika Capello In Ireland when you cross the road look right first, not left

Brian Gregan Control the controllables

Emily Brady You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with

Tara Lyons If you study you will be able to answer questions - who knew?!!!

Jean Kelly Do the simple things right and the rest will look after itself

Seán Delap Never go to sleep angry

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin "Yesterday I was clever so I wanted to change the world, Today I am wise, so I am changing myself!" *Rumi*

Louise Boylan "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." *Ferris Bueller*

Jane D'Alton In the end only three things matter: how much you loved, how gently you lived and how gracefully you let go of things not meant for you

Oliver Murphy Life is not a dress rehearsal; don't waste it

Nicky Dowling You get what you work for, not what you wish for

Jane Wade "Some of the best moments aren't written in the score"

If you could teach another subject/introduce a new subject - what would it be and why?

Adam Goodwin Technology - the practical side of building projects would be a lot of fun!

Tadhg MacHugh HEMA- Historical European Martial Arts

Stephen Tonge International Relations - give students a better understanding of how the world works and how countries often act like little children!

Brian Scully Biology. I find it extremely interesting and you never have students saying "I don't get it", like in Maths!

Rob Quinlan Chinese (Mandarin). I already get polite smiles when I attempt xièxiè), which I'm fairly sure is code for "close enough"

Brian Gregan Maths

Emily Brady Home Economics - I am always thinking about my next meal!

Tara Lyons English - seems easy

Jean Kelly Definitely not Irish.... Tá me lofa aige!

Seán Delap Irish - It's my native language

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin Resilience and life skills in the modern world - we could all do with more of it in our daily lives

Louise Boylan Engineering - I would enjoy the overlap of Physics, Maths and Applied Maths and the hands-on approach that subject has at Leaving Cert level

Jane D'Alton Psychology as it would equip students with practical insight into how people think, learn and behave, all skills that support critical thinking and decision-making making it relevant for life beyond the exams

Oliver Murphy Ancient Greek. I studied it many years ago and have found it a treasure and an enrichment in my life

Nicky Dowling I'd teach English because books can carry students far beyond the classroom walls

Jane Wade Home Economics - Rob Quinlan says so!

If you could have a piece of music played to herald your arrival to class, what would it be? (Feel free to elaborate)

Adam Goodwin Dies Irae

Tadhg MacHugh Main theme from UNCHARTED

Stephen Tonge Enter Sandman - best guitar riff in history

Brian Scully U2 - Zoo Station....a dramatic arrival!

Rob Quinlan The Business - Tiësto. "Back and forth, back and forth with the questions"

Erika Capello "On top of the world" (Imagine dragons) because their energy hits me and helps me to remember that I actually have the best job in the world

Brian Gregan Blue notes - Meek Mill

Emily Brady Shania Twain - Lets go girls

Tara Lyons Chain reaction by Diana Ross!! Speaks for itself.

Jean Kelly Mission Impossible Theme - because the real mission is to make Maths possible

Seán Delap The Boys are back in Town - reminds me of my Leaving Cert year when I went to see Thin Lizzy headlining the first ever Slane concert. (U2 were the support act!!)

Orla Ní Shúilleabháin We will rock you by Queen

Jane D'Alton "Dog Days Are Over" - Florence + The Machine, it's so full of optimism and empathy, just like yours truly ;)

Oliver Murphy Thus Spake Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzche - the music at the start of 2001 a Space Odyssey. It is full of drama and expectation

Nicky Dowling Eye of the Tiger (Survivor) - You know I'll give you that look when I catch you yawning :-)

Jane Wade Seachanges (with Danse Macabre) by Raymond Deane - self-explanatory, really

Graeme Byrne
Name: Beasley
Loves: His cosy bed
Hates: Other dogs
Most Annoying Habit: Barking at nothing!

Yvonne O'Toole
Name: Betty
Loves: Opening presses
Hates: Being left alone
MAH: Knocking on the door with her tail

Corinne Gavenda
Name: Max
Loves: Fetching or finding his ball so you got to be there to throw or hide it!
Hates: Other people playing ball!
MAH: Counter surfs and will eat anything he finds

John McGinnity
Name: Pepsi
Loves: Opening her own and everyone else's birthday presents
Hates: Visiting cats dropping into our back garden
MAH: Always wanting lots of treats!

