

# The Kintullagh Voice

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The Newsletter of St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena



**N.I. Top Grammar School**



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# Romania Winter Trip

The early hours of Tuesday, 4th February, saw 23 sleepy students (and four equally tired members of staff!) travel to Dublin Airport to embark on our journey to Romania. It would be easy to focus on the great laughs we had- teaching ceilidh dancing to a Romanian high school, a surprise trip to the ice-skating rink, karaoke contests, and the infamous 'Around the World' game.

We built connections with people a world apart from us, despite barely sharing a common language. We saw smiles light up faces as we danced, delivered gifts, and spent time together. The thanks we received from residents was humbling and unforgettable.

The most memorable part of the trip for me was connecting with people despite the language barrier. We communicated through games, song, dance, and more. I can definitely say that I've made many new friends because of this trip.

I've truly made lifelong friends- both from my school and among the locals. When we visited the high school, it was surprising how well we all got along, despite not speaking the same language. We connected by sharing our talents, singing, and dancing together.

I also really enjoyed playing games at Casa Elim with my classmates and the teachers, as it gave us a chance to get to know each other in a more informal setting.

**Dona Noble**

When I signed up for Romania last September, I didn't fully know what to expect. But from the moment we set off from Ballymena on that cold February morning, I knew it would be a trip I'd remember for the rest of my life. Romania opened my eyes to the harsh realities many people face daily. We visited orphanages and care homes, taking part in face painting, dancing, and so many other exciting activities. But what stood out the most were the friendships I made—friendships that will last a lifetime.

*I would recommend this trip to anyone looking for a new experience. It not only develops your communication skills but also fosters a profound sense of independence. I promise you, this trip will change your life for the better—and once you leave, you'll wish you could go back!"*

**Rebecca McGrath**







# Year 8 Football Cup Champions!

## Gaelfast Year 8 Football Cup final

*St Louis Ballymena 6-6 St Mary's CBGS 6-04*

**The Year 8 Gaelic Football final between St. Louis and St. Mary's was a thrilling encounter, full of drama, excitement, and exceptional skill. The two teams gave it their all, but it was St. Louis who emerged victorious with a narrow win, securing a 6-6 to 6-4 victory.**

The match began with early exchanges as both teams looked to settle into the game. St. Louis took the lead through a well-taken goal from their forward, Oisín Anyalechi, who found the back of the net with a clinical strike. St. Louis were soon on the scoreboard again, this time with a point from Thomas Matthews, who slotted over a well-timed effort. St. Mary's responded swiftly, with Ryan Hughes adding a point, but St. Louis quickly regained control with another goal, this time from Ronan Laverty, who managed to fire home a powerful shot into the net.

St. Mary's weren't to be outdone as Taylor Magee scored a brilliant goal to bring them back into the game, keeping the match finely balanced. After a short spell of dominance from St. Louis, they were back at it, with Kiran Jayaprakash scoring another goal to extend their lead. St. Mary's continued to push forward, and it was Taylor Magee once again who scored a second goal for his team, keeping the contest alive. However, Lorcan Douglas of St. Mary's added a point shortly after, narrowing the gap.

The Ballymena school found the net once more through a brilliant goal from Cahan O'Kane while Matthews added a point to extend St. Louis' lead further as the first half drew to a close.

The second half started with plenty of attacking intent, and it was St. Mary's who made the first breakthrough, with Tom Harbinson scoring a well-taken goal. St. Louis, however, replied with a point from Conan McKeever before St. Louis added another point, showing the team's composure. St. Mary's continued to fight back, with Austin scoring another goal, followed quickly by a goal from Ryan Hughes, making it a nail-biting contest. However, St. Louis responded in spectacular fashion, with Kiran Jayaprakash firing in another goal to push them back ahead.

Conan McKeever added a point from play, and St. Louis extended their lead further with a free kick point from McKeever, keeping their noses in front. Laverty of St. Louis added a final point to seal the victory as the game drew to a close.

