



THE  
KING'S  
HOSPITAL  
SCHOOL

350  
-1669 YEARS 2019-

## Media Release

### Irish boys win top awards at science fair in Phoenix Arizona

**May 18, 2019:** Two fifth-year students from The King's Hospital School in Palmerstown, Dublin, have won three top prizes at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (Intel ISEF) in Phoenix Arizona for their project 'Developing Novel, Low-Cost Methods to Support Citizen Scientists in the Conservation of Bat Species'.

Richard Beattie, from Baldonnell, Dublin, and Dylan Bagnall from Kentstown, Co Meath, were awarded the China Association for Science & Technology (CAST) prize worth \$1,200; best in the Animal Science category prize of \$3,000 and best in the Life Sciences category, worth \$5,000.

CAST awards are given to projects that best reflect the originality and innovation of students' work in all scientific disciplines.

The Intel Foundation also awards a \$1,000 grant to each winner's school and to the affiliated fair they represent, in this case, Sentinus Northern Ireland.

On hearing the news, Headmaster, Mark Ronan said 'this is a remarkable achievement for Richard and Dylan, who are committed and passionate students yet make time to engage in life beyond the classroom – supported by an inspiring teacher. We are all incredibly proud of them and encouraged for the future by their innovation and confidence.'

Speaking from Arizona on Friday, the boys' science teacher and mentor, Ciaran O'Connor, said: "This event is the equivalent of the Olympics for science students. Perhaps even cooler than the monetary prizes – both boys will get a near-Earth asteroid named after them by MIT."

The boys – now both 17 – qualified for this all expenses-paid trip by winning the top prize at Sentinus Northern Ireland in 2018. They also came first in the Biological &

Ecological category at the BT Young Scientist & Technology Exhibition 2019 and received an additional award from the Irish Research Council.

Research for the bat conservation project was undertaken both at Dylan's home in Kentstown, Co Meath – where a bat roost with a variety of bat species has been in existence for many years – and on the grounds of The King's Hospital School.

The boys set about identifying bats from the roost using an inexpensive Raspberry Pi detector and polymerase chain reaction analysis.

Richard said: “We are trying to raise awareness about bat conservation. We believe the specific tools we have developed are now ready to be used by everyday citizen scientists. We have developed our own website <https://batidentification.com> and we hope to get people who have bats in their homes to report them to us.”

Gerard Hughes of Sentinus Northern Ireland who also travelled to Phoenix with the boys said: “The key factors considered by the judges in awarding the top prize to the boys were how innovative the project was, the fact that it was an interdisciplinary project, the scope for use by citizen scientists and the boys’ very impressive presentation skills.”

In other exciting news, Richard Beattie has achieved a place on the prestigious Summer School Programme at The Research Science Institute at MIT, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Students from around the world will conduct original research for 6 weeks, with all fees covered.

### **About Intel ISEF**

Intel ISEF, which is a Society for Science & the Public programme, is the world's largest international pre-college science competition.

Each year, about 1,800 second-level students from more than 75 countries, regions, and territories are awarded the opportunity to showcase their independent research and compete for on average \$4 million in prizes.

Millions of students worldwide compete each year in local and school-sponsored science fairs; the winners of these events go on to participate in Society-affiliated regional and state fairs from which the best win the opportunity to attend Intel ISEF.

Intel ISEF unites these top young scientific minds, showcasing their talents on an international stage, where doctoral level scientists review and judge their work.

### **About Sentinus NI**

Sentinus is a charity in Northern Ireland supported by the Department of Education. It is a cross border initiative that encourages cooperation between schools North and South of the border. The purpose of the competition is to promote enquiry-based projects encouraging the use of skills that are so necessary for today's ever-changing work environment

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