Amelia An
Name: Hami
Loves: Cherry and egg white (gym rat)
Hates: Anyone touching her head when she's eating
MAH: Randomly eats her poopie

Jean Kelly
Name: Scut (the dog)
Loves: Singing along to Little Mix in the car
Hates: When anyone leaves a room
MAH: Scratching your head to wake you up

Name: Callie (cat)
Loves: Breaking into the cookie jar for Dreamies
Hates: When Scut calls over
MAH: Scratching my new sofa

Stephen Tonge
Name: Otto
Loves: Attention
Hates: Being left alone
MAH: Gets the Zoomies when you want him to stay still!

David Connolly
Name: Mahler
Loves: Sunbeams and blankets
Hates: Being able to see the bottom of his food bowl
MAH: Losing his toys under the radiators

Brendan Williamson
Name: Purrnochet
Loves: Drinking from the toilet
Hates: Going Outside
MAH: Drinking from the toilet!

Name: Chairman Meow
Loves: Attention
Hates: Dinner arriving more than 5 minutes late
MAH: Scratching the sofa

Marc Mulligan
Name: Whiskers
Loves: Running Outside
Hates: Peppermint oil
MAH: Meowing non-stop

Erika Capello
Name: Luna (the cat)
Loves: Hamsela (the hamster)
Hates: Hamsela (the hamster)
MAH: Trying to eat Hamsela

PETLOVE

SUSTAINABILITY

This year has seen wonderful sustainable developments in the school. We began the year with a rejuvenation of our classroom bins in an effort to promote responsible waste management among the student body. Each classroom has received new, clearly labelled, general waste and recycling bins.

This year also saw our student committee participate in the first ever Duke's Pupil Earth Summit where they fielded questions connected to SDG: 16; Peace, Justice and Strong institutions. Participants addressed the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), brainstorming solutions and presenting on environmental issues.

Whole school transport survey: The school sustainability committee were involved in the creation of a whole school transport survey that aimed to gather data on the student cohort's transport and consumption habits. Thank you all, for your wonderful support and responses. And thank you to our Sustainabilty Committee members Elliot Guest, Thea Xi Ya Xie (pictured above) and Isobel Furlong and Mia Kaixin Lai (pictured below).

Well done to 5th year student Sarah Gordon who spearheaded the installation of special bins with creative signage which Sarah created (see poster below) for a bottle collection in aid of Embrace Badjao. Embrace Badjao works to provide education and relief to the vulnerable Badjao Community in the Philippines. Sarah had this to say:

The idea was to utilise the re-return facilities and then donate the money directly. It was a low effort way of building up cash from what would otherwise be waste. It was something that I was excited to initiate. These people are excluded from society as a minority group and desperately need all the support they can get. In reflection the scheme definitely needed some more acute monitoring. Rubbish, especially food waste contaminated the collection. I did my best with posters and reminders in the newsletter to avoid contamination, but with so many students, regulation can be difficult. Although there were obstacles, the scheme collected just over €200. Considering you can only collect 15cents per bottle, it's not bad at all! The scheme was a positive learning experience and a beneficial way of encouraging charity and sustainability.

MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Moving to a new country

Boyuan Qiu 5th Year

Moving to Ireland in September 2024 and joining The Institute of Education for Transition Year was both exciting and a little overwhelming. Before that, I had been studying in a public secondary school in Shanghai, so almost everything here felt new at the beginning.

One of the first things I noticed was how lively the classes were. Teachers here don't just teach - they really bring lessons to life. In English class, for example, our teacher, David Connolly, would sometimes turn the classroom into a mini stage, using props to act out scenes from Shakespeare. It definitely made Shakespeare more interesting than I had expected.

