

Gortnor Abbey

2018



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MISSION STATEMENT

We are a Christian Co-educational Secondary School. In keeping with the Jesus and Mary Ethos, we are committed to the holistic development of each individual in our community by:

- ❖ Empowering each person to grow in justice, honesty, respect and loyalty to self, family, school and community.
- ❖ Helping all students to achieve full potential at their studies.
- ❖ Promoting an appreciation of Heritage, Culture and the Environment.
- ❖ Providing an atmosphere where religious belief, a sense of responsibility, self- confidence, self-esteem and self-identity are developed.
- ❖ Encouraging participation in all facets of school life - spiritual, academic, sporting, social and cultural



To achieve these ideals we recognise the need for a **SAFE ENVIRONMENT** as expressed in our safety statement.

Gortnor Abbey

What is it about Gortnor Abbey?

We are often asked what it is about Gortnor Abbey that makes it so special. While you have to experience our school to really know it, we believe that the following elements make us what we are.

- Our co-educational school's idyllic rural setting on the shores of Lough Conn and its wide range of facilities provides the ideal environment for learning and teaching.
- We seek to live out the ethos and educational philosophy of the founders, the Religious of Jesus & Mary under the Trusteeship of the Le Chéile Trust. Our Whole School Evaluation report stated "Fostering a sense of responsibility in the young and nurturing the leaders of tomorrow is a central part of the Jesus & Mary educational philosophy and is evident in many ways at Gortnor Abbey. Gortnor Abbey succeeds in creating a caring and strong sense of community where the holistic education of each student guides all endeavours."
- The wellbeing, happiness and success of each of our students is at the heart of everything we do. We believe in the limitless potential of young people and expect the best from and for our students.
- A strong sense of mutual respect permeates the school. This atmosphere is constantly commented upon by visitors.
- Our students achieve the highest academic results. Many students have received awards and entrance scholarships from 3rd level colleges to mark and celebrate their success in the Leaving Cert due to achieving high CAO points. Among the awards received are JP Mc Manus Scholarships, Naughton Foundation Scholarships and entrance awards to TCD, UCD, DCU, NUIM and GMIT.
- The percentage of Gortnor Abbey students transferring to 3rd level each year is consistently among the highest in the locality. Currently we have past students attending Trinity, Royal College of Surgeons, UCD, DCU, UL, NUIG, Colleges of Education and Institutes of Technology.
- We are particularly aware of and sensitive to the needs of special needs students and have a dedicated learning centre for students with special needs as well as a centre for ASD students which we call the Claudine Centre. We have received planning for a purpose built unit which we hope to have completed in 2019.
- We strive to create a warm, friendly and caring atmosphere where each student's uniqueness is cherished. For us the welfare and safety of each student is always a priority and is well catered for through our Pastoral Care, Year Head and Mentor system. Regular Care Team meetings take place during which the needs of students are addressed. We also have a very proactive Student Council.
- We offer an effective transition programme and mentor system to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary education
- We have a truly dedicated staff, who teach to the highest academic standards. We strive for excellence in everything we do and believe in going the extra mile.



- We assess, monitor, acknowledge and reward academic excellence and genuine endeavour in each class group, beginning in 1st year. All school reports are individually assessed and signed by the Principal.
- Our excellent T.Y. Programme bridges the gap between Junior and Senior Cycle. The T.Y. Programme is carefully balanced to include academic study as well a broad and striking programme aimed at “education for life”.
- We are very proud of our strong tradition of music including choirs and musicals. This year’s TY class are working hard on the musical “Hairspray” which will take place on 2nd and 3rd March. Clips of music in the school are available for viewing on youtube /Gortnorabbeymuisc.
- Our renowned Art Department has inspired many students over the years. We continue to offer our students a wide range of opportunities to develop their artistic talents by means of our annual Hat Show, participation in Junk Kouture, Texaco Art awards and a wide range of other art competitions.
- We have a strong ethos of participation in competitive and non-competitive sporting activities and are the proud holders of several Connacht and National Titles across a range of sports including boys and girls Gaelic, Basketball, Soccer, Athletics and Rugby.
- We believe that students need and indeed welcome healthy structures which enhance the learning environment for all. We work very hard to prevent bullying and deal immediately with any incidents reported to us. We have recently updated our policy in line with DES guidelines. Students are actively encouraged to approach the Principal/Deputy Principal with their concerns. Our approach to discipline is firm, fair and consistent.

