



Open Night 2023

We were delighted to welcome Primary 6 and 7 girls from our feeder Primary Schools along with their parents to our Open Night on Thursday 26th January 2023. It was wonderful to share with them a flavour of our vibrant and high achieving school community.

Our thanks go to all our students and staff who made the evening such an enjoyable occasion for all.

A special note of thanks to Mrs Brown for co-ordinating the event, our Chamber Choir and Mrs Quigley who showcased their outstanding talent with their performance of 'Seal Lullaby' before the Principals' address and our Head Girl, Emma Corns and Year 8 student Hannah Lyttle for sharing their perspectives as Thornhill students.



THORNHILL COLLEGE
DID YOU MISS
OUR RECENT OPEN DAY?
NOT TO WORRY!

If you would like a tour of the school or to speak with a member of our Senior Leadership Team or Learning Support Co-ordinator, please contact the office to arrange an appointment.

Tel: 71355800

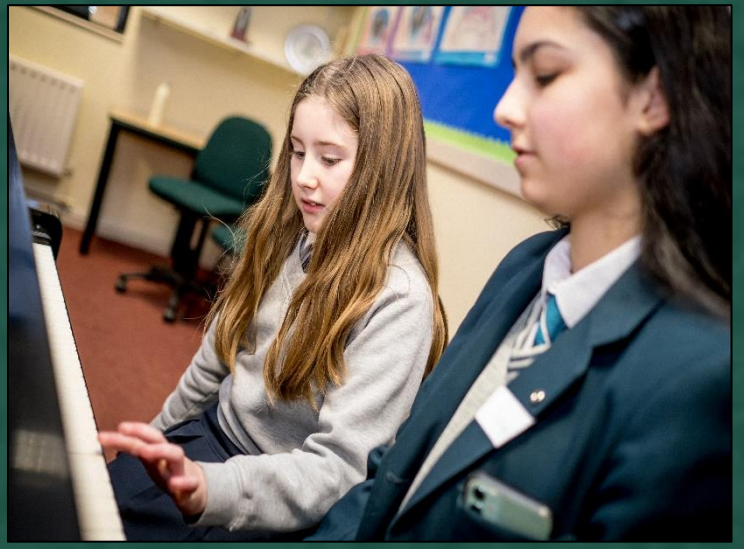
Email: info@thornhill.derry.ni.sch.uk













Open Night Speech – Hannah Lyttle

My name is Hannah and I am a year 8 pupil here at Thornhill College. I know most of you here will be nervous about starting a new school. I know I was. The school can look huge but let me reassure you, you will feel at home in no time. When you start Thornhill, your class will be given a year 10 buddy who takes you from lesson to lesson to ensure you don't get lost in what feels like a maze on your first few days. You will also get a year 14 councillor a form teacher and a hoy who are there to help with any problems and support you through your time here at Thornhill college.

NEW SUBJECTS

A very exciting part of my journey is having the opportunity to learn new subjects. I really enjoy science because we do experiments such as testing chemicals. I also have really enjoyed H.E because we make lots of yummy food such as yoghurt loaf. I have made an exciting LED lamp in our innovative Technology and Design Department.

EXTRA CIRCULAR ACTIVITIES

There are so many extra circular activities for you to take part in such as Netball, Debating, Drama, Gaelic and cross country. The list is endless. These activities help you immerse yourself into our school community and gain invaluable new skills.

COMPETITIONS

There are lots of opportunities to enter competition here at Thornhill. I won a costume design competition where I designed a costume for the drama department.

I also won an award for my poetry entry; this was for the world homelessness awareness day competition. These are always so fun to take part in with the bonus of some delicious prizes.

THE CHRISTMAS SHOW

We have a multitude of exciting events at Thornhill, with our infamous Christmas Show topping my list so far. Every year group has a different colour year 8 was red so you wear red tinsel and accessories whilst at the show. You and your form class get ready before making your way to the sports hall which has been transformed into a Winter Wonderland. My favourite act this year had to be the teacher band, it was such a fun atmosphere to be in with the music blasting and people dancing and cheering.

