



St. Columba's College – the Pursuit of Excellence in a Caring Environment

Up until the foundation of the Finn College in 1925 by the late Thomas Logue, B.A., post primary education in the Finn Valley area was for the very fortunate few. The old Finn College was located in the upstairs portion of the old Market House on Main Street, Ballybofey from 1925 to 1968.

In 1968 the school was taken over by the Raphoe Diocesan Authority and placed in charge of the Mercy Sisters with Sr. Carmel as its first Principal. The 'Finn', as it was affectionately known and as it was originally constituted, closed in September of that year. The original policy of co-education and inter-denomination was continued but the name was changed to St. Columba's College. With the introduction of free secondary education from 1968, it soon became clear that a new school building was required. A site for the new college was donated by the Butt Hall committee and building commenced at pace. By the end of 1969 the students had moved to the new campus on Drumboe Avenue. The first building of the new school was officially opened on 30th April 1970 with eight teachers and 69 students.

Many developments have taken place in the intervening years. In 1983, an extension consisting of 38 classrooms was officially opened. By this stage the college had 784 students and 42 teachers. Further developments to the college facilities were to follow including new classroom extensions in 1996 and 2011, development of our canteen facilities from 1990 and the development of two sports pitches in 2009 and 2018. We received planning permission for a major extension and refurbishment of the college in August 2022 which will further enhance the facilities in the college. The project includes the provision of 6 Science labs, 4 Construction/Engineering Rooms, 2 Art Rooms, 2 Home Economic Rooms, 2 Computer/Multi Media labs, A Multi-Purpose Hall and Fitness Suite, a Library, a Special Needs base (two classrooms with additional accommodation), a number of general classrooms, offices, and external hardcourt play areas. It is hoped that this major development will go to tender in April/May of this year with construction to begin in early 2024. We are very grateful to the Stranorlar Parish Committee for the use of the old St. Mary's National School as temporary accommodation until 2026 when the major development will be completed.

St. Columba's College has 922 students, 69 teaching staff and 23 ancillary staff for the 2022-2023 academic year. We celebrate over 50 years of success and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of staff, patron (CEIST), students, parents and the wider community who have made this possible. Over the years we have broadened the range of curricular programmes and subjects to meet the needs of all students in the catchment area.

We offer a broad range of subjects in Junior Cycle. Core subjects include Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography, Science, Religious Education, Physical Education, Digital Media Literacy, SPHE and CSPE. Optional subjects include French/German/Spanish, Visual Art, Business Studies, Engineering, Graphics, Home Economics, Music and Wood Technology. Some students follow the Junior Cycle School Programme (JCSP) which includes some added supports.

Our Transition Year Programme is optional. Approximately 60% of our students opt for this additional year while the remainder of students move directly into other senior cycle programmes from junior cycle.

For senior cycle, students can take either (1) The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme, (2) The Leaving Certificate Established Programme or (3) The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The subjects currently on offer at senior cycle are: English, Irish and Maths, Geography, History, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Agricultural Science, Business, Economics, Accounting, Home Economics, Construction, Engineering, Design & Communication Graphics, Art, Music, French, German, Spanish, Applied Maths, Computer Science and LC Physical Education.

The college moved to one hour classes in this current academic year. There are six classes on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and four classes on Wednesdays. Students who arrive at the school can get a light breakfast and study in the warm and comfortable school canteen which opens at 8.00am each morning. School starts at 9am with Class Tutor time or Assembly. Classes begin at 9.05 with a twenty-minute break from 11.05 to 11.25am. Students have 40 minutes for lunch – they may eat their packed lunch in the canteen, where hot lunches, soup, sandwiches and drinks are also served. The school has a healthy eating policy. Some students leave the college and buy lunch in Stranorlar/Ballybofey. Afternoon classes run from 2.05 to 4.05pm (except on Wednesdays). The Pastoral Care team comprises the Principal, the two Deputy Principals, Year Heads, Guidance Counsellors, Learning Support Teachers and Class Tutors. There is a Student Support Team for each year group who meet on a regular basis to assist and support students who are having difficulties. Each class is also assigned a Guidance Counsellor, who meets with them and assists them with settling in. Students can arrange to meet with their Guidance Counsellor at any stage throughout their time in St. Columba's, should they have any difficulties. Children who have additional/behavioural needs receive additional support from the Learning Support Teachers in small groups or on a one to one basis. A team of ten Special Needs Assistants also provide additional support for students.

Student wellbeing is important to us at St. Columba's College. We are currently taking part in Jigsaw's 'One Good School' initiative which aims to raise awareness about mental health. St. Columba's College is also part of a School Completion Programme which caters for students in seven primary schools and three post-primary schools in the Finn Valley area.

The college offers a range of sporting activities, which includes Soccer, Gaelic, Golf, Rugby, Basketball, Athletics, Camogie, Hurling, Futsal and 'Girls Active'. In addition to the variety of sports, there are various activities and competitions in many other interest areas such as school musicals, Art, Business and Enterprise, Coding, Debating, Leadership opportunities, Maths and Science quizzes/competitions, field trips, European tours, guest speakers and visits out.

As we emerge from the very challenging time of the Covid-19 pandemic, we look forward to brighter times ahead where St. Columba's College will continue to provide an excellent secondary education to meet all the needs of students in the Finn Valley community. Our projected enrolment for the 2023-2024 academic year is approximately 950 students. It is envisaged that St. Columba's College will continue to make a significant contribution to second level education in the Finn Valley for many years to come.

For further information please visit our website <http://www.stcolumbascollege.ie>