Music was a different kind of challenge. At first, I had to get used to a lot of new terms in English, which wasn't always easy. There were moments when I felt a bit lost, but I didn't want to give up something I enjoyed. So I decided to push myself and try something new. In February 2025, I took part in a national piano competition organised by the Newpark Academy of Music - my first competition in Ireland. I was quite nervous (probably more than I would like to admit), but it turned out to be a great experience. I was lucky enough to win First Prize in two categories: the Senior Piano Sonata Cup (16 and over) and the Coakley Fuller Cup, and I also performed at the White Recital Hall in the Royal Irish Academy of Music.

When I started 5th Year, I met my music teacher, Jane Wade. Her classes helped me understand music in a much clearer and more organised way. She was also always willing to take the time to answer questions after class, which made a big difference and helped me build my confidence. Looking back, moving to a new country was not always easy, but it has been a really valuable experience. Being part of a supportive and inspiring school environment has helped me settle in, make friends from different backgrounds, and grow more confident step by step. It's a journey I'm really glad I took - and I'm still learning from it.

Sarah Karam 5th Year

As the youngest child, I always dreamed of doing more, even if it meant stepping outside my parents' comfort zone. One of those things was studying abroad. My parents always taught me and my siblings to put our education as our main priority. So, when I asked them if I could follow my sisters' footsteps, and study in Ireland, they were nothing but supportive.

If I'm being honest, my first few weeks away from home were not what I imagined. Sure, I anticipated homesickness, but it hit me harder than I ever expected. The large parks, narrow roads, short buildings, and beautiful nature were all admirable, but too unfamiliar to me. I was so used to tall modern buildings and hot weather. I called my parents every morning to talk about everything I was experiencing, and their words of encouragement helped me start the day on a positive note. Yet I still questioned my choice "Is this really worth it?", "Maybe I should just go back home." Despite my struggles, I managed to push through. Living with my sisters in Dublin brought me a sense of familiarity, I felt like I had a part of home with me. I also received help from The Institute, and I had amazing resources that truly helped me. This ranged from meetings with Pastoral Care to short friendly chats with my teachers.

School life in Dublin felt like a movie. It was the little things like catching my bus on an early chilly morning, grabbing hot chocolate before school, studying in the school's study hall. All so simple, yet so surreal. I wasn't used to being in such a large school. Back in the UAE, we only had around 40 students per year group. That's what I love about The Institute, you get to meet so many new people with any number of exciting stories that they're waiting to tell you. Another thing I admire about The Institute is their method of teaching. You can tell that every teacher is so passionate about their subject through the effort they put into their work. Each teacher gave me amazing notes, allowing me to confidently enter and finish all my exams. As someone who's introverted, I felt this unique sense of comfort in the classrooms. I was able to raise my hand, ask questions, and receive the answers I needed.

Being in a new environment, with a completely different culture than my own was not easy, but it shaped me in ways I never expected. I gained so many new friends and made countless beautiful memories that I will forever cherish. I learned so much about myself in just my first year abroad, and that's worth much more than what money can buy. Let my experience be your motivation to take risks and not give up so easily.

MY SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Moving to a new country

Stella Huang 4th Year

I still remember looking out of the plane window as we began to land. Everything was green - fields dotted with sheep, calm and peaceful. After landing, the first thing I noticed was the fresh air. People at the airport were very friendly. An old man saw me struggling with my suitcase and came over to help with a smile. That was my first impression of Irish people - warm and easygoing. I am an international student doing 4th year at The Institute. There is no exam pressure during 4th year, so students have the opportunity to try many different activities. At the beginning, I felt a bit nervous - coming to a new country and facing a new accent - but I gradually adapted to life here.

When it comes to food, I really enjoy Irish stew. It is made with lamb, potatoes, and carrots, and slow-cooked for a long time. It is especially comforting in winter. Soda bread with butter is also very tasty. In small shops near the sea, you can often find the best fish and chips. Ireland has many beautiful places. The Cliffs of Moher are very windy but absolutely breathtaking. In Dublin city, you can often hear street musicians playing the violin, which adds a lively and artistic atmosphere to the city.