FRIENDS

Starting in a new class full of new people was very scary, but I have gained so many great friends since I have been here. One of my favourite memories with my friends was at Halloween when we got to do each other's face paint and our whole year group got to watch hocus pocus in the hall. These are moments we will never forget.

I've made so many memorable experiences and plan to make countless more in the next 7 years.

I hope I have shown you that you will have fun here and gain lots of new friends too. I really look forward to seeing you in the coming school year with your crisp green uniform as a Thornhill girl. Go raibh maith agat, Merci, Gracias.

Hannah Lyttle (Year 8)

Open Night Speech – Emma Corns

Good afternoon, to all the parents, grandparents, guardians and family members visiting Thornhill today, and a very special warm welcome to all our prospective Thornhill girls in Primary 6 and 7. I am Emma Corns, Head Girl of Thornhill and I am so excited to offer you an insight into our wonderful school and Thornhill family this afternoon.

Approaching the end of your primary school education can be a daunting yet exciting time for a lot of you. I vividly remember being in your shoes just seven years ago, visiting the schools during open days and deciding which would be the best fit for me. I particularly remember visiting Thornhill, just like all of you today, and being inspired by all the Girls kindness, enthusiasm and friendship, the amazing relationships between the pupils and staff, and of course the wonderful school building, and even today the magic and glimmer of the school on that specific open day in 2016 remains. I remember listening intently to the speech of then Head Girl, and hearing her talk of her Thornhill memories and how special this school was to her, and here today seven years later it feels surreal that I too am doing the same, sharing to the next generation of Thornhill girls just why our school is so exceptional.



For me I always wanted to come to Thornhill; it seemed like the obvious choice. My mum had come to this school before me and always talked about her time in the old school across the road with great fondness and the friends she made then still remain her best friends today, and so I made the decision to start Thornhill in the September of 2016, a decision I am eternally thankful that my younger self made. Coming alone from a very small rural primary school of 75 pupils to Thornhill, a school of over 1400, was a huge adjustment. There were so many more new faces, new subjects and new surroundings, yet I found my place and felt at home extremely quickly, thanks to the caring nature of our dedicated staff who are here to help every step of the way. The strong sense of family that is instilled within our pupils was evident from my first day, where I was taken under the wings of our older pupils through our Class Councillor and Class Buddy programme, which is something that many of you will avail of as you get settled into this school come September. The special emphasis on the relationships between the different years in our school through such schemes, made me feel so welcomed as I felt like I had a big sister watching out for me in the school to help me with any problems, worries or concerns. Taking part as a Class Councillor this year, where I got to know my new first year friends during their first few months as Thornhill girls has been such a fulfilling experience, and I'm sure a lot of you will form similar meaningful relationships with the older girls in the first few months of your Thornhill journey.

Coming to Thornhill I didn't really know anybody else and was quite shy and nervous, yet over the years I was nurtured through relationships with my peers and teachers alike to be a confident, courageous and capable young woman. The lifelong friendships I have made in this school with the amazing girls these past seven years have been so important and pivotal, in shaping the person I have become. As I again reflect back to my Thornhill open day in 2016 I often look at a photo of me that was taken for the local newspaper, and standing beside me was a girl Georgia who at the time was a stranger, but today is one of my closest friends, so as you sit here today in this very hall you may not realise some of the girls that are going to be such big components of your life may be sitting next to you. I look back at the start of my Thornhill journey with a huge smile on my face as I remember how much fun I really had in those first few years with my new form class. Between school socials, ceilidhs, netball tournaments, fashion shows and of course our iconic Christmas show, my first-year schedule was packed with such fun and excitement, where I made such important memories that I will cherish a lifetime. I often remember putting on that green uniform for the first time and feeling an indescribable feeling. Feeling like I was a true Thornhill Girl, and even today that same pride remains.

Thornhill really is a school for everyone, where each pupil is equally valued, heard and celebrated for their individual successes. It is a school that allows pupils to thrive in their own chosen field, realise their potential and believe they can achieve great things. Thornhill girls don't just thrive academically, they are equipped to be well rounded individuals that are caring, kind and concerned members of society, who can make a difference.