Transition Year students pictured with Joanna O’ Riordan attending St. Vincent de Paul Seminar in Knock



Junior Cert Curriculum

In September 2014 we began the first phase of the new Junior Cycle Programme with the introduction of the new English course which was examined in June 2017. September 2016 saw the introduction of new courses in Science and Business. In September 2017 Irish, Art and modern languages were added and the first JCPA's were awarded to last year's Junior Cert students.

All students study:

Irish	English	Maths
History	Geography	Religious Education
Science		

Wellbeing consists of:

Double PE	S.P.H.E	C.S.P.E
Computers	Wellbeing	

In addition, 1st year students choose three of the following:

Art	French	German
Business Studies	Music	Home Ec.
Technical Graphics	Woodwork	Technology

Students are requested to rank their choices from 1-5. From these rankings the subject groupings are devised.

Once the option blocks are decided students will be offered an opportunity to sample each subject. Following this, students will be asked again to rank subjects in each block in order of preference. It is not possible to guarantee that students will get a place in their first choice subjects; however every effort will be made to accommodate them in so far as resources allow.

Meadhbh Walsh & Danny Newcombe who on the basis of their excellent Junior Cert results in Science and Maths, qualified to compete in the Junior Science Olympiad held in DCU. In order to qualify for selection students had to achieve 100% in one subject and a minimum of 99% in the second.



1st Year Induction

- An Open Evening is held in February of year of enrolment.
- A further Open Day post enrolment will take place on Tuesday 21st March 2018.
- An information night for parents of incoming 1st years takes place on Tuesday 21st March at 7:30pm.
- 1st years have their first two days at school on their own with their mentors to help.
- A follow up information night for parents is held in September once students have settled into school life.
- Regular monitoring and liaising with students is carried out by the 1st year, Year Head Ms. Newman and by class tutors



Winners of the 1st Year Maths Quiz with their teachers Ms. Rowland and Ms. Mc Ellin

Food donation collected from students & staff for Rescue 116 organised by Ms. Carroll & Ms. Gaughan, Home Ec. Dept.



Annual Hat Show winners 2017



Transition Year:

Transition Year is an invaluable optional year available to students before entering Senior Cycle. Our T.Y. is tailor made to suit the needs of the students in promoting their personal, social, spiritual, educational and vocational development. We currently run 3 T.Y. classes due to increased demand.

Our Whole School Evaluation report commented as follows on the T.Y. Programme “The T.Y. programme is well established and a significant number of students opt for the programme on an annual basis. It offers variety in terms of the breadth and balance of the subjects studied. Key to the success of the programme is the dedication and commitment of the teachers to the ethos of the T.Y. The programme makes optimum use of individual teachers’ skills, knowledge and interests”.

Core Subjects

Religious Education	Irish	English
Maths	French/ German	Ag. Science
Physics	Chemistry	Biology
Vocational Preparation	Physical Education	

Modules offered vary from year to year and may include:

Social Education	Choral singing	Cookery	Business Studies	Public Speaking
History	Enterprise	Photography	Social Dancing	Musical
Geography	Music	Art	Sport	First Aid
Woodwork	Careers	Computers	ECDL	GAA Coaching

In addition the students are involved in all aspects of drama, field trips, tours, retreats, work experience, operating a business (mini-company), interviews, debating and a variety of workshops.



Transition Year students 2017 who collected over €1000 for The Irish Cancer Society by running a TY students V Staff volleyball match

**Roisin Callaghan & Jack Donoghue
Overall winners of the TY Waltzing
Competition 2018.**



Senior Cycle

Leaving Cert students study the following:

Core Subjects:

Irish	Religious Education (non-academic)
English	Guidance
Maths	SPHE/RSE
Physical Education	



Student of the Year 2017
Elaine Mc Hale

Students currently choose four of the following:

French	German	History
Geography	Biology	Chemistry
Physics	Agricultural Science	Accounting
Business	Art	Music
Home Economics	Construction	Technology
Design & Communication Technology		

Religious Education Academic (an additional extra - outside of the groupings)

The process of selection begins shortly after Christmas with an information night for Parents. This meeting is followed by a meeting of the Guidance Counsellor with each individual student. Final subject option groups are drawn up after a consultation process with the students, whereby each student ranks their choice of subjects from 1 – 6.

