

Gairmscoil Mhuire Prospectus

Athenry Vocational School visit us at avs.scoilnet.ie



Why choose our school

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- **Strong Academic Focus**
 - The Leaving Certificate percentage of A, B & C grades above national average in almost all subjects.
 - Focus on target setting from 1st year
 - Focus on revision techniques and strategies from 1st year.
 - Evening study and evening subject revision classes.
 - Academic Monitors and Supports put in place for all students.
 - Small class sizes in 1st year (24 or less) across all subjects
 - Results available for all school tests online for parents
 - 85% of last year's cohort progressed to higher education, with a number deferring their offer for a year, while the remainder are completing PLCs and a few repeating to achieve higher points.
- **Pastoral Support**
 - Class groups named after class tutor eg 1 Fahy, 1 Hurney.
 - "Cool Schools" Anti-Bullying programme in place. 1 of only 2 schools in West implementing this programme which is based on national best practice.
 - Mentoring programme for all first years, paired with senior cycle students.
 - Senior prefects monitor, help and support students
 - Year head and class tutors in conjunction with pastoral care team monitor student welfare.
 - Rewards for each class group based on behaviour and conduct in 1st to 3rd year.
- **Wide Range of Sport and other Extra-curricular Activities**
 - Sports include: Hurling, Camogie, Football, Rugby, Basketball, Volleyball, Athletics, Golf and Showjumping among others
 - Extra curricular- Quiz Teams, Mini-Company, Gaisce, Fashion Show, Young Scientist, School Tours
 - Music- Cello Program for beginners (All 1st years get at least 1 lesson), Guitar lessons, Choir, Drumming workshops, School Stars -School show this year hosted in conjunction with UTV and JW promotions. Next year there will be a school musical we alternate the school show with a musical.
- **Wide and Diverse Curriculum**
 - Spanish will be available from next year for all new 1st years in addition to French and German
 - Taster programme of all optional subjects in first term
 - Transition Year- strong academic focus with 1 day per week devoted to activities. The remainder of the week is spent on academic subjects.

Message from the Principal

Dear Parent and Student

Choosing the right second level school is one of the most important decisions any student or parent will make. While most schools offer the same subjects and the same sports and other extra-curricular activities, it is the quality of the teaching and learning experience and the overall care of each student that tends to distinguish them.

Our aim in Gairmscoil Mhuire is to create and develop the best environment for students to learn and teachers to teach so as all students can reach their full potential.

We have an excellent teaching staff here in Gairmscoil Mhuire who have many years of valuable teaching experience and who achieve the highest results with students each year. They continually strive to ensure that the highest standards of education are provided to each and every student.

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 continually monitor student's academic performance, behaviour and attendance throughout the year through our online school management system. Parents will also have access to all of the information on monthly assessments, attendance and behaviour through the 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.

We hope that you will consider our school and place your trust in us to provide your child with the best possible education.



Alan Mongey
Principal

1st Year Curriculum & Settling In

Settling In

First years return to school in September with senior cycle mentors only. This helps to 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 to 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 also 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.

We are **introducing Spanish** as a new subject next year and students will **also experience French and German** before choosing **their preferred language**.

Subjects Core: 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 Math, Irish and Science in addition tot eh optional subjects

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

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

Each year group has been assigned an academic monitor who continually monitors 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 student's academic progress.

Petersburg – Team Building

Each year we take all 1st year students on a day trip to Petersburg to help develop and enhance positive relationships and friendships among the year group.



1st Year Curriculum & Settling In

Peer - Mentors

A group of 4th 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

Prefects

A number of Leaving Certificate students are chosen each year to act as prefects. Their role and duties vary however they have a specific role to support and help all first year students.

They attend each first year assembly and take an active part in offering support and advice to students throughout the year from study and revision help to assisting during Anti-Bullying week and raising awareness and helping to address any concerns students might have.

Home School Community Liaison

Our Home School Community Liaison Teacher is Ms Booth. The HSCL Scheme is a preventative strategy, which is targeted at pupils who are at risk of not reaching their full potential in the educational system.

