2024 WINTER NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our 2024 Winter Newsletter! As the year draws to a close, take a look at all we have accomplished in two short months. As you read on, you will discover the Wonders of the World through the Geography Week activities and you may be inspired to look at your future college and career goals while seeing how we celebrated College Awareness Week. We hope you will feel empowered on reading about our Student Council elections and feel great warmth when you hear about our Christmas fundraising efforts for Saint Vincent De Paul. From wherever you are in the world reading this newsletter, we wish you, the entire Le Chéile Secondary School community, and their families a very happy and healthy Christmas and New Year!

Dates for your Diary

January

6th Jan: Back to school
8th Jan: 3rd year Information Evening
Week of 13th Jan: Democracy Week
14th Jan: 5th year Parent Teacher Meeting
28th Jan: 3rd year Merchant of Venice trip

February

3rd Feb: St. Brigid's Day bank holiday (no school)
4th – 14th Feb: Mocks for LCA, 3rd & 6th years
5th -7th Feb: School musical: School of Rock
14th Feb: Last day of term
Week of 17th Feb: February midterm break

Message from the Principal

'Christmas is joy, religious joy, an inner joy of light and peace' - Pope Francis

Writing my Christmas message always forces me to take time out from the busyness of school life to reflect on the year that has passed. School life is so busy with teaching and learning and the wide range of extra-curricular activities that the time seems to fly past. Our students have once again been a credit to their school and their families in engaging with learning, getting involved in school activities, and supporting one another.

Our Transition Years have embraced the new type of learning which characterises the TY programme with the emphasis on much greater independence and self-directed learning. The musical preparations are well underway, and we look forward to the production of School of Rock in early February.

We continue to flourish as a school with our students having opportunities to thrive both inside and outside the classroom. Over the course of the term, they have participated in Maths Week, Science Week, Geography Week and Languages Week. We have had students involved in the Italian Exchange Programme, Field Trips, Art Tours, visits to Leinster House and so much more. Our 3rd Year students have participated in a Study Skills day and, in addition to the Study Skills, our 6th Years have had the opportunity to attend the Higher Options event and an in-school Careers Fair. As always, our extra-curricular sports schedule has resumed with great success.

Reading through our newsletter you will hear more about the many wonderful events and initiatives that students have been involved in. I am very grateful to our teachers who give their time so generously to ensure that our students have such a broad and balanced educational experience.

We talk often of our root beliefs and core values; values which are Gospel values rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, and which guide and direct all that we do here in Le Chéile. In this season of Advent, we reflect on our core value of Gratitude and remind ourselves of all that we have to be grateful for. Christmas is a time of giving and during the course of Advent the students have put energy and enthusiasm into various charitable events including the Team Hope Shoe Box Appeal and our St. Vincent de Paul annual Christmas appeal. I would like to acknowledge the generosity of all in the Le Chéile school community who have been so kind in their support of these charity fundraisers.

The Christmas season is a very special time and brings great opportunities for spiritual re-growth and reunions with family and friends. It can, however, also be very challenging for some and our thoughts and prayers are with those who are dealing with the loss of loved ones or anxiety over the health of those close to them.

As the term draws to a close, I am delighted to take this opportunity to wish each of you a peaceful and blessed Christmas. We look forward with hope and optimism to 2025 and to welcoming our students back on the 6th of January rested and with a renewed enthusiasm.

Leona Harrington

Message from the Deputy Principals

As Term 1 draws to a close, the deputy principals would like to take this opportunity to reflect on what has been an incredibly busy and productive start to the school year.

Mr. Kershaw and Ms. Carey have stepped into new territory acting as Deputy Principals in the absence of Ms. Walsh and Ms. Sheehan but so far, it's been a really rewarding and fulfilling experience; an experience that has been all the more pleasant under the guidance and mentorship of Mr. Walshe and the ever-patient Mrs. Harrington.

Our students have shown great enthusiasm, and a commitment to excellence in extra-curricular activities including volleyball, basketball, football, and community events like our highly successful St. Vincent de Paul appeals and Christmas Jumper Day to name just a few. As always, we are super proud of the efforts and teamwork displayed by our students, and equally proud to see our core values and root beliefs underpinning everything our students do here in Le Chéile.