Final Score: St. Louis 6-6 (24 points) St. Mary's 6-4 (22 points).

The game was a fantastic display of Gaelic football, with both teams demonstrating great determination and skill throughout. St. Louis' attacking strength proved too much for St. Mary's in the end, as they held on for a thrilling victory. Both teams should be proud of their performances, making it a memorable final for all involved.

Many thanks to the Saffron Gael for this great report and unbelievable coverage for our school games.









Fiontan, a dynamic and skilful player, has been selected in the Half Forward line following an outstanding season. A key figure in our 2022 Mageean Cup victory and a driving force for Ruairí Óg CLG, Fiontan continues to impress, recently scoring an incredible 10 points in Antrim's U20 Ulster Championship win.

Jack has been awarded the Number 5 jersey in the Half Back line, thanks to his consistent excellence in Ulster Schools competitions. A committed member of Dunloy Cuchullains, Jack has already built an impressive record, boasting multiple club championships, league titles, and an Ulster Minor medal.

# Hurling All Stars

## Celebrating Our 2025 Hurling All-Stars: Jack Martin & Fiontan Bradley

We are delighted to celebrate the success of two exceptional students, Fiontan Bradley and Jack Martin, who have been named in the prestigious 2025 Danske Bank Ulster Schools GAA Hurling All-Stars. Both young men have not only excelled on the pitch but have also shown leadership, commitment, and pride in representing St Louis. Their achievements reflect their dedication to the sport and make them outstanding ambassadors for our school.

***Congratulations, Fiontan and Jack - a great honour and a proud moment for the entire St Louis community!***







# Ulster Rugby 7s Final

## Senior Rugby Girls Show Spirit and Skill in Ulster Schools' Cup Final

Our senior girls rugby team proudly took to the pitch in the Danske Bank Ulster Girls Schools' Cup final, facing a strong Enniskillen Royal Grammar School (ERGS) side in what proved to be an exciting and high-quality match.

Despite the final scoreline of 47-12 in ERGS's favour, St Louis demonstrated determination, grit, and flashes of brilliance throughout the game, earning the respect of spectators and opponents alike.

From the first whistle, it was clear the match would be a fast-paced contest. ERGS struck early, but St Louis answered quickly. In the 10th minute, Mary-Rose McDonnell lit up the pitch with a stunning solo run from the halfway line, breaking through the defensive line to score St Louis' opening try. She coolly slotted the conversion to bring the score to 14-7, narrowing the gap and energising the team.

The girls showed strong defensive moments, particularly through Kate McGilligan, who powered through the opposition in a determined run just minutes earlier. The team continued to push back against ERGS's attacking pressure and never lost their fighting spirit.

After the break, we returned with renewed energy. In the 16th minute, Mary-Rose McDonnell struck again with another impressive try, sprinting past defenders in a thrilling chase to the line. Her two-try performance stood out as a highlight of the day, showcasing the talent and potential within the St Louis squad.

Although ERGS continued to score, with their captain Leah Irwin putting in a standout five-try display, our girls maintained their composure and fought to the final whistle. Every player showed determination, teamwork, and pride in representing the school on such a big stage.

Enniskillen RGS 47 - 12 St Louis GS Ballymena

### Senior Rugby Squad:

Tija Jaceviciute, Natalia Czubinska, Maria Rosa Black, Caoimhe McPartland, Kate Hasson, Emma Killough, Erin McAleese, Clodagh Maguire, Eva Lee, Brianna Kinney (C), Mary-Rose McDonnell, Kate McGilligan, Ashley Anderson, Anna McNamee

While the result wasn't in our favour, the experience of playing in a major final and performing on such a stage will no doubt inspire our players as they continue to grow and develop in the sport. Congratulations to ERGS on their win, and a huge well done to our girls for their dedication and effort.







