

Gairmscoil Mhuire Prospectus

Athenry Vocational School visit us at www.athenryvs.com



Recent News:

- New school for 1000 pupils being designed and planned by Coady Architects for completion during 2014/2015 academic year
- School selected as one of 40 lead schools in Ireland for New Junior Cycle Reform for all schools in Sept 2014. Students will follow Junior Cert. course and complete short courses in Computer Science or Sports Science (focus on Hurling/Camogie) or Agricultural/Horticultural Science or Music/Drama over the three years of Junior cycle.
- Top placed school in Athenry/Oranmore area for progression to Third Level (Irish Times and Irish Independent League tables 2011)
- We will be offering 3 academic and 3 Hurling/Camogie scholarships to incoming first years – details will issue to all successful applicants

Why choose our school

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- **Committed to constant review and evaluation to enhance student learning**
 - Review of school structures
 - Continual review of teaching and learning
- **Strong Academic Focus**
 - Excellent Junior & Leaving Certificate results. 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
 - **78% of last year's cohort progressed to third level either in Ireland or the UK, with a number deferring (3%) their offer for a year, while the remainder are completing PLCs (10%) and a few repeating to achieve higher points. (7%)**
- **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**
 - Junior cycle Reform lead school- 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

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

“Nurturing the Individual”

Settling In

First years return to school in September with TY 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.

Students will **also experience Spanish, 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 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**.

It is envisaged that the new Junior Cycle for all students will see students study 7 subjects and two short courses for examination

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 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 students' academic progress.

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

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.

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, Home Economics and Art and being rolled out 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, €130 and €120 in 1st, 2nd and 3rd year respectfully to cover the cost of Netbooks, electronic books, lockers, school diary and examination papers. This equates to over €200 in saving for families.

- **Netbooks to replace textbooks**
 - **All Junior cycle students currently have digital textbooks on Netbooks. 1st Years have replaced all textbooks with electronic books and 2nd and 3rd years are gradually replacing each of their texts as the year progresses.**
 - **This is a hugely innovative step in second level schooling and our school is one of the leading schools in Ireland for ICT integration into teaching and learning.**



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

“Nurturing Creative Talents”

School Concert and Musical

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

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.



Guitar Lessons: Students who are interested in guitar are also supported with guitar lessons at a cost of €2 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.

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

