

GAIRMSCOIL MHUIRE



**Gairmscoil Mhuire**  
**Athenry Vocational School**

School Prospectus

# Welcome / Fáilte

Welcome to Gairmscoil Mhuire. I hope that this prospectus will answer some of the questions that you may have about our school and give you an insight into the many curricular and extracurricular innovations that have, I believe, produced excellence in all facets of our practice.



## Our commitment to you

As Principal, I see my most important responsibility as ensuring that all students at Gairmscoil Mhuire can reach their potential in a safe, secure and welcoming environment. We provide an excellent teaching and learning environment.

Our students are encouraged by our excellent team of teachers to work hard and achieve.

We believe that all our students can reach their goals and progress to further education or employment.

Ciaran Folan  
Principal



# Our School

## Academic excellence

Each year our students consistently achieve high grades in both the Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations. Proof of this can be found in the fact that over 87% of this year's Leaving Certificate class have progressed to further education. Destination colleges for our students include: N.U.I.Galway, Trinity College Dublin, U.C.D., University of Limerick, Mary Immaculate College, Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, Athlone IT and Sligo IT. Our former students are studying: Engineering, Science, Accountancy, Law, Business, Psychology, Nursing, Human Health and Disease, Primary Teaching, Architectural Technology and Arts.

## Caring for our students

Our students are cared for by our guidance and pastoral care teams who support them throughout their time in our school. We believe that our students are equipped with life skills for the future, the academic skills and knowledge required for further education and confidence in themselves as learners and citizens.

## Transition to Post Primary School

We work hard to make the transition from Primary to Post Primary school for all students as easy as possible. We encourage all our students to work at the highest possible level in each subject and we give all of our students an equal start in the school. We form classes based on a structured mix in first year whereby students are placed in mixed ability classes and where there is a proportional balance of boys and girls. This provides all students with the best possible start in first year and allows them time to settle into their new school and experience their new subjects. We run taster courses to allow students to experience all the subjects we offer and to help them make informed choices about the subjects they wish to study.

## Physical Infrastructure

Our school has excellent teaching and learning facilities. We have three fully equipped Science laboratories, four practical rooms, two Home Economics rooms and all our classrooms have the latest teaching and learning technology. All students have a netbook and school wide WiFi gives access to learning resources and classroom materials.

We have a large gymnasium and excellent sports facilities. In the 2014/2015 school year work will commence on a new 1,000 pupil state of the art school on a green-field site.

## Home School links

We continually monitor student's academic performance, behaviour and attendance throughout the year through our online school management system. Parents have access to all of the information on monthly assessments, attendance and behaviour through E-Portal at home, on each of their children.

This system has allowed us to open up better communication channels between the school and home and helps to keep parents fully informed and actively involved in their child's education, which I believe is essential to ensure that students can reach their full potential.

## Extra-Curricular activities

Gairmscoil Mhuire is well represented in a wide and varied range of sporting and extracurricular activities. Our teams have won numerous honours and individuals have excelled in various activities. Our Junior Hurling Team won the All Ireland Vocational Schools title this year. In January we will stage the musical "Oliver" which will involve the whole school community.

Our best ambassadors for our school are our students, so please visit our school, engage with our staff, parents and students and learn what Gairmscoil Mhuire has to offer your child.



# Why choose Gairmscoil Mhuire?

You want the best education and opportunities for your child and here in Gairmscoil Mhuire we work together in partnership to achieve this.

## Strong Academic Focus

- Excellent Junior & Leaving Certificate results. Percentage of A, B & C grades above national average in almost all subjects.
- 87% of last year's cohort progressed to further education either in Ireland or the UK.
- Focus on target setting and study skills from 1st year.
- Evening study and evening subject revision classes.
- Academic Monitors and supports in place for all students.
- Small class sizes in 1st year (24 or less) across all subjects.
- Results for all school tests available online for parents.

## Pastoral Support

- Year head and class tutors in conjunction with pastoral care team monitor student welfare.
- Mentoring programme for all first years, paired with senior cycle students.
- Anti-Bullying programme in place.
- Rewards for each class group based on behaviour and conduct in 1st to 3rd year.

## Positive Behaviour

We expect and promote high standards of behaviour centred on respect:

- Respect for self
- Respect for fellow students
- Respect for staff
- Respect for property

## Wide Range of Sport and other Extra-curricular Activities

- Sports include: Hurling, Camogie, Football, Rugby, Basketball, Soccer, Volleyball, Athletics, Golf and Show jumping among others
- Extra-curricular- Quiz Teams, Mini-Company, Gaisce, Fashion Show, Young Scientist, School Tours
- Music- Cello Program for beginners, Guitar lessons, Choir, Drumming workshops.
- School Musical "Oliver" in January 2014

## Wide and Diverse Curriculum

- New Junior Cycle lead school - Locally developed courses in: Computer Science, Sports Science (Hurling and Camogie focussed), Agricultural/Horticultural Science & Music/Drama.
- Spanish, French and German.

Taster programme of all optional subjects in first term.