We are particularly grateful to our dedicated staff, whose hard work and passion have ensured that every student is supported in their learning journey. Their commitment is what makes our school such a special place.

To our parents and guardians, thank you for your continued partnership and support. Your involvement, whether through attending events, helping with homework, or simply encouraging your children, makes a significant difference in their success and well-being.

As we head into Christmas, we encourage students to take time to relax and recharge while also reflecting on their goals for the remainder of the year.

Let's return in the new year with a renewed energy and focus to see us through the post-Christmas Blues!

Wishing you all a safe and enjoyable holiday break.

Mr. Walshe, Mr. Kershaw, and Ms. Carey

Student Council

The Student Council elections took place at the end of December this year. Each year group gathered in the hall to listen to the speeches of the students from their year group on their proposed ideas for the council. Students then voted for who they thought were the best speakers in an online poll.

After votes were counted the following students were elected: Fortune Mieluzeyi, Zainab Khan, Gemma Odemena, Emma Rose Buttner, Jan Skorzepa, Sandra Pompka, Mia Dixon, Ava Power Martin, Stefan Raducan, Simon Zwirko and Edwin Thomas. Well done to all students on their amazing speeches. I look forward to working with you all in January.

Ms. Lenihan

Incubator Project

This year, Le Chéile Secondary School decided to bring back an old tradition of hatching chickens from an egg in an incubator. We teamed up with Nore Valley Park who provided us with everything we needed to run this exciting programme. Chicks take 21 days to hatch and have to be kept at a warm temperature and rotated regularly. The incubator helped us do this.

Halfway through the process, a man from Nore Valley Park came out to 'candle' the eggs - this is a technique used to see if the eggs have developed as expected at this point. We were lucky to be able to clearly see that all 7 had developed and we were hopeful to have 7 baby chicks hatch at the end of the 21 days.

Right on schedule, the black baby chicks started hatching one by one! Ms. Cahill set up a webcam so we could all watch it live on YouTube. They were sticky when they came out first and had to dry out in the incubator before they could be handled and placed into the brood box. Unfortunately, as happens in nature, one chick didn't survive the first night, but the other 6 thrived and were noticeably bigger even after only a day or two!

Students had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the chicks and even hold them and pose for photos. This was a great opportunity for students and staff to reconnect with nature, learn more about the life cycle of a chicken, and to see where their food comes from. We hope to run this project again next year. Thanks to Noel for all his help throughout this exciting process!

Ms. Cahill

November We Remember

November We Remember gives students and staff time to reflect on lives lost, to understand grief, and to celebrate life. This year's theme was 'A Garden of Remembrance'. This theme encompasses the idea that life is always growing and changing as we do, but it is important to take the time to appreciate the beauty around us.

TYs were involved in decorating and cutting out decorations and 6th year students helped to create the garden using supplies from our Art Department.

Students were brought down during Religion classes to display their butterflies, which they had decorated and written the names of people they wished to remember. They then had a moment of reflection, a discussion on how grief is a natural part of life and methods on how to deal with it. Each session was then closed with a prayer service.

Anti-Bullying Week

This year for Anti-bullying Week students in Ms. Perry's SPHE classes examined in closer detail what responsibility, respect and empathy really mean. They divided into groups and used a template to break down each word into 4 parts: What the word means, what it looks like to us, how we can recognise it in our everyday lives, and how we would use it in school or outside of it.

It was a great way to dive deeper into words that we hear a lot from people but might not actually know what it means.

The posters were then displayed outside of Ms. Perry's classroom for the rest of the school to see which was a source of pride for the ones who made them. Excellent work everyone!

Ms. Perry

Good News Trip

On Friday, 13th of December 1MG and 2MG along with 1st and 2nd years who didn't lose any points this year attended the Odeon cinema in Charlestown to see Moana 2 as a reward for such positive behaviour in term 1. Over 140 students attended and it was a huge success! Thanks to Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. McCann, Mr. Tuohy, Mr. Creedon, and Ms. Thompson who also attended.

