



## What is it about St. Louis?

**By Helen McFadden, a 5<sup>th</sup> yr student who joined St. Louis Community School in Transition year.**

On the morning of Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2013 I simultaneously felt apprehensive and exhilarated as thoughts of my new school raced through my mind. Before I realised it I was approaching the entrance to the school and subconsciously about to turn a new corner in my life. I had already heard about the excellent teaching, the broad range of subject choices, the top-class facilities and the caring Management and Staff, but my more immediate introduction was instead to the wonderful friendly atmosphere and the terrific rapport which exists between Management/Staff and students. All of a sudden I was being surrounded by unfamiliar but welcoming faces. Little did I realise that some of these unfamiliar faces would turn out to be the people I look forward to engaging with in conversation every day! My apprehension was put to rest quickly as I was introduced to students from my year by some of the girls who, without hesitation, took me under their wing and informed me of everything I needed to know about the school. Honestly, I would have felt like a ship adrift on the ocean if I did not have my trusty tour guides! Management and Staff were also most helpful in their pleasant reassurances that appropriate assistance and advice would be available at all times. And I had always been told that Santa Claus arrives only once a year!! I had well and truly arrived in Transition Year at St. Louis CS.

For me Transition Year followed a well-balanced course, mixing as it did, regular courses in preparation for Leaving Cert. with adventure sports, drama (on and off stage!), entertainment and tours as well as fund-raising for charities. We went on many road trips including Outdoor Pursuits at Petersburg Adventure Centre, the Christmas markets in Galway, the ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co. Laois, shopping in Dublin coupled with a visit to the Bord Gais energy theatre, an overnight trip to Monaghan, a comedy roadshow in the TF, a walking "pilgrimage" to Knock, ..... We even went to prison! Each day of transition year was bursting with learning and activities,

cheerfulness and light-heartedness. The bonding days made me feel as if I had always been in the school as I was so quickly made part of the big family!

I have found the St. Louis students to be most gracious in their dealings with their fellow students. While, naturally, they do not always agree with each other on everything they tend to resolve any differences of opinion they may have in an understanding manner which is usually followed by a resumption of friendship. This of course made me feel very comfortable in my new surroundings. They have a great respect for everyone and everything and are very proud of their school and its long tradition of caring, teaching and learning. The Green Flags flying at the front of the school are just one indication of this.

Furthermore, upon my arrival Management and Staff informed me that should I encounter any difficulties they would assist in resolving them. Funny enough I never encountered a problem and to this day I still haven't. I notice that the teachers go out of their way to ensure that new students are happy in their new environment by involving them in various activities like the school choir, the preparations for St. Patrick's Day parade, the musical, various school projects, presentations, the campout on the AstroTurf, Gaisce, ECDL, charity fund raising and so on.

Even in fifth year I am still greeted by the same energetic, bustling, spirited atmosphere that is bouncing off the walls each morning. Every corner I turn I am faced with smiling, warm faces ready to talk and listen. There is such good-natured positivity circulating in the corridors and in classrooms it makes each student put their best foot forward each day. Students and teachers greet each other in a friendly manner even as they weave their respective ways along the many floors and corridors to and from classrooms. The teachers give constant encouragement to their students and it is obvious that they have their best interests in mind. There is certainly a positive teacher-student relationship in the school which draws students into the process of learning.

The entertainment and laughter has not come to a grinding halt in fifth year. Even through the heavy load of homework and study I am still involved in extracurricular activities such as debating, public speaking, big brother big sister, the social hub and the school choir. These extra-curricular activities provide good laughs and general all-round pleasure. However I, like all the others in my year, am fully aware that 2016, the centenary of the Rising, will also be a defining year for us in education – the Leaving Cert.

Being a student in St. Louis has most definitely enhanced my interest in education. My day of arrival here has been extremely important to me because it was on that day that I knew I made the right decision in joining the extraordinarily big happy family that is St. Louis community school which has prompted me to answer the question – What is it about St. Louis?