Leaving Cert Assessments:

A key feature of our strategy to help students achieve their true potential at their academic studies is our assessment procedure.

In Leaving Cert, students are currently formally assessed and results posted home on 3 occasions i.e. at the end of September, end of October, and following the Mock exams. The parent teacher meeting for Leaving Certs is held in November before which further assessments are carried out. Following each assessment the results of each student are closely examined and analysed by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Head. Many students are then met individually.

Our Leaving Cert students achieve excellent results and Gortnor Abbey is consistently ranked among the highest performing schools in the county in relation to progression rates to third level. In 2016 two students were awarded entrance scholarships to University College Dublin following in the footsteps of the two students who received entrance scholarships in 2015 to NUIG and UCD.

Scholarship Recipient 2017: David Kennedy UCD Entrance Scholarship



Facilities

We are truly committed to the provision of top class educational facilities. A multi million Euro extension was completed in 2009, so we can boast that our facilities are second to none.



Home Economics Kitchen: A modern Home Economics Kitchen



Two Computer Suites: Two Computer Suites complete with 27 computers in each.



Wood Work Room:

A Construction Studies/Architectural Technology Room complete with the most modern machines, tools and equipment. This room also has its own Computer Suite.



Technology Room: A Technology Room complete with “high tech” machines, gadgets, equipment and a Computer Suite



Music Suite: A Music Suite with 12 i mac high spec computers, overhead projection and surround sound. This area was designed with performance both dance and choral in mind.



Science: Three fully equipped Science Laboratories, complete with computers and data projection, a Demonstration Room and an Amphitheatre.



Art: Art Room with five potters’ wheels and kiln, a darkroom, facilities for screening printing, tapestry and carving in plaster.





CAD Room: A new Computer Aided Design Room with the most modern equipment for the teaching of TG and DCG.

Learning Support Room: Designed and equipped to meet the needs of small groups with a laptop for each student.

Careers Room: with Careers Library.

Needle Work Room.

Internet Access & Data Projectors: in all classrooms and specialist rooms



Church: Due to the generosity of the Jesus & Mary Sisters we have a beautifully appointed Church on site which we use for various school liturgies.



School Restaurant: Our restaurant is open daily at break times. Students can enjoy their lunch in the comfortable surrounds of our student dining room.



Locker Areas: Each year has a specially assigned locker area. First Years are provided with double sized lockers in an effort to ease the transition from primary to post primary school.



Full Size Gym: with facilities for a wide variety of indoor sports.

Drama: The school has a large stage in the sports hall with state of the art camera, sound and light equipment, as well as a Costume Room.



Autism Spectrum Disorder Provision in Gortnor Abbey



Claudine Centre....
.....towards independence

Newly opened in September 2013, the Claudine Centre in Gortnor Abbey has specialist rooms and qualified and experienced staff catering for the needs of students with ASD. Research shows that students with ASD progress better in a structure mainstream learning environment. Each student has an individualised plan and a variety of best practice methods are employed to meet the varied needs of the students. Gortnor Abbey places emphasis on developing each student to their full potential, mindful of the need to assist them in developing their communication, social, behavioural and independent life skills. ASD students have access to the mainstream curriculum and an effective programme is tailor-made for each student. Inclusion with mainstream peers is sensitively managed. We promote and facilitate close links with parents in order to compliment the learning environment and encourage independence. Having secured planning permission we look forward to our new build ASD Unit being completed in 2019.



1st Year Students with Adam Harris of “As I Am”



Co and Extra-Curricular Activities

Sport

The school is one of the best facilitated in the region having an International Sports Hall with equipment for volleyball, badminton, basketball, gymnastics, indoor soccer and hockey, Olympic handball, athletics and table tennis.

Outdoors we have basketball courts, playing fields and an all-weather pitch.