Geography Week

The week of the 25th to 29th of November saw Le Chéile celebrate its biggest Geography Week ever! There were a number of lunch time challenges to get involved in and also a 'Where in the world?' Schoology competition in which students had to guess the location of three photos posted by Mr. Kershaw each day. Some locations were easily recognisable but there were quite a few that took an alternative look at well-known monuments and cities around the world! Well done to Andrian Plesca in 6MG who won a €50 voucher for Odeon cinemas for correctly guessing all 15 locations!

During the week, Ms. Cahill hosted a number of LEGO Landmark competitions in her classroom. Participants were given a photo of a famous landmark from somewhere in the world and they had 10 minutes to recreate it using LEGO bricks. Well done to everyone who took part!

A huge thank you to all the junior and senior cycle students who entered the creative writing competition! The Geography Department staff were blown away by your amazing poems, stories, and songs - congratulations to everyone who took part. The winner of the €10 cinema voucher was 2nd year Jasper Zwaan with his brilliant reimagining of The Beatles' *"Help"*, turning it into a clever song about being caught in an earthquake. Well done on such a fun and creative entry!

Where were you born?

TY Geography students surveyed the entire student body and asked one simple question, 'Where were you born?'. The results of this survey showed just how diverse a student population we have as 52 separate countries were recorded!

Watch the video highlighting all the countries on a digital globe on Schoology or our school's social media accounts!

Stay curious, stay creative, and keep exploring!

Geography Week: Design a Flag Competition

Tiffany Edede in 3OR won a €10 cinema voucher for her depiction of the Nigerian flag in the 'Redesign a National Flag' competition hosted by Ms. Cahill! This entry was chosen as it perfectly depicts the country it represents through the use of colour and symbols, the fact that it is easy to draw, and how there are nods to the original flag. Here's what Tiffany had to say about her entry: "*I changed the way the green parts were designed and I added yellow flowers because the main flower there is the yellow trumpet flower. It looks like a sunflower and this reminded me of sunflower oil and Nigeria is rich in oil. The yellow also stands for music and Nigeria is famous for their Afro beats. Lastly, the yellow makes the flag bright just like Nigeria's bright culture.*" Congratulations again!

Geography Week: Paint a T-Shirt

Ms. McCann and Ms. Cahill were seen sporting their hand-painted Geography T-shirts at the whole school assembly that Friday as they were excited to announce the winner of the Paint a Geography T-shirt competition that they ran the previous day. Well done to Hera Voros Biro and Jasper Zwann for their grand designs and congratulations to Logan Keegan and Nicola Keating for their 'Get a LOAD of this guy' winning design! Enjoy the cinema vouchers!

Bebras Computing Challenge

During the month of November, our Coding students took part in the Bebras Computing Challenge. This challenge introduces computational thinking to students by allowing them to solve interactive tasks online. It is run in over 60 countries with the aim of getting students all over the world excited about computing.

A number of our students achieved high scores and five were selected to participate in the national final. Well done to Ishan Gandhi (3MG), Sumaya Hersi (3MT), Vadim Sakalovs (3MT), Maksymilian Kurpias (3MT) and Alex Deveney (3DD). We look forward to competing in this event in Maynooth University in April 2025.

Paul Donnelly

Local Sinn Fein TD Paul Donnelly visited Le Chéile in November to speak to the 5th and 6th year Politics and Society students. Mr. Donnelly took questions about the then upcoming General Election, housing, and his community work in Dublin 15.

LCA Horticulture Trip to the Botanic Gardens

On the 7th of November, Ms. Lyons and the LCA Horticulture class had a lovely afternoon at the Food Glorious Food workshop in the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland in Glasnevin. They learned about some really interesting exotic plants and even saw a plant that had had a cockroach for breakfast! They also got to plant their own seeds in recycled pots to take back to school. What a fun and informative tour!