One Irish festival I experienced was St. Patrick's Day. On that day, everyone wears green - hats, scarves, and even green glasses. The streets are filled with people dressed in green. It felt a little strange at first, but I quickly joined in and enjoyed the festive atmosphere. The teachers at school are very responsible and patient. They do not speak too fast, and if you ask questions after class, they explain things carefully without making you feel uncomfortable. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed and humorous. People often joke around, and we seem to remember things better through laughter.

There are also many activities in 4th year. In Biology class, we visited a natural history exhibition and saw human anatomical specimens. The school also organised a farm visit, where we fed lambs and enjoyed some freshly baked traditional Irish bread. Another time, we went to an amusement park, where I rode a roller coaster. I screamed so much that my voice went hoarse. The school also arranged a work experience for me at RCSI, where we witnessed babies being born and observed some minor surgeries. It was a very eye-opening experience.

Overall, this year has been truly fulfilling. There were no dramatic adventures - just ordinary but happy days. The people, the food, the festivals, and the beautiful scenery have all made me realise that coming here was the right decision.

Mia Kaixin Lai 4th Year

My first year in Ireland: On August 23rd, 2025, I embarked on a solo journey from China to Ireland. At Beijing airport, I met my first friend Judy - we were on the same flight to Dublin, and, remarkably, ended up at the same school and in the same year group! Talk about a coincidence! Everything was new for me: a new language, a new house, and new faces. When I stepped out of Dublin airport, the rain soaked me, and I couldn't help but grumble a little. But my Irish host family welcomed me with warmth. My host sister showed me around Bushy Park where I was mesmerised by the breathtaking scenery.

Before orientation, I knew nothing about The Institute - I'd never visited Ireland or The Institute before, though I decided to study abroad in May 2025. Luckily, I received the offer from The Institute in June and secured my Irish visa just two weeks before my flight. During orientation, I met fellow international students and we quickly became friends. Under Leanne's guidance, we learned how to navigate the campus (figuring out which classrooms are in which buildings) - a huge help for new students like us!

Every day I look forward to school. As an international student, I sign in at the International Office each morning and sign out in the afternoon. Leanne is incredibly friendly and patient; every morning, her warm smile greets me as I enter the office. Whenever I have questions or face difficulties, she takes time to listen and help me a lot. While 4th year at The Institute differs from other Irish schools, I find studying here far more relaxing than my Junior High days in China, and I genuinely enjoy learning from teachers and embracing new knowledge every day.

When it comes to hobbies, I love traditional Chinese classical dance and playing badminton. I've danced for over 10 years, but moving to a new country meant pausing my Chinese dance lessons. I only occasionally practiced dancing in my host family's home - space was too limited. Did I let a new country stop my passion? Absolutely not! I decided to try ballet instead. After asking around, my school's yoga teacher recommended a dance school in Windy Arbour. After my first trial class, I fell in love and have practiced ballet ever since. Even more thrilling: in March, after 6 months of training, my teacher said I could start wearing pointe shoes - every dancer's dream come true! My next goal is to try my best in my ballet exam (Intermediate Foundation Exam) in June 2026 and achieve a distinction.

One of the highlights of my year was The Institute's Cultural Day, complete with a bake sale! In Home Economics class, we baked chocolate cakes and donated half to the bake sale. For the event, I wore a Chinese classical costume and performed a dance - my first time showcasing traditional Chinese classical dance in Ireland. Around 40 people watched in the music room, and I'm so grateful to everyone who came, cheered, and praised my performance. I am so happy that lots of people loved my performance. It meant the world to me, that many people were experiencing Chinese dance for the first time. I am determined to keep sharing Chinese culture in Ireland and beyond!

Looking back, my first year in Ireland was full of excitement, joy, uncertainty, surprises and challenges. I feel so lucky and grateful - for the kind people who supported and taught me, and for the unforgettable experience of studying at The Institute of Education. I hope that The Institute will guide me as I continue to grow, helping me discover my true self along the way.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Kate Lynch, Leaving Certificate 2024

When I was in 4th year in 2022 (I know - somehow that's a long time ago now), I was lucky enough, through The Institute, to study Journalism with Angie Crowe and enter the Press Pass Student Journalist of the Year Awards (now the Young Journalist Awards). Just this past week, at the time of writing, I found myself back there (this time with one of my own wonderful Institute students) speaking about my experiences as a journalist since leaving school in 2024.