Much like many of you, I too am entering a new chapter in my life as I approach the end of my Thornhill days and make the scary transition to university. Yet the skills and knowledge I have learnt in my time here have equipped me to make this big next step in my life. Looking back at my time here it has been filled with much happiness, smiles, laughter, friendships and success, and for that I will be eternally grateful.

I wish each and every one of you all the success and blessings over the next few months as you make this big decision and hope to welcome many of you with open arms and hearts in September when you too become proud Thornhill Girls.

Emma Corns (Head Girl)



Congratulations!

Our congratulations go to Year 13 student Tara and Year 14 student Caoimhe who were recently selected for the Derry Ladies Gaelic Football Minor Panel. What a fantastic achievement ladies, very well done!!!



Congratulations!



Our congratulations go to the PE Department and all of those students who recently competed at the District XC Championships. A special word of congratulations goes to Year 8 student Saorla who as placed first in the Mini Girls, Year 10 student Ava who finished 8th to qualify for the Ulsters, Year 12 student Hannah who was placed 2nd in the Intermediate Girls and our Senior Girls Team (Sophia 4th, Aoife 7th, Kate 8th and Kate 12th) who have also qualified for the Ulsters. Our Senior Team finished first overall and our Intermediates finished 2nd – what a fantastic achievement ladies, very well-done to you all!





GLENTURAS

Thank You Glenturas!

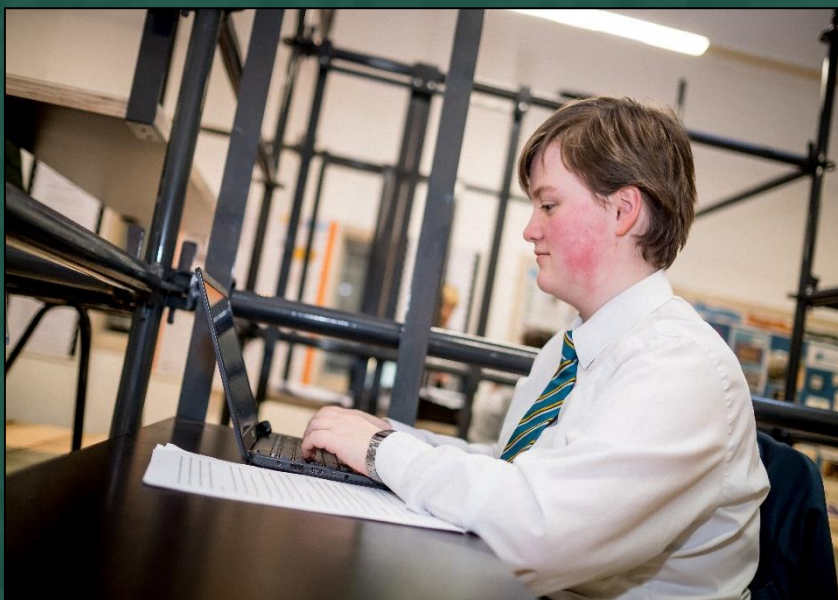


GLENTURAS

Our Technology and Design Department would like to say a massive thank-you to Glenturas Construction who most generously designed, built and installed a new workspace structure in the Technology Dept Foyer for the A-Level Technology and Design students at no cost to the school. Mr Gerard McCallion visited us the Department in June last year to view the space and find out what the department would like installed. He and his son then worked together to design and create this bespoke structure. This workspace will provide our Year 13 and Year 14 pupils with a dedicated area to study and work on their design portfolios within the department as well as facilitating easy workshop access. Our thanks also go to Mrs Casey, who approached Glenturas about this project and co-ordinated the installation with the school.

We would also like to offer a huge thank you to Mr Jim McCauley, former Head of Technology and Design in Thornhill College, who most generously has purchased new chairs for the workspace which will be arriving in the coming weeks. He was very excited to hear about the new workspace that was being created for our pupils and wanted to show his support and encouragement. These chairs compliment the new space immensely.

As a department we are greatly appreciative of the support and generosity that we have received to help create this space for our pupils which we hope to continue to enhance and develop over the coming years.