Schools of Sanctuary and Culture Committee

After a very successful celebration of Black History month last term, this term the SOS Culture Committee have been focusing on other forms of celebrations. We celebrated St. Nicholas Day with a lovely piece written by SOS committee member Amelia Ostrowska in 3rd year, kindly assisted by Faith Ayuba, who celebrates this event every year with her family.

"St. Nicholas Day is a well-known tradition which is celebrated mostly in Eastern Europe. It is a day to celebrate the saint and his kindness and generosity towards the poor and the unhappy. To this day, those who celebrate the day celebrate him by cleaning their shoes in reward for a sweet treat. All are welcome to celebrate. Make sure to be extra kind to your friends on this special day."

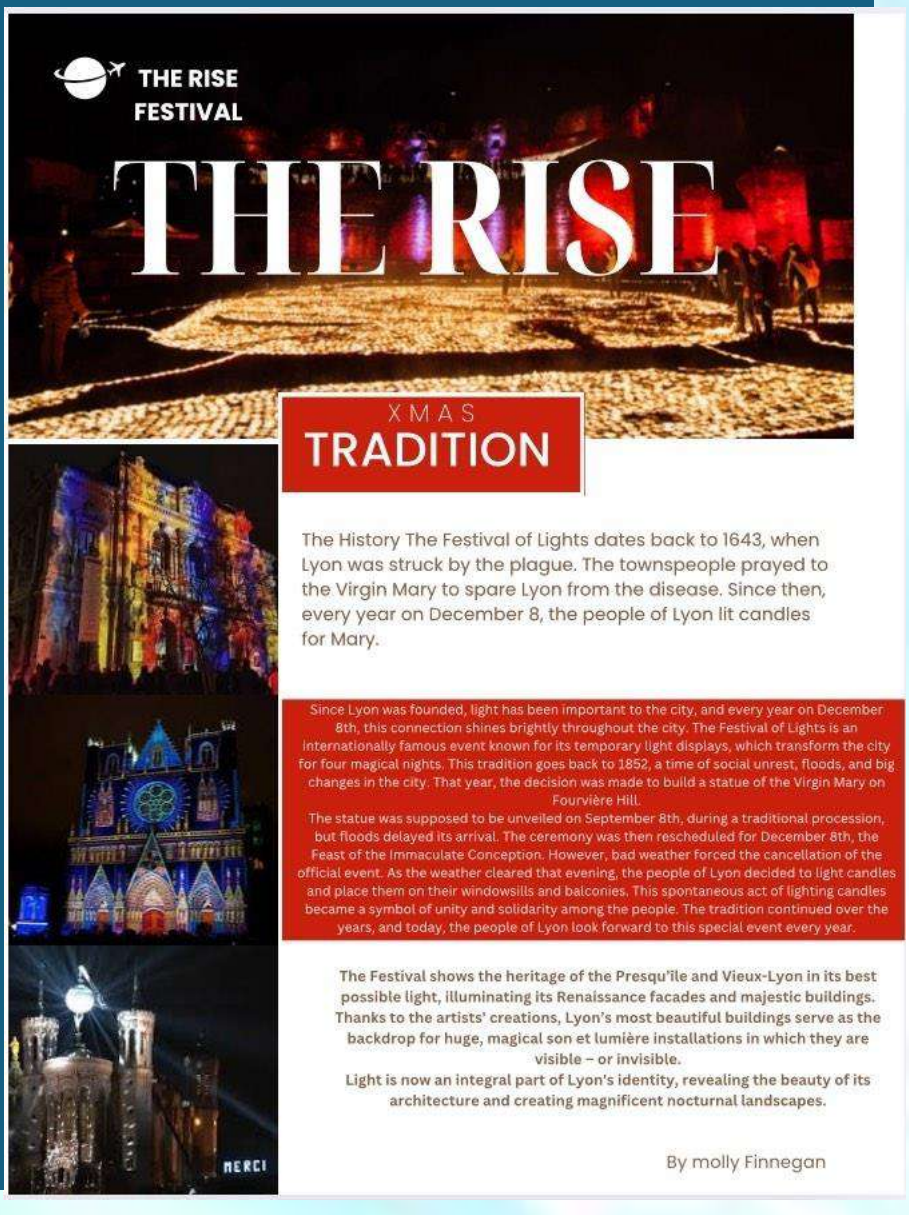
Harafat Abimbola in 5th year wrote a lovely prayer for the people of Syria;