The aim of the scheme is to promote partnership between home, school and the community to ensure that every child participates fully in school life. Ms Booth works with parents and teachers with the aim of developing partnership and the 'whole-school' approach to education. The scheme recognises parents as the primary educators of their children and Ms Booth supports them in this important role.

Ms Booth is an invaluable asset to the school and please feel free to contact her should you have any concerns.

Special Educational Needs

Ms Qualter heads up our SEN department of Ms Kinsella, 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.

If you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact Ms Qualter. We advise all parents to submit any reports with their application for a place in the school

Innovation In Education

Investment in ICT infrastructure and Training

- **In addition to the recent government grant we have invested heavily in ICT in recent years**
 - WE have 3 fully equipped computer rooms
 - Data projectors in all rooms (Static or mobile)
 - Interactive whiteboards in Science, Irish, History, Geography and Home Economics and Art and being rolled out further to other subject areas
 - Computers are available at lunchtime for student use and in the study centre for after school work on projects
 - Each student has their own network login and student folder.
 - Each student has access to teachers' resources on the school internal network with additional resources being rolled out on the internet through the website and the through "Fronter" a secure online website for teachers notes.
 - Our teachers attend regular in-service in ICT and its use in the classroom

School Book Rental

- We currently operate a book rental scheme costing 200, 80 and 70euro in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year respectfully to cover the cost of textbooks, lockers, school diary and examination papers. This equates to over 200Euro in saving for families.
- **Netbooks to replace textbooks**
 - **We are currently however in negotiations to purchase electronic versions of all textbooks with a view to preloading them onto Netbooks for use in school. Therefore reducing the need to bring large bulky textbooks into school.**
 - **This will make life significantly better for our students and we hope to roll this out to all year groups over the coming years.**

Healthy Eating Policy

- In conjunction with the HSE and our canteen staff we are currently reviewing what our students eat and as part of the new building being constructed this year we intend to provide better canteen and seating facilities for our students with a view to ensuring all students eat a healthy and balanced diet each day

E-Portal

- Parents will be issued with a secure username and password to the school website where they will be able to access
 - Attendance and Punctuality details
 - Assessment results
 - Behaviour and Conduct detailsThis system allows us to provide more detailed and up-to-date information on student progression for parents

Music and Drama

School Concert and Musical

This year sees us stage our school concert (Nov 25 at 7:30pm) in conjunction with JW productions and UTV. The show is similar in format to the X-Factor with the winning acts progressing onto regional and national finals. WE alternate the school concert with a musical every few years and intend to run a new musical in November 2011



School Choir

Our school choir has recorded a Christmas CD of Irish song in the Church of the Assumption Athenry. Our growing school choir mainly comprised of first and second year music students are also in rehearsal for the school concert 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, organ and other musical instruments.

Partnership with Athenry School of Music

Cello Music programme- all 1st year students are given a lesson in the cello and are taken on a tour of the universe by an experienced cello teacher. The program proved very popular with a waiting list in place for the 20 cellos available to those who wanted to continue with the music instruction after the initial lesson. Each cello student is given a cello to take home and bring to school for free lessons in the cello. 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.



Guitar Lessons: Students who are interested in Guitar are also supported with guitar lessons at a cost of 1euro the remainder being subsidised by the Student Support Fund for sports and extra curricular activities

Sport & Extra-Curricular

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. The school has won eleven All-Ireland Hurling Championships in recent times.

Our Camogie teams have been competing successfully at Junior and senior level over a long number of years. We have won Connaught titles at junior and senior level 2years ago and we won the Connaught 7 aside completion last year.

So far this year our camogie and ladies football teams are undefeated and our first year boys' football team have won each of their matches by over 10 points.

Our senior rugby team and had notable victories over "The Bish" and Clifden Community School this year and they also drew against "The Jes" all of whom are traditional rugby strongholds. Our junior team also won the Monivea Cup again this year defeating Holy Rosary, Ballygar and the Pres Athenry.

Our equestrian team has competed at a number of events each year and has enjoyed success throughout the year.

The school has a strong Athletics tradition with students representing the school at National and International level.

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



Extra & co-Curricular

We have enjoyed enormous 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 and we endeavour to meet those interests and support students in whatever activities and events they wish to participate in.