Our extensive co and extra-curricular programme includes the following:

Retreats		Liturgies	Table Quizzes	Interviews
Art Tours		Science Quizzes	Biology Field Trips	Geography Field Trips
Maths Quizzes		Irish Quizzes	Lá Gaeilge	Visits to outdoor centres
Rugby/Basketball/Gaelic Soccer/Table Tennis		Debating & Public Speaking	Open Days & Information evenings	Musical and Drama events
Concerts		Art competitions	Choral Singing	Language Assistants
Annual Road Race		Visits to Industry	House Leagues	Visiting Speakers
Trips to Museums, Exhibitions, Galleries, National Concert Hall, Buildings of National interest	Annual Awards Ceremony	Christina Noble Walk and other charitable events	Language & Cultural Exchanges – France & Germany	
Gaisce Awards	Litter League	Green Schools	Study Skills Programme	

Our Whole School Evaluation report endorses and affirms all of this effort as follows “All of these activities bear witness to the school’s holistic ethos. Active participation across such a wide range of options is encouraged not only to support and enhance the skills and knowledge of the student, but also to create and instil a sense of justice, fair play, discipline and commitment on both an individual and team level. This brings about a sense of inclusiveness and can also be the source for informal relationship building between students and teachers”.



Annual Awards

We acknowledge, honour, and reward our students for excellent and genuine endeavour at an annual ceremony attended by all of the students and staff.

Annual awards include:

Academic Student of the Year - Awarded to the student in each class group beginning in 1st year with the best overall average test results for the year but who in addition is exemplary regarding homework, attendance, punctuality, attitude and class participation. Selection is made by staff.

Claudine Thevenet Cup – Awarded to a Leaving Cert student:

- ❖ For showing commitment, excellence, spirit and social awareness.
- ❖ For showing great courage, strength of character and leadership.
- ❖ For making the most of their potential and talents for themselves and others. Selection is made by both staff and students

Claudine Thevenet Award winner 2017 - Ita Madden

(Blessed Dina Award) – Awarded to the student in each year group who is deemed to be respectful, hardworking, socially aware, persevering and helpful. Selections are made by both staff and students.



3rd Year Bl. Dina Awards Nominees- Amy Padden, Laura Padden, Jessica Doherty, Sean Dermody, , Jack Sweeney, Paul Lynott (absent) **Overall winner: Jack Sweeney**



1st Year Bl. Dina Awards Nominees

Fionn Mc Manamon, Adam Clinton, Amy Mc Cormick, Sophia Triest, Claudia Mon Lee.

Overall winner: Fionn Mc Manamon



Sports Person of the Year

- ❖ For active participation in P.E. and sport
- ❖ For positive attitude toward physical activity and sport
- ❖ For ability to work as part of a team
- ❖ For respect shown to trainers, mentors, coaches and teachers
- ❖ For excellence in their chosen sport



Sports Girl 2017 –Aoife Hegarty



Sports Boy 2017 – Aaron Murphy

Girls Athletics Team



*1st Year Boys Gaelic County
Title Winners 2017*



*Senior Boys Gaelic
County Title Winners
2017*



Annual Road Race Winning Girls and Boys Team



So what is it about Gortnor Abbey?

We believe the following email provides an excellent answer!

6th October 2015.

For the attention of Mrs. Patricia Melvin, Principal, Gortnor Abbey

Dear Mrs Melvin,

As you know, in the region of 180 of Gortnor Abbey pupils visited NUI Galway over the last two days. I was in charge of the Anatomy aspect of this visit, where pupils had a chance to examine real human bones - some of which were part of Garda investigations that had been handed into us in Anatomy in order to ascertain the age and gender of these bones.

I would like, on behalf of myself and my colleague Dr. Alanna Stanley, to compliment you on the conduct of your pupils. They were all - without even one exception - excellent ambassadors for their school.

Both Dr. Stanley and myself were incredibly impressed by them.

Several things impressed us. It is obvious that in any class there will be introverted people, and that in some cases these people may become marginalised. Our experience in a University environment has made such things easy to see - I would like to tell you how happy we both were that we did not observe this at all in the Gortnor pupils we had the pleasure to interact with. The cohesiveness of the classes, and the social integration within each class, was obvious for ALL members of the class.

This is indeed a credit to you, their teachers, and themselves. If only all schools could foster this sense of inclusiveness the world would be a happier place indeed.

I would also, personally, like to note that there are several highly intelligent people (in at least three cases shockingly so) in the groups that we met. In order to put this into perspective, the classes were asked to examine human bones (without a textbook or any assumed prior knowledge) - we then chatted with them and asked a few questions. These questions were very much the same as those we ask 1st year medical students. It was, to be honest, a surprise to me that many of the answers and questions we received were actually more advanced than those of the majority of 1st year University students we encounter.

It was a pleasure to meet these ambassadors for your school.

Thank you again to you, your staff and your pupils. Gortnor obviously fosters the entire person - whoever that person may be - whilst encouraging their intellectual and personal development. Not to mention their great sense of humour!