Our Brave Colleague Alex



We were delighted to welcome back from Ukraine our friend and colleague Alex Aria. He has been on the frontline after joining the International Ukrainian Legion just one week after the conflict began last year.

Alex has been working in Thornhill College for over six years as site manager for Avanti Cleaning Company. Originally from Argentina, Alex spent much time in Europe before settling in Ireland some 15 years ago. With some previous military and medical experience, he explained 'I immediately decided to go to Ukraine because I knew it was the right thing to do. The minute I saw the children, families and refugees at the border I knew it was the right thing.'

Alex's previous experience meant that he was involved in training the men to become soldiers overnight. He told us 'I have seen young men from all over the world with no experience of conflict whatsoever other than what they knew through the game Call of Duty, but they were determined and brave. One of the buildings we used for training actually translated into Thornhill and so I wear this badge and the tricolour on my uniform to remind me of home.'

Whilst Alex has been there from the very start, he is determined to remain until the very end. When asked about how he copes with what he's experienced he explained 'I don't want to forget because I don't want to lose the reason why I'm doing this. I channel the difficult experiences and memories into motivation to help the Ukrainian people.'

Alex also shared his heartfelt gratitude for the support of his family, friends and colleagues. 'I couldn't do it without the support of my partner Shauna and all my loved ones. I'd also like to thank my colleagues in Thornhill College for their prayers and generosity. When I was last back at the end of June the ladies in the office gave me an envelope with cash and with that, we were able to equip a paramedic. So, thank you from my heart as this was greatly appreciated and is keeping someone safe.'

Never one to take it easy Alex has been back in his job as Avanti site manager whilst on leave from Ukraine. He explained 'being back in my job in Thornhill is part of my life, it's a bit of normality.'

Alex returned to Ukraine at the end of January and with him he takes our prayers, thoughts and good wishes. We look forward to seeing him again very soon.

If you'd like to find out more about Alex's experience you can listen to a recent interview he did for Radio Foyle on BBC Sounds.



Congratulations Aoife!

Our congratulations go to Aoife Moore (one of our Year 14 students last year) who has been selected for CCEA's 2023 True Colours Art Exhibition. True Colours is an annual exhibition of what CCEA considers to be the best A-level artwork in Northern Ireland, so this a tremendous achievement by Aoife. The exhibition will be held in the Ulster Museum, Belfast and will run throughout February.



Congratulations Emily!

Our congratulations go to Emily Moran who entered the British Physics Olympiad this year and achieved a Silver Award which places her in the top third of students who sat the exam (2,830 top Physics students from the UK and a further 2,500 students in China). This is a significant achievement and the Physics Department are very proud of her Emily and her efforts to go above and beyond the A-Level syllabus. Well-done Emily on this fantastic achievement!



Congratulations!

Our congratulations go to Annie (Year 10), Sarah, Ellen and Shannon (Year 11) and Freya (Year 12). These girls were recently selected for U16 Derry Ladies Gaelic Football Panel. Well-done on this fantastic achievement ladies – we are very proud of you all!



What Parents & Carers Need to Know about

TWITTER

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Twitter is a social media network which allows users to post short messages ('tweets') of up to 280 characters. Tweets can consist of text, photos, videos, audio, links, polls and GIFs – often linked by hashtags if they share a common theme or message. Hashtags receiving high levels of interest are said to be 'trending'. Twitter users can engage with other people's posts by liking, retweeting (sharing) or tweeting back (commenting on). Since the entrepreneur Elon Musk acquired Twitter in October 2022 for \$44 billion, he has implemented several major changes to the platform.

INTERACTION WITH STRANGERS

Tweets are public by default, meaning that anyone can view and interact with posts, follow someone and send direct messages. The concern here is that young people may therefore connect and communicate with strangers. Some individuals may follow a young person's Twitter account simply because they have similar interests; however, others may turn out to have more sinister intentions.