"Lord we come before you with hearts filled with optimism and faith to pray for the people of Syria.
Today we ask that Gods presence be felt deeply in the midst of their emotions and uncertainty, especially for all of those who are suffering, displaced and have been touched by the war.
We hope for solace to those who are grieving and comfort to those who have lost loved ones,
May Your light shine in the hearts of Syrian families and in the darkest of places.
We think of those affected by the war, our friends from Syria and their family members.
We pray for restoration and stability in the affected communities.
And that they be granted a future of everlasting safety, freedom, unity, protection and prevailing peace.

May God bring his blessings upon those who are helping to aid Syria and may their efforts be recognised.
And guide the hearts of all who stand with Syria,
that we may be instruments of His mercy and grace.
We hope that the people of Syria will remain resilient and that they will conquer with their strength and their fortitude.
In God's name, we offer our prayer for Syria. Amen."

Lastly, Molly Finnegan in 5th year wrote a piece on the Rise Festival in France which dates back to 1852.

The School of Sanctuary and Culture Committee would like to thank everyone who has helped to celebrate different cultures and traditions these past few weeks. We wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year!



Senior Volleyball

The school senior volleyball teams had a very busy term! The girls volleyed it all off taking a trip to Carlow early in November to take part in their round two matches against Ardee College, Louth, and St. Leo's College, Carlow. The girls played really well on the day but just fell short of qualifying for the next round.

The boys' team hosted St. Patrick's CGS, Dublin, in their knockout stage and won this match to qualify for the quarter finals. They followed this with a short trek to Luttrellstown CC to take them on, along with Tyndall College, Carlow, in the quarter-finals round. They put on a very impressive display of serving, setting, and spiking to win both matches and advance them to the All-Ireland semi-finals. A long bus journey to Enniskillen took the lads to their next competitors in Summerhill College, Sligo, and Deele College, Donegal. The team yet again showed their strengths but unfortunately missed out on reaching the final.

Both teams represented their school so well on every occasion and showed great sportsmanship. They both continue to train after school on Mondays with the hope of a few more competitive matches in the new year. Any new members are always welcome to join!

LGFA Round-Up

The Junior LGFA team were beaten by Colaiste de hIde in the preliminary quarter final this year, having an unsuccessful start and never really coming out of the starting blocks in this race. They performed very well this year against teams like St. Michaels and Blakestown, showing the huge benefits of the work being done in Tyrrelstown GAA and surrounding clubs. These girls should be very proud of how they performed and some of them hopefully drive on next year to compete at Senior Level.

The Senior LGFA team played Colaiste Brid and Firhouse this year, unfortunately conceding both games. Many Junior players had to step up to this level so that we could enter a team, and we want to thank them so much for doing so.

A big farewell to Senior player Chloe Phoenix as this will be her last year playing schools LGFA. Chloe has been a very dedicated player and our LGFA Ambassador this year. She will be sorely missed. A massive thank you to Mr. McGee for co-managing the teams with me this year and doing so much work.

Finally, thank you to our TY pitch committee of Ruby Ryan Dunne, Evan Kane and Luca Ward, and also to our TY jersey washing committee of Molly and Ellie Dixon and Ali Morgan.

Ms. Heavey

Girls Basketball

The girls' basketball team had a fulfilling experience this year. While both teams strived in their skills and commitment, the U16s celebrated strong victories and a winning streak with wins like 51-10 against Adamstown CC. The girls all demonstrated exceptional teamwork and skill, coming together in offence and defence.

Their defence was relentless, stifling the opposing teams' scoring opportunities. Offensively, the girls moved the ball with confidence, creating open shots.

The U19s faced some of the most challenging games of basketball this season and while they ultimately lost their chance to the final they played really intense games of basketball. Their moments of brilliance showed their true potential, with standout performances from players who never stopped fighting for more. While some disappointing losses the U19's never failed to come back stronger for every match.