# 1st Year Curriculum and settling in

## “Nurturing the Individual”

### Settling In

First years return to school in September with TY mentors only. This helps to them familiarise themselves with the school and their fellow year group. Students also meet with their mentors throughout first year and also visit Petersburg adventure centre during first term year to help build up friendships and relationships. All first years are encouraged to participate in sport, musical, science, quiz or mini-company activities to build a better relationship with their peers and teachers.

### Subject Choice

Students will follow a taster programme for the first half term and will experience each of the optional subjects before deciding upon their desired subjects. Students will also experience Spanish, French and German before choosing their preferred language.

**Core Subjects:** English, Irish, Mathematics, History, Geography, Science, Civic Social Political Education, Social Personal Health Education, Religious Education & Physical Education. Computer studies is integrated across all subjects and students will cover the use of IT in subjects such as Maths, Irish and Science in addition to the optional subjects.

**Optional Subjects: 2 from** Business Studies, Art, Craft and Design, Music, Material Technology (Metal), Material Technology (Wood), Technical Graphics and Home Economics, **1 from** French German and Spanish

**Junior Cycle Short Courses: Computer Science** (developed in conjunction with NUIG and University of Limerick), **Sports Science** (Hurling and Camogie focussed), **Agricultural/Horticultural Science** and **Music and Drama**.

### Pastoral Care

Each class in the school has a teacher who is known to the class as their Class Tutor. The tutor develops a special rapport with each individual in the class and is available to assist pupils with any problems they may be experiencing. The school holds weekly pastoral care meetings to discuss any issues that may concern the welfare of particular students or group of students and ensures appropriate supports are put in place for students. Each class group is named after their class tutor.

### Academic Monitors

Class tutors act as academic monitor, they continually monitor the progress of each student in all of their subjects. The role of the academic monitor is to support students to ensure they achieve their full potential in each subject. They will identify students based on the monthly assessments and referrals from class teachers, year heads and school management, who require support and will identify appropriate strategies to improve students' academic progress.

### Peer - Mentors

A group of Transition year students volunteer to take part in a training programme which enables them to act as mentors to incoming first years the following year. Each participant is assigned to a small group of students and becomes their mentor.

#### The aims of the peer - mentorship programme are:-

- To befriend and support first years
- To give first years a sense of belonging and acceptance
- To provide a friendship network and positive role models
- To create a safe and caring school community
- To help with the transition from primary to post - primary school

### Special Educational Needs

Ms Qualter heads up our SEN department of Ms Fahy, Ms O'Sullivan and Ms Conneely who are all fully qualified in this area. We make early contact with feeder primary schools to ascertain the needs and educational requirements of all students. This ensures that we can put in place at an early stage all of the appropriate resources and strategies necessary to ensure all students' educational and personal needs are met here in the school.



# Curriculum

## New Junior Cycle

From 2014 the New Junior Cycle will be introduced in all schools. It will feature newly developed subjects and short courses, a focus on literacy, numeracy and key skills, and new approaches of assessment and reporting. Schools will have more freedom to design programmes that meet the learning needs of all students.

Gairmscoil Mhuire is one of 41 network schools across the country that have been working on the new Junior Cycle for the past two years. In that time we have gained valuable experience and developed staff expertise that will allow us to implement the new Junior Cycle to the benefit of our students.

### Junior Cycle Subjects

- Maths, English, Gaeilge, Science, Geography, History, CSPE
- Spanish, French or German
- Art, Music, Home Ec., Metalwork, Woodwork, Technical Graphics, Business (Optional)
- Physical Education, Social Personal Health Education, Religious Education
- Two Short Courses from:
  - Computer Science (developed in conjunction with NUIG and University of Limerick)
  - Sports Science (Hurling and Camogie focussed)
  - Agricultural/Horticultural Science
  - Music and Drama

### Transition Year (Optional)

Transition Year is offered to students who wish to take time before moving into fifth year to build personal confidence, to gain competence in the core academic subjects and to develop skills and knowledge in a way that may not be possible in the more exam orientated classes.

Transition Year also provides another gateway of entry to subject choice at Senior Cycle.

### Transition Year Subjects

- Gaeilge
- Mathematics
- English
- Language (French or German)
- Physical Education
- Information Technology
- Religious Education
- Social Outreach
- Careers

In addition to traditional subjects students participate in a wide variety of interesting modules such as:

Geography, Business, History, Economics, Physics, Chemistry, CAD, Driver Theory, Law, Journalism, Sign Language, Drama, Music, Film, Art, Environmental Studies, Biology and Agricultural Science.

### Leaving Certificate

Students study seven subjects for Leaving Certificate.

Core Subjects:

Gaeilge, English, Mathematics

Option Subjects:

All fifth year students choose four of the following subjects:

French or German, Accounting, Agricultural Science, Construction Studies, Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Design and Communications Graphics, Engineering, Geography, History, Home Economics, Music, Physics

Non Examination Subjects:

Religious Education and Physical Education

### Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

This course is ideally suited to students who wish to follow a course aimed at acquiring practical skills, work experience and an opportunity to accumulate credits through on-going assessment. This is a two-year programme.