FIXATION ON VIEW COUNT

Twitter has recently introduced a 'view count' feature – telling users how many people have seen their tweet (even if they haven't reacted to it). Previous research has found that unfavourable comparisons with other social media users can cause young people to experience feelings of insecurity, jealousy and low self-esteem – leading to an obsession with increasing their numbers.

TROLLS AND BULLYING

The anonymity offered by fake profiles encourages some users to send tweets designed to provoke a reaction; to disrupt conversations; to spark an argument; or to harass the recipient. Such trolling and bullying can impact the mental wellbeing of both the target and anyone who witnesses it. Encourage your child to come to you if they experience such behaviour on Twitter, or if they see it taking place.

PAID-FOR VERIFICATION

Previously, if a Twitter profile displayed a blue tick icon, it meant that the owner – usually a celebrity or a major organisation – had been verified as genuine. Now, however, anyone can pay for a Twitter Blue subscription to receive the tick, with the platform carrying out limited checks on the account's authenticity. This could easily lead to more fake accounts impersonating real people or companies.

CONTENT MODERATION CHANGES

In late 2022, Twitter stated that their 'policy enforcement will rely more heavily on de-amplification of violative content: freedom of speech, but not freedom of reach'. No policies have changed yet, but this wording suggests they may limit who can see posts rather than removing them. While supporting free speech, this could encourage an environment where some toxic content remains online.

HIJACKED HASHTAGS

The hashtag (#) is one of Twitter's most recognisable facets, allowing users to find specific trends or topics. But the sheer volume of tweets each hour can rapidly distort a hashtag's meaning: an initially innocent search term can quickly end up returning inappropriate results. This is common with 'trending' hashtags, as people know that using them will get their tweet seen by a larger audience.

Advice for Parents & Carers

SET ACCOUNTS TO PRIVATE

To reduce some of the fear of your child's tweets being seen and shared by anyone, you can always make their account protected. This means that your child has to give approval for another user to view their posts. You can change Twitter's privacy settings so that your child can't be messaged directly by other people on the platform and their geographical location won't be shared.

FOSTER CRITICAL THINKING

It can be difficult for anyone to ascertain if something online is real or false, but particularly for young people. Encourage your child to check several reputable sources to determine if a story they've seen is true; remind them to watch out for scams and think about the message's possible motive. Emphasise that it's not a good idea to retweet something if they aren't sure it's correct.

ENGAGE SAFETY MODE

When Safety Mode is activated, Twitter checks for abusive or spammy behaviour such as hurtful language or repeated negative replies. The platform then flags these suspect accounts and blocks them from responding to your child's tweets. The autoblock function then prevents these accounts from interacting with your child's again for seven days.

EXPLORE THE NEW SETTINGS

Previously, any user could reply to anyone else's tweets. However, the new conversation settings let your child determine who can reply to their posts – either by selecting everyone (the default option), people they follow or only people they mention (using the @ symbol). This improvement has given users extra control, providing them with more protection from trolls and online abuse.

PAUSE BEFORE POSTING

It's important that young people think about what they're about to post and whether they might regret it later. Twitter has developed 'nudges': little prompts which appear if someone is about to tweet using harmful or offensive language. These nudges promote more positive online behaviour by giving users an opportunity to pause and consider their words before they post something.

BLOCK, REPORT OR MUTE

If someone is upsetting your child on Twitter, you can block and report them. Blocking stops them from messaging or following your child, while reporting an account alerts Twitter to investigate possible misuse. The 'mute' feature, meanwhile, keeps tweets from a specific account (or which include certain words) out of your child's timeline. The other user won't know that they've been muted.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



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BE CAREFUL WHO TO FOLLOW

As accounts are no longer being as rigorously verified under the 'blue tick' system, it's essential that young Twitter users understand what this means, in terms of people not necessarily being who they claim. Anyone who your child only knows online is still a stranger, regardless of how long they've been communicating for. Remind your child never to disclose personal information on social media.

Source: <https://blog.twitter.com/common-thread/en/topics/stories/2022/how-twitter-is-nudging-users-healthier-conversations> | https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2022/twitter-blue-update | https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2022/twitter-2-0-our-continued-commitment-to-the-public-conversation | <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2131&context=etd>



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