It was such a full-circle moment. I got to meet one of my long-time inspirations, Róisín Ingle, as well as so many incredible voices in Irish journalism. More than anything, it was genuinely exciting to speak to all the young journalists in the room, to hopefully show them that this is a career they can really pursue. It's something I hope my own students here in The Institute have taken away from our classes too.

As part of that discussion, I was asked what my plans are for the future, which is also why I've been asked to write this piece. Earlier this year, a colleague of mine at the Irish Mail on Sunday sent me a link to apply for an internship with The Wall Street Journal (a fairly well-known newspaper based in New York and London!). I was lucky enough to be selected as one of two college students heading to their London office this summer.

It's a Platform and Publishing Editing internship, which means I'll be working on how journalists at the WSJ engage with their online audience, which stories get the most traction, why people keep reading, what headlines make someone click. I've also been told there may be opportunities to pitch and write feature stories, so I'm already keeping a running list of ideas to bring with me (and gently pester editors about). I'm also very excited to spend the summer abroad - I've already made a London playlist - and I fully intend to make the most of it. I have also recently been selected to collaborate with The Irish Time's women's podcast.

One message I really wanted to get across during my talk at the awards this year, and one I want to share again here, is that no matter what point you are at in life, whether you're a student, an intern, a professional, or even a teacher (!), you have permission to make mistakes. And not just that you have permission, it's something you actively need to do.

One of the hardest things about being a Leaving Cert student is that it can feel like everything depends on getting things exactly right. And while those exams are important (before your teachers and parents start emailing me), they are not the only thing that defines your future. One thing I've learned from the people I've met and interviewed over the past few years is that the world beyond school is much bigger, and it allows space for trial, error, and growth in a way that actually shapes you for what comes next.

I've learned this not just through my own experience, but through the people I've had the chance to speak to. One of the most fascinating people I interviewed was Professor Athanasios (Sakis) Mantalaris. I met him in 2024 when I visited NIBRT (the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research and Training), somewhere some of you might even have had work experience. Sakis works in cell and gene therapies which, very simply, use living cells or genetic changes to repair or replace damaged parts of the body, or prevent genetic conditions. These "advanced therapies" are genuinely groundbreaking, with the potential to treat or even cure diseases like sickle cell anaemia, certain blood cancers such as leukaemia, and spinal muscular atrophy.

He showed me footage of a young girl treated in St James's Hospital here in Dublin who had been born with spinal muscular atrophy, a condition that causes muscles to weaken over time. After receiving this therapy, she was able to run, play, and live like any other child her age. I remember being completely blown away, not just by the science, but by the reality that this was happening here in Ireland. It also reminded me, quite personally, of a friend I had in primary school with a similar condition who passed away very young. It made me wonder how different things might have been if she had been born just a little later.

Ireland is actually a global leader in this kind of research, alongside countries like Japan, South Korea, and the United States, and we're in a unique position to make these treatments increasingly accessible to people here at home. But beyond the science, Sakis taught me something I've carried with me ever since. When I asked how he keeps going through setbacks, he told me that when he first began his work, he wrote his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Whenever he doubts himself, he goes back to it, to remind himself of his ambition and the bigger picture.

I went home that evening and wrote my own Pulitzer speech!

That sense of belief became important very quickly. When I first pitched this story to an editor, I struggled to explain why it mattered. In journalism, you're constantly asked "so what?", because every story needs a clear reason to be told. At first, I couldn't quite articulate it the way I wanted to. But I knew it mattered. So I tried again, more clearly, and with more conviction. I explained that people in Ireland are walking into hospitals with life-threatening illnesses and walking out without them. That this was something happening here, now, that people deserved to know about. I told the story of that little girl, and that's when it clicked.