# Biology Olympiad

**“In early February, several students from Years 13 and 14 took part in the annual Biology Olympiad. The Olympiad challenges and stimulates students with an interest in biology, encouraging them to expand and develop their talents. It provides an opportunity for students to showcase their abilities and be rewarded with publicly recognised certificates.**

The competition consisted of two 45-minute online exam papers, which tested skills, knowledge, and application in biology. The questions were highly complex, with many reaching degree level!

Over 9,000 students from around the world participated, marking a record number of competitors. I was delighted to later discover that I had won a silver medal, placing in the top 10% of competitors. Furthermore, Aisling Smith, Cobhlaith

Gormley, and Caoimhe McGroggan in Year 14 were awarded bronze medals, placing in the top 15%, while Eugene Mulholland received a Highly Commended certificate.

We would all like to thank our teachers for their support throughout the competition, and I strongly encourage others to take part in future years.”

*Ben Marris*

**Ben Marris (silver) top 10%**

**Aisling Smith, Cobhlaith Gormley and Caoimhe McGroggan (bronze) top 15%**

**Pictured (L-R): Caoimhe McGroggan, Aisling Smith, Ben Marris, Cobhlaith Gormley.**





# NI Business Challenge

**On 19th February myself and my fellow Year 13 classmates Belle, Kevin, Blaithin, Dearbhla, Amelia, Ailbhe, Minnie, Ben, Robert, Matthew and Oisin had an exciting opportunity to participate in the NI Schools Business Challenge at Queens Management school.**

In our groups we were tasked with presenting our recommendations back to an expert judging panel comprising of Directors from Henderson Group, BDO NI and lecturers from the QUB Business School.

The task involved a case study based on the Henderson Group, advising them on ways to improve their management and finances and analysing

potential acquisitions and short-, medium- and long-term effects on the business.

The aim of this challenge is to “support the NI Business Studies curriculum whilst facilitating the development of pupil's business skills and knowledge in an enjoyable and interactive forum.”

We worked tirelessly during our free time, after school and over lunch times. It was a great opportunity to develop our research, collaboration and problem-solving skills whilst meeting new people and learning more about Queens Business School and the different courses they offer.