I'm unsure how you do that, but please keep doing it, and send some of them our way!

Please pass on the sincere compliments of the Anatomy Department to all those who visited NUI Galway; everyone who visited should be immensely proud of their school - and themselves.

With sincere thanks and best wishes,
Alex

Alexander Black
Lecturer in Anatomy
Anatomy, School of Medicine
National University of Ireland, Galway



STUDENT SUPPORTS

General Student Supports

Open Door Policy

Student communication with the Principal/Deputy Principal is encouraged and facilitated.

Care Team- consisting of the Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Guidance Counsellor/ Year Heads/ SENC

Mentoring System

Senior students are trained to act as a support to 1st Year students and to provide a line of communication between the teaching staff and new students.

School Leaders run a lunchtime club for Junior students playing chess, board games and card games, giving them an opportunity to socialise and make new friends.

Year Head System

Tutor System

Guidance Counsellor

Student Council

Information Evenings – for parent and students

Book Rental Scheme – for 1st year to 3rd year

Google Classroom

Evening Study

Supervised evening study is offered based on sufficient demand.

Parents' Association

The school has an active Parents Association which works hand in hand with management and teachers.

Specific Learning Supports

Special Education Needs Co-ordinator – SENC

Ongoing assessment of Literacy and Numeracy levels

Resource classes

SNA Support

Active Support for students with Dyslexia

Access to Educational Psychological Services

Full Time Guidance Counsellor



General Information – 2018

1. **School Uniform** available from Kevin Loftus, Crossmolina.

Girls: Green knee length gym

Green V- neck jumper with school crest

White Shirt blouse/White Polo Shirt with collar

White round neck T-shirt for underneath white shirt if required

White knee length Socks/Plain black tights

Black low heel shoes (dark coloured AV8's acceptable)

Black uniform trousers (leggings, tracksuit bottoms, skinny jeans or jeans are **not allowed**)

Boys: Grey Trousers

Grey Shirt

White round neck T-shirt for underneath shirt if required

Grey V-neck jumper with school crest

Black shoes (**no logos or stripes**)

Black School Jacket for girls and boys (optional) is the only jacket allowed to be worn in class.

Sport/PE: Any Polo shirt, tracksuit bottoms or shorts and runners

Please note all uniform items and sportswear **must be clearly marked** with the student's name.

Important Dates:

Open Day – for newly enrolled 1st Years, Wednesday 21st March 2018. Students who enrol will be contacted re arrangements.

Information Night for Parents of Incoming 1st Years – Wednesday 21st March 2018 at 7:30p.m.

1st Year Assessments- This on-line assessment will take place in Gortnor Abbey.

Date and time to be confirmed.

2. **Administration Fee €70** - to cover Journal, Locker, Insurance, Educational Administration Package, Photocopying and NPC.
3. **School Books** – We offer a Book Rental Scheme to Junior Cycle students for use of class text books. **Please note workbooks not included.** The yearly rental charge is €50 and the yearly deposit is €50 for the 1st and 2nd year students. In 3rd year the charge is €50 rental only. The deposit is refundable at the end of 3rd year. Book rental money for incoming 1st Years to be paid by Friday 13th April 2018.
4. **Stationery** –All incoming 1st years receive a list of required stationery in June.
5. **School Class Times-** Monday & Tuesday 9:00am. -3:45pm.
Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 9:00am. - 3:05pm.
6. **School Transport** – All eligible for public transport please contact Bus Eireann at 096 20225
Private Transport Operators: Treacy Coaches -086 3993003: Johnny Corcoran – 087 2669192:
Arrow Cabs- 096 77777/086 3891939. Noel Moran- 085 1277122/ 096 45777



The Sculptors

*I dreamed I stood in a studio
And watched two sculptors there.
The clay they used was a young child's mind
And they fashioned it with care.*

*One was a teacher, the tools he used
Were books and music and art;
One was a parent with a guiding hand
And a gentle, loving heart.*

*Day after day the teacher toiled
With touch that was deft and sure.
While the parent laboured by his side
And polished and smoothed it o'er.*

*And when at last their task was done,
They were proud of what they had wrought;
For the things they had moulded into a child,
Could neither be sold nor bought.*

*And each agreed they would have failed
If they had worked alone,
For behind the parent stood the school,
And behind the teacher, the home.*

Mark Taylor