Another story that taught me just as much came from a completely different world. Stephen Cox, founder of Bullhorn Ranch, is often described as Ireland's first cowboy, someone who, in his own words, "brought Yellowstone to Ireland." A carpenter by trade, he built the ranch entirely from the ground up, and even bred and trained his own American Quarter Horses in Western-style riding. When I pitched the story, my editor loved the story, but had his own idea: I had to go and ride one of the horses myself, cowgirl hat and all. If you're looking for a career that never gets boring, journalism is definitely one to consider.

What struck me most about Steve wasn't just how unusual his work is, but how he got there. When he started, Western riding didn't really exist in Ireland. There were no clear pathways, no obvious resources, he had to teach himself, figure it out as he went, and build something entirely new through determination. Now, he trains riders of all ages, many of whom go on to compete and win at national level, and his work has even expanded into farming, where he uses his skills to help farmers manage cattle in ways that are completely different to traditional methods. His story is a reminder that sometimes the path you're looking for doesn't exist yet, and that doesn't mean you're on the wrong track. It might just mean you're the one who has to create it.

The final story I want to mention is a little closer to home - Café Lucy, on Clanbrassil Street Upper here in Dublin - you may even like to pop by after school! It was founded by Ukrainian couple Viktoria Horbonos and Mykola Kuleshov after they moved to Ireland during the war. The café is named after Mykola's grandmother, Lucy, whose honey cake recipe is the most famous on the menu. They've built a life for themselves here in Ireland, bringing their culture with them and creating something really special, while also continuing to support people back home through donations and care packages.

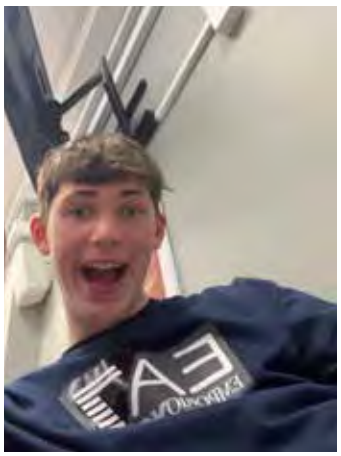
What stayed with me most from their story was their perseverance and spirit. They managed to build something warm and welcoming in the middle of incredibly difficult circumstances and that kind of resilience is something that really stays with you.

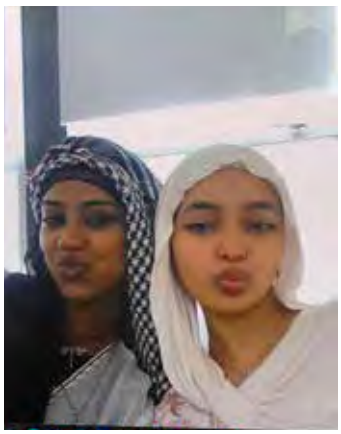
Looking back on all of these experiences - from science labs to ranches to cafés - there are some clear messages that I keep coming back to:
You are allowed to make mistakes and you need to; You can be confident in what you care about, even if you can't always explain it perfectly at first; You can stick to your convictions; And you can choose a path that doesn't exist yet, forging it for yourself. I'm hoping to bring all of those lessons with me to The Wall Street Journal this summer, and I hope that, wherever you are right now, you might carry some of them with you too.

AROUND THE SCHOOL

Thank you to everyone who sent in photos for this section, we love seeing your candid 'around the school' and school trip pictures every year!

AROUND THE SCHOOL





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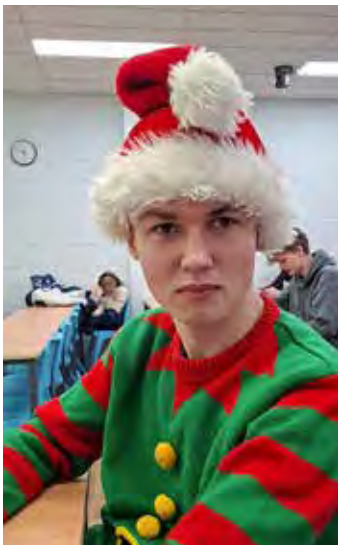