***Daria Condurache***

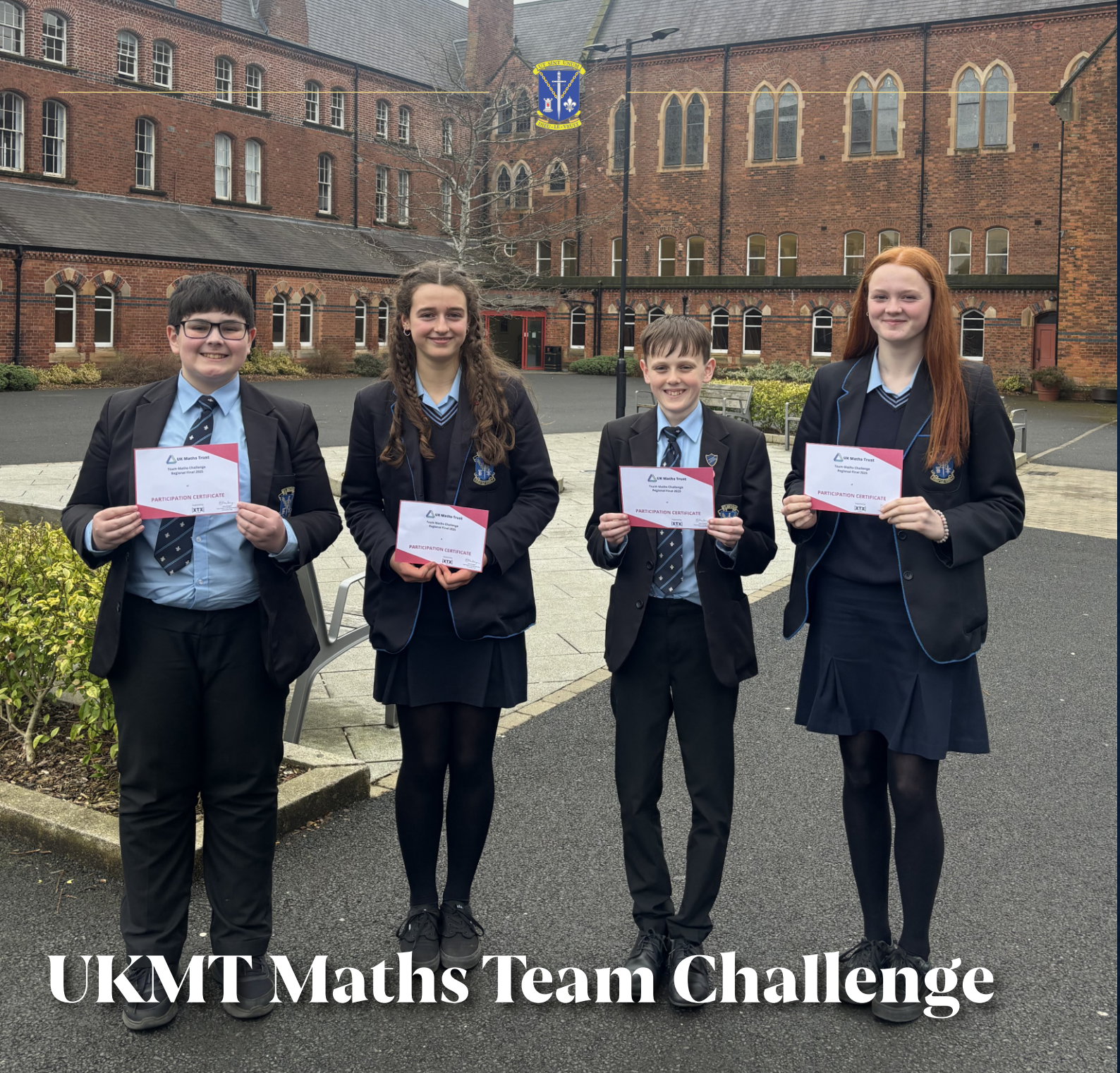


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# UKMT Maths Team Challenge

**The UK Maths Trust Team Challenge regional final took place this year on Friday, 7th March, and I was thrilled to be selected for the team alongside Cristiano Di Niro, Annie Convery, and Amber Anderson. We set off to St. Malachy's College in Belfast to compete against 16 teams from across Northern Ireland, all packed into a huge hall, buzzing with excitement.**

Walking into the competition, I felt a mix of nerves and excitement. Representing St. Louis in such an important event was both an honour and a challenge.

As we arrived, we were given some practice questions to warm up our brains before the competition officially began. A UKMT representative explained the rules, and we discovered that our teacher, Miss Warnock, would be invigilating another team while a teacher from Sullivan Upper School supervised us.

Then, it was time to get started!





### Round 1: The Group Round

The first challenge was the group round. We had 45 minutes to tackle 10 maths problems, each increasing in difficulty. Our team worked together brilliantly, solving one question after another with confidence. When the results came in, we were delighted to find we had only made one mistake—but unfortunately, it cost us six marks!

### Round 2: The Cross-Number

Next came the cross-number round, which was my personal favourite. Our team was split into two pairs: one pair worked on the down clues, while the other worked on the across clues. The tricky part? Some of our answers depended on the other pair's solutions! Some questions were straightforward, but others had us thinking until the very last second. We nailed most of them, making this our strongest round yet. At this point, we were feeling on top of the world—but the next round proved to be our biggest challenge.

### Round 3: The Shuttle

The shuttle round tested both our speed and accuracy. Again, we worked in pairs, but this time, each answer depended entirely on the previous one. If one answer was wrong, it threw off the entire sequence! The first round went smoothly, but in the second round, an early mistake meant that every answer after it was also wrong. Because of the scoring system, this meant our marks took a big hit. It was frustrating, but we didn't let it dampen our spirits!