Their fast breaks and well-executed plays led to a dominant performance from start to finish, showcasing the depth and strength of team chemistry, which at the beginning of the year was a group of girls who didn't know everyone's name or would speak to each other in normal circumstances, their Captains Ksenia, Aine and Malgorzata and Amy led the teams to success—finished the season with true friendships, happy memories and as a team.

Pizza Day for the basketball girls was the perfect break after a tough week of practice and games. The team gathered to enjoy some good food, share laughs, and relax together as a team. Everyone dove into some slices, enjoying the strong bond even off the court. This strengthened the team's connection, leaving everyone feeling recharged and ready to get back to work for the next season.

Molly Finnegan

Boys Basketball

Congratulations to the U16 Boys Basketball Team who won their 3rd/4th place final against Castleknock, with a game winning lay-up by Nojus Vasikausk as with 3 seconds to go, to win the game 54-52. Next up it's the All Ireland in the new year!

Boys Football

Massive well done to the seventeen 1st year boys who made their debut for Le Chéile this term as they won their first group game, beating Kishoge 3-2. Led by captain Andrew Rigney, the boys raced into an early 3 goal lead thanks to goals from Maxim Creciun and 2 from Abraham Noragbon. While Kishoge pulled 2 back, the lads showed great resilience to hold onto the lead with all 17 players having a strong impact when called upon. A special mention to all the lads in the squad as we have consistently had at least 25 at every training session and it was very difficult to cut it down to a matchday squad of 17.

College Awareness Week

From December 9th to 13th, our whole school community celebrated College Awareness Week (CAW). Our College for Every Student committee, comprised of students across all year groups, planned loads of fun events to help foster a college-going culture in the school. Monday morning was set aside for 6th year students to meet with their teacher mentors for the first time this year. Throughout the week, our student ambassadors showed off their college knowledge by sharing posters on Schoology explaining some of the confusing terminology such as CAO, SUSI, HEAR, DARE, PLC, etc. Our 6th year ambassadors also held a Senior Cycle Subject Q&A for 3rd year students already thinking about next year. The highlight of the week was definitely our biggest ever Careers Fair on Thursday. Thank you to our students who attended the talks and engaged in activities during the week. And a special thank you to all members of our CFES committee who help make the week so successful every year.

Careers Fair

Le Chéile Secondary School recently held a vibrant and engaging careers fair, providing 6th year students with invaluable insights into their future opportunities. The event brought together a diverse array of exhibitors, including leading universities, training providers, and career services, ensuring that every student could explore pathways tailored to their aspirations.

Students had the chance to interact with representatives from esteemed institutions such as Maynooth University, Trinity College, University College Dublin (UCD), and TU Dublin, to name but a few. Creative minds explored options at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD), while those considering further education received guidance from Coláiste Dhúlaigh and Dunboyne College of Further Education.

Industry and public service organisations also played a pivotal role in the fair. Representatives from the ESB, Pfizer, Dublin Fire Brigade, and An Garda Síochána offered insights into dynamic career opportunities in essential sectors. The National Learning Network highlighted accessible routes for diverse learners to thrive in the workforce.

Adding a special touch to the event, several school alumni returned to share their experiences and career journeys.

The fair was a resounding success, leaving students inspired and better equipped to make informed decisions about their next steps. Le Chéile Secondary School is proud to support its students in shaping their futures, one opportunity at a time.

Bristol Myers Squibb Talk to TYs

As part of CAW representatives from one of our businesses in the community, Bristol Myers Squibb, came to talk to TYs about STEM and entry routes into BMS including apprenticeships, internships and graduate entries. We look forward to taking part in their TY programme later in the year.

TU Dublin Open Day

In November, 6th year students visited our local university, TU Dublin Blanchardstown, where they had the opportunity to tour the campus, and participate in talks. They visited the various departments and learned more about the courses TU Dublin offer.

Science Week

This year, Science Week kicked off on the 10th of November and our school was filled with excitement as students participated in a wide range of activities designed to inspire and entertain. The TY students organised exciting events, once again proving they were truly in their element. Additionally, the TYs went above and beyond to promote Science Week by creating posters and signs around the school. Their efforts certainly sparked a chain reaction of enthusiasm among students and teachers.

