

PRESS PASS AWARDS BASH

Winning take on passion free TDs

By EMMA FLANAGAN

POLITICS is a mess. That's a well-known fact. Young people generally don't care and the adults wish they didn't have to.

Career politics has taken over. Politicians don't have policies they believe in or that could change the country for the better, they have policies that get them elected.

Passion in politics seems dead, and that's a great shame.

I have a strong interest in politics, quite unusual for someone my age, and even I'm bored. What does that say about politics in this country, and in the West as a whole?

And, yes, I'm aware politics is not a soap opera, although some politicians might act a bit like it is. But it's hardly far-fetched to say that if politicians really did care about doing a good job, then politics would be a lot more interesting.

A very worrying example happened very recently.

Ann Phelan, Minister of State at the Departments of Agriculture, Food and Marine, Transport, Tourism and Sport, spoke to a completely empty Dail.

There was not a single Government or Opposition TD there. Her attempt to pass an amendment to the new Prisons Bill went down worryingly smoothly as there was absolutely no one to oppose her.

How can the general public be expected to actively engage in politics when politicians themselves don't even seem to be engaged?

This apathy only worsens when it comes to young people, who honestly couldn't care less about politics.

I don't want to force young people who don't have an interest in politics to fake one, but I do wish more were at least aware of what is going on in their own country and how this can affect them.

It can be hard to express this without sounding preachy. I can't help but wonder if Ireland needs its own version of Russell Brand.

Say what you will about his beliefs, during the British general election he managed to engage more young people than any politicians did.

He talked to them about how what was being done in politics could affect them. It was very honest.

Maybe we should do what Scotland did, lower the voting age to 16. It seems young people take more of an interest in politics because they finally have a say.

Essentially, politics has to change, and quickly, or risk alienating people altogether. I'm unsure how many more people it can afford to lose.



The write stuff . . . Emma shows off her Press Pass trophy with newsclub Zachary, opinion setter Eoin, super snapper Lorraine and ace sports writer Ciaran

READ IT AND REAP

By BARRY MORAN

KEEPING up with the news can help today's students to develop skills that will benefit them throughout their lives, a major awards ceremony heard yesterday.

More than 60,000 Transition Year students took part in Newsbrands Ireland's latest newspapers-in-education scheme.

And 7,500 entered this year's Press Pass competition, with the winners chosen by a panel of editors and journalists.

Damien English, Minister for Skills, Research and Innovation, said the project had given aspiring reporters a greater understanding of the working world, as well as the chance to hone their writing skills.

Presenting the winners with their prizes, he explained: "Press Pass is a positive initiative that can benefit Transition Year students in a variety

Newspapers boost kids' reading, writing and critical thinking

of ways, not only by improving literacy skills and helping to prepare them for the Leaving Cert English course, but also by developing a greater understanding of the world we live in.

"Newspapers are an excellent teaching tool and we commend NewsBrands Ireland for providing them free of charge to participating schools."

It was the fourth year that NewsBrands – the representative body for all the major news titles in the country – had run the initiative, teaming with the Irish League of Credit Unions as sponsor.

The overall winner was Emma

Flanagan from Our Lady's College in Drogheda, while trophies were also awarded in five other categories – Features, Opinion, News, Sport and Photojournalism.

Launched in 2012, it is estimated that more than almost 60,000 students from schools around the country have now taken part in the programme.

Speaking in Dublin's Convention Centre, NewsBrands Ireland chairman Vincent Crowley said the standard of entries in this year's competition demonstrated the huge commitment of students and their schools, as well as the educational power of newspapers in the classroom.

He added: "Once again this year's entries are of an exceptional standard and what's really coming through is a sense of enjoyment and love of words."

"The winning entries demonstrate a confident grasp of language and literacy that will stand to the students whatever they choose to do in life."

Brian McCrory, President of the Irish League of Credit Unions, added: "We are very proud to support Press Pass, which offers a range of exceptional benefits to participating schools and students."

"Reading newspapers is an easy and enjoyable way to enhance one's knowledge, and in that context Press Pass fits well with the ethos of Credit Unions."

@BarryM85

Skills . . . English

WINNERS

OVERALL WINNER

Emma Flanagan, Our Lady's College, Drogheda, Co Louth.

FEATURES

1st — Karen Stapleton, Colaiste na Sceilge, Caherciveen, Co Kerry.

2nd — Ali Cousins, St. Mary's College, Naas, Co Kildare.

3rd — Sarah Babiker, St. Mary's College, Naas, Co Kildare.

OPINION

1st — Eoin Hartnett, Colaiste Chraoibhin, Fermoy, Co Cork.

2nd — Aoife Ni Ealuighthe, Pobalscoil na Trinoide, Youghal, Co Cork.

3rd — Siobhan Ni Neachtain, Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, Dingle, Co Kerry.

NEWS

1st — Zachary Gillespie, St Columba's Comprehensive School, Glenties, Co Donegal.

2nd — Anna O'Neill, Loreto College, Foxrock, Dublin.

SPORT

1st — Ciaran Sheehan, CBS, Charleville.

2nd — Aoife Fennell, Donabate Community School, Dublin.

3rd — Andrew Quinlivan, St Brendan's, Killarney, Co Kerry.

PHOTOJOURNALISM

1st — Lorraine Hanrahan, Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland, Co Kerry.

2nd — Niamh Cronin, Presentation Secondary School, Ballyphehane, Cork.

3rd — Daragh Murphy, Colaiste Iognaid, Galway.

'EMMA'S BANG ON'

By Professor John Horgan, Chairman of Judging Panel

YOU can't learn much about journalism from textbooks, but all those I've ever read contain two sound pieces of advice.

The first is grab the reader's attention. If you don't do that straight off, the rest of your article is basically for wrapping the fish and chips. Or, as one experienced journalist put it to me: Who reads the second paragraph? Only someone who has found the first paragraph interesting.

The second piece of good advice is that the second-most important paragraph is the last. This is because a well-written article will end with a bang, not a whimper, and will therefore stick in the reader's memory.

Our overall winner scores top marks on both counts. What's more, Emma seems endowed with the gift of prophecy. Her article, written (and judged) before the election, captured the public mood even before it had been expressed in the ballot box.