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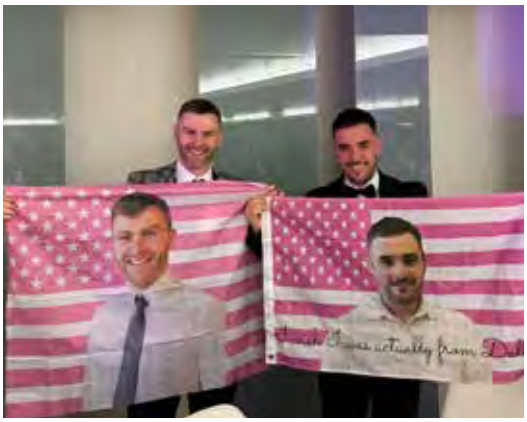

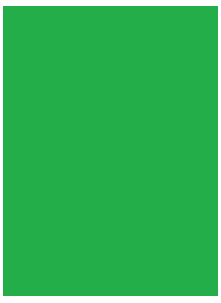

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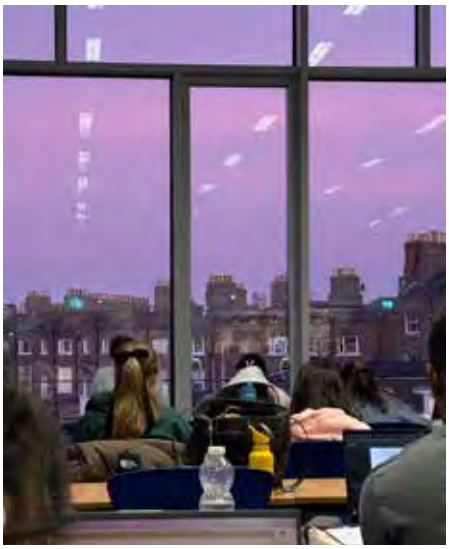

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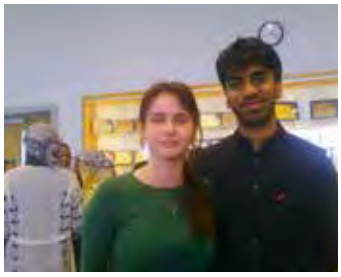

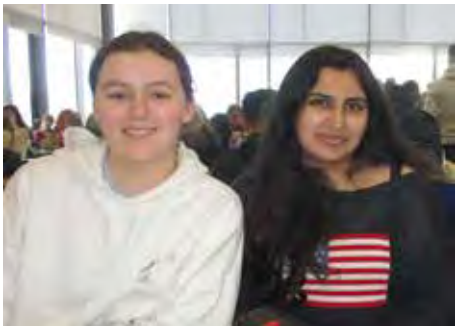

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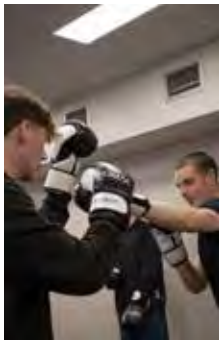


DUCK WORLD

GRADUATING CLASS
of 2026

85

"Think where man's glory most begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends" *William Butler Yeats*

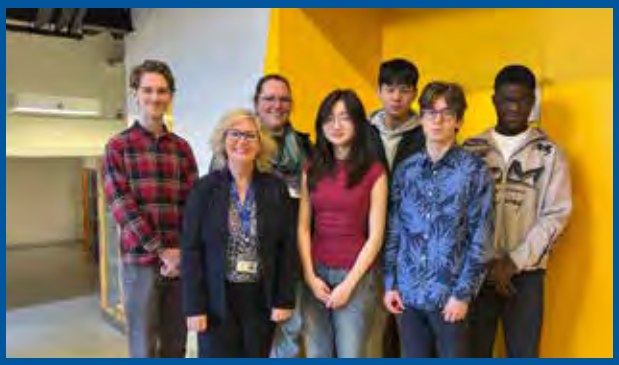
SIGN MY YEARBOOK

"True friends are never apart, maybe in distance but never in heart." *Helen Keller*

SIGN MY YEARBOOK

"Great is the art of beginning, but greater is the art of ending"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



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