



Balla Secondary School, Co. Mayo



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Christmas Newsletter

December 2016

Message from the Principal

It is hard to believe that the festive season is once again upon us. It has been another very busy term for us all in Balla Secondary School. The Leaving & Junior Certificate classes had their November exams that were closely followed by their PT meetings and twenty of our students received their John Paul II Awards at a celebration ceremony in Our Lady's Basilica, Knock.

Many matches have been played this term, some won, some drawn & some lost. The debating teams & public speaking competitors waxed eloquently on their designated subjects and our artists were in full flow with Credit Union competition wins, inclusion in National Calendars & with preparing the set for the now renowned Musical 'Heavenly Mayhem'. With two sell out shows and one matinee for the local primary schools our very talented students and their exceptionally talented music teacher Ms. Lyons wowed the audiences with their version of the Broadway show Sister Act.

After all the excitement of the musical and other events including the Christmas market in Balla complete with amazing fireworks, trips to Dublin which involved ice skating and visits to art galleries, we were back to reality this week with the start of the official Christmas Exams. Thinking of the needs of others our Student Council organised a Festive Fun Day where all students & staff dressed up in Christmas attire to raise funds for the local SVP branch.

To top the term off Balla Secondary School has been named Mayo's top ranked 'feeder-school' in the recently published Feeder Schools League Tables. The tables, published by the Irish Times have also placed the school in joint second place nationally in the 'Non-Fee Paying Schools' category and it is the only Mayo school to feature in the Top 20 of this list. Congratulations to all our students who worked so hard, their parents who supported them and our teaching staff who worked tirelessly with them throughout the year. As a school we are committed to achieving excellence in academic success, whilst also ensuring that all our students are happy and reaching their full potential in a caring, friendly & nurturing environment.

Le gach Dea-Ghuí i gcomhair na Nollag is na hath bhliana

Teresa Walsh (Acting Principal)

Jersey Sponsorship



Thanks to Sean Corcoran from **Electric Skyline** who sponsored a set of O'Neills jerseys. These will be used for many years in GAA, soccer, spikeball and Handball. Pictured on the left are the Balla Junior Ladies wearing the new jerseys.

John Paul II awards



Congratulations to our students who received their Pope John Paul 11 Papal and Gold Medal awards from Archbishop Michael Neary at a ceremony in The Basilica, Knock on 17th November. The Pope John Paul Awards require students to work voluntarily within their parish and with various social awareness programmes that they may be interested in. Some examples of the work they have engaged in during the past year included mentoring first year students in the school, volunteering in Knock Shrine during summer 2015 (VAKS), paired reading, organisation of activities for science week.

Javascript Programming



Congratulations to the Leaving Cert students who received their certification on completion of an 8 week course in Javascript Programming as part of the STEM initiative at Balla Secondary School. This programme introduced students to basic concepts of programming (e.g. variable declarations, strings, statements, functions, arrays, using animations) which are common to all programming languages. They are pictured with their ICT teacher Ms Margaret O'Dowd and the Acting Principal Ms Teresa Walsh.

School Musical

Congratulations and well done to our very talented students on this year's fantastic production of "Heavenly Mayhem". All that hard work paid off with the reward of a very well received musical. Under the direction of Aisling Lyons and Joan King the cast delivered a great night of entertainment. The show's infectious energy had the audience dancing in their seats and the cast have been commended for their outstanding performances, superb acting and singing and dazzling dance routines. A big thank you to everyone who helped to make the show a great success!

Transition Year News

School Bank: The TY School Bank was officially opened by Keith Higgins on the 15th of November. Great work was done by Mrs Carney and her Bank Team organising this event. Many students opened accounts on the day and continue to do so.

Science Week: The TYs played a major role in Science week within the school, organising a very successful monster science quiz for First and Second year classes. Prizes were sponsored by Roches. They were also invited to attend a film in Mayo movie world by Mayo science and technology festival on the 17th of November.

Public Speaking: Lauryn Biggins ably represented the School in the Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition in Davitt College. She spoke to the topic of Human Rights. Dean Kenny, Rian O' Connor and Thomas Reynolds took part in the South West Mayo Development Public Speaking competition organised in conjunction with Drugs and Alcohol Task Force.

School Musical: As in previous years the TYs played a major role not only singing and dancing but painting sets, organising dance routines, and helping out with makeup and stage management.

Ice Skating: Their last trip of the term was to Dublin where they went ice skating and even had some time for Christmas shopping. Despite the many falls and bruises great fun was had by all.



Pictured above at the official opening of Balla School Bank by Keith Higgins and Colm Kelly from Bank of Ireland, are members of the bank team.

Juvenile Boys Football



Our juvenile boys footballers (pictured above) are unbeaten so far this season, with wins in the Connacht league versus Foxford, Gortnor Abbey and St. Brendan's, Belmullet. We have the latter stages of the league, the championship and a county final versus Our Lady's, Belmullet to look forward to in the new year

St. Vincent de Paul Appeal

Many thanks to all who have contributed to our annual St. Vincent de Paul hamper appeal to date. The student council have also been instrumental in raising funds for the society by organising a Christmas jumper day in the school recently. All proceeds will go to the St. Vincent de Paul. Thanks to Mrs. Patricia Flatley from the local Balla / Belcarra / Mayo Abbey / Facefield branch who spoke to first year students recently regarding the work of St. Vincent de Paul.



Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition

Pictured on left is Lauryn Biggins TY who represented the school in the Soroptimist Public Speaking Competition in Davitt College Castlebar on the 20th November. She spoke on the issue of Human Rights and is pictured after receiving her Certificate.



Pictured above are Rian O'Connor, Dean Kenny, and Thomas Reynolds took part in the south west Mayo development public speaking project in conjunction with the drug and alcohol task force in the McWilliam Park Hotel in Claremorris

First Year Boys Football



Pictured above are the victorious First Year Boys Gaelic Football team that won the Mayo Post Primary League recently



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