# Delivering a quality education for our students

## ICT Innovation

- Netbooks for students.
- 100Mb Broadband.
- Wireless network to give students and teachers access to learning resources.
- Online resource project with other ETB schools to develop classroom resources for our students.
- Collaborative intranet with resource sharing for students and teachers.
- Robotics module being introduced for 1st and 2nd Years in collaboration with NUI Galway.
- Coderdojo Programming club runs in the school every Saturday during term time. (Organised and run by Athenry Coderdojo club).

## Best Practice in Teaching and Learning

- New Junior Cycle Network School.
- Instructional Leadership Programme – Two year programme where selected staff undergo training on the best teaching strategies to support student learning. Only 90 schools participate every two years, this is our fourth year to take part.
- Assessment for learning. Giving feedback to students on how to improve not just performance or grades.
- School self-evaluation focussed on literacy, numeracy and key learning skills.
- Evening study is available for a nominal fee until 6pm each evening.
- During the year we run after school revision courses in core subjects.





# Music and Drama

## “Nurturing Creative Talents”

### School Concert and Musical

This year sees us stage our school musical “Oliver”.

### School Choir

Our school choir has recorded a Christmas CD of Irish songs in the Church of the Assumption, Athenry. Our growing school choir, mainly comprised of junior cycle music students, are also in rehearsal for the school musical and school choir competitions.

### Music Department

We have a vibrant and growing music department here in the school. We have recently installed new IT software and hardware for the IT element of the course. In addition we have purchased new guitars, an organ and other musical instruments.

### Partnership with Athenry School of Music

**Cello & Violin Music programme** - all 1st year students are given a lesson in the cello and violin by an experienced teacher. The program proved very popular with a waiting list in place for the 20 cellos and 10 violins available to those who wanted to continue with the music instruction after the initial lesson.

Each cello and violin student is given an instrument to take home and bring to school for lessons. It is hoped to develop this program further to include additional instruments next year. We are deeply appreciative of the work of the Athenry School of Music in helping us deliver this programme.

## Sport and Extra Curricular Activities

### Comprehensive range of sports for All Interests

Athenry Vocational School has a very proud sporting tradition. We cater for Hurling, Camogie, Gaelic Football, Basketball, Volleyball, Rugby, Soccer, Athletics and Golf. Our Junior Hurling Team are All -Ireland Vocational Schools Champions 2013 and the school has won eleven All-Ireland Hurling Championships in recent times.

Many of our students have gone on to achieve sporting scholarships in numerous universities in Ireland.

### Extra & co-Curricular

We have enjoyed success in such activities as the Young Scientist (National Category award winner) and Junior Achievement (Business - Regional winners and national finalists). We have also celebrated success in Foras na Gaeilge competitions, quizzes, National Art and Design events (Form and Fusion finalist).

Our students have wide and varied interests. We endeavour to meet those interests and support students in whatever activities and events they wish to participate.



## Parents' Council

At the Annual General Meeting of parents each year parents are elected to form the Parents' Council.

The Parents' Council meets regularly and acts as a representative body who:

- represent the views of parents
- inform parents of developments in education and in the school
- foster co-operation between parents, teachers and school management
- provide opportunities for parents and the school principal or representative of staff to meet and exchange ideas on the education of their children, to discuss issues such as discipline, homework etc. and to address topics of mutual interest
- help with the provision of extra equipment and fund-raising

*Parents who wish to become actively involved in the school are welcome and encouraged to join the Parents Council.*

## Student Council

The Student Council consists of a representative body elected from and by the general cohort of students in the school. The Student Council gives students an opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions and to play an active role in policy-making in the school. A member of staff liaises with the Student Council and through the Council links are formed between the students and school management.

## Patronage

Gairmscoil Mhuire is a school under the patronage of the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board

From 1st July 2013 Co. Galway V.E.C. merged with City of Galway V.E.C. and Co. Roscommon V.E.C., to form the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (E.T.B.).



## **CONTACT US**

Phone: **091-844159**

Fax: **091-845149**

Email: **[admin.athenryvs@gretb.ie](mailto:admin.athenryvs@gretb.ie)**

Principal: **Mr. Ciaran Folan** **[principal.athenryvs@gretb.ie](mailto:principal.athenryvs@gretb.ie)**

Deputy Principal: **Mr. Tomás Ó Flaharta** **[toflaharta@gretb.ie](mailto:toflaharta@gretb.ie)**

Visit: **[www.athenryvs.com](http://www.athenryvs.com)**



## CONTACT US

Phone: **091-844159**

Fax: **091-845149**

Email: **[admin.athenryvs@gretb.ie](mailto:admin.athenryvs@gretb.ie)**

Principal: **Mr. Ciaran Folan** **[principal.athenryvs@gretb.ie](mailto:principal.athenryvs@gretb.ie)**

Deputy Principal: **Mr. Tomás Ó Flatharta** **[toflaharta@gretb.ie](mailto:toflaharta@gretb.ie)**

Visit: **[www.athenryvs.com](http://www.athenryvs.com)**