Among the highlights were dingbats, games of bingo, and quizzes that tested our knowledge and quick thinking. For those who love a challenge, there were treasure hunts, boat wars and escape rooms, where students used problem-solving skills and critical thinking to find hidden clues – a real test tube of ingenuity!

While there was no shortage of exciting activities during Science Week, the main focus was highlighting the significance of science, a *matter*-ful subject that connects to our everyday lives. The activities acted as a reminder that science is about more than simply learning in the classroom; it is also about problem-solving, critical thinking, and investigating the world around us. After all, science is not just a subject; it is a *way of lab-ing life!*

Thank you to the TYs for their hard work organising such fantastic activities. Their efforts made this year's Science Week a real success, and we cannot wait for what next year TYs have in store.

Ms. McAndrew

ISTA Senior Science Quiz

Some of our 6th Year students took part in the ISTA Senior Science Quiz in Trinity on the 14th of November where they showed off their knowledge in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and General Science. Harsh, Alex and Haroon went head to head with Olivia, Elizabete and Cayleigh in a friendly Le Chéile rivalry. Although both teams did very well, the girls came out slightly on top in the end. Amidst tough competition from all around Dublin, our six students represented the school very well. We look forward to the Junior Science Quiz next term.

6th Year Biology Trip to the Zoo

On November 25th, 6th Year Biology students braved the cold to carry out their Ecology field work at Dublin Zoo. They started the morning doing practical experiments, surveying the flora and fauna of the grassland ecosystem. Afterwards, they were allowed to wander through the zoo visiting all of the animals in their enclosures. A highlight of the day was seeing the zoo's first bull elephant with tusks- Aung Bo!

Science Week in the Claddagh

During Science Week, the Claddagh students were busy learning about volcanoes and carrying out a volcanic experiment using ingredients that can be easily found around any kitchen. The students were super excited making the volcanoes erupt! They used recyclable materials and paper mâché (homemade!) to make the volcanoes.

BT Young Scientist

Two of our TY students have been working diligently since September on their BT Young Scientist project. Ryan Clarke and Mahad Rahman are working on an AI programme that can detect patterns of lying using a webcam! We are so proud of their hard work and can't wait to support them as they present their project in the RDS in January.

Christmas at Le Chéile

Carols by Candlelight

On Thursday, the 12th of December, we celebrated our annual Carols by Candlelight evening. The GP hall was transformed into a glowing, Christmassy concert hall as the choir filled the air with new carols and old Christmas favourites. We were led in reflection by representatives from the student body as they told the story of the birth of Christ and reminded us of the true meaning of Christmas. Thank you to SuperValu Tyrrelstown for providing us with some amazing prizes for our raffle to raise funds for St. Vincent de Paul. Well done to all staff and students involved!

Candy Cane Grams

At the end of December, Ms. Heffron and her TYs organised a Candy Cane Gram fundraiser to raise money as part of our SVP Christmas Appeal. The Candy Cane Grams included a message from friends or loved ones that were delivered to any chosen person in the school. They successfully raised €340!

Christmas Markets: Festivity, Joy and Enterprise

On the 17th of December, we held our annual Christmas Market. This festive day is always a highlight of the School calendar at this time of year, bringing joy and and a sense of togetherness. The Christmas market offers an opportunity for students to demonstrate their enterprise skills and creativity, selling a wide range of products to the entire student body and faculty.

From sweet treats and boba tea to handcrafted Christmas coasters and ornaments, there was something for everyone! Arranged by the school's Business Department and supported by every single student, teacher and SNA who was involved in setting up a stall, the Christmas market is another wonderful example of how we in Le Chéile Secondary School come together to create something extraordinary time and time again.

SVP Christmas Jumper Day

Over €1800 – that's how much the Le Chéile school community raised for our local branch of Saint Vincent de Paul this year! Thanks to Ms. Lenihan for organising the fundraiser, and well done and thank you to everyone who made our goal a reality!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!