### Round 4: The Relay

The last round was the relay—a fast-paced challenge that tested both teamwork and quick thinking. One teammate solved a question and ran to a teacher to get it checked before passing the next question to the rest of the team. With only 45 minutes to solve as many as possible, the pressure was intense! Time flew by as we worked at top speed. Thankfully, our maths knowledge didn't fail us, and we finished feeling proud of our effort.

### The Results Are In!

After a short break, the results were announced. The atmosphere was electric as Wallace High School was crowned the winner—they will now represent Northern Ireland in the national final. We finished in 6th place, missing out on the podium by just eight points!

Even though we didn't win, I couldn't have been prouder of my teammates. The entire competition was an amazing experience, and I can't wait to do it all again next year—maybe this time, we'll take the trophy home!

### Looking Ahead: The Junior Maths Challenge

The Junior Maths Individual Challenge is coming up on May 1st, and I'm excited to compete again. Last year, as a Year 8 student, I achieved a gold certificate and was the top scorer in the school. With everything I've learned from the team event, I'm hoping to achieve gold again this year!

*John Rea 9LB*







## Mission Statement:

Grammar School is a Catholic, voluntary grammar school committed to providing excellent educational opportunities for every pupil to develop their unique talents in a supportive environment.

Our motto "Ut Sine Macula et Labe" reinforces our commitment to our family values and our approach to education.



# Columbanus Competition

### Outstanding Success for Our School in the Columban Competition.

Our school is celebrating a remarkable achievement in this year's Columbanus Competition, with three of our talented students securing top awards.

In the written section, Odhran McGowan claimed first place, while Eabha Delargy secured second place, marking an extraordinary accomplishment for our school to take both the top and runner-up positions in this category. In the image section, Maria Rosa Black also excelled, earning second place for her creative work.

This success is a testament to the dedication, talent and hard work of our students, who have

demonstrated exceptional skill in both writing and visual storytelling. Their achievements highlight the strength of our school's creative and academic community.

A special thank you goes to Miss Pickering for her invaluable guidance and support throughout the competition preparation. Her encouragement has played a crucial role in helping our students reach their full potential.

### *Congratulations to all involved on this outstanding success!*

Check out Odhran McGowan's piece which was awarded first place.





## BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

In the quiet spaces of classrooms around our modern day world a remarkable story unfolds daily. It is the story of our teachers. They are but ordinary individuals partaking in extraordinary work to bring hope to a world that quite often can feel fractured and uncertain. These educators are far more than conveyors of knowledge. They are companions who guide us on a very important journey, life. Providing us with more than just facts and figures but resilience, dignity, and a vision for a hopeful future.

To teach is to believe in the potential of the human spirit, even under certain circumstances that may seem bleak. Teachers strive to work in the midst of brokenness, such as broken systems, broken homes, and sometimes even broken dreams. Yet, they show up every day, not because the work is easy, but because they understand the importance in their role of young children today. In their persistent and consistent efforts lies a reflection of what Catholic Social Teaching calls the dignity of a person and their individuality. Each student who enters a classroom is so unique and an unrepeatably expression of society, carrying with them the possibility of greatness. A teacher's vocation is to uncover that greatness, even when hidden amongst layers upon layers of anxiety, insecurity or fear.

Teaching is not merely about imparting knowledge, it is about forming children's personalities and morals. Every lesson, every conversation, every act of kindness speaks to the core of who a child is, and who they might become. There is a discrete holiness in this work. It requires deep trust, both with the student, the process, and trust in the belief that even the smallest acts of love and patience can ripple outward transforming lives in ways that may never be fully seen or known.

Hope is not always easy to sustain, especially in a world that often feels weighted by division and despair. Yet teachers are uniquely equipped to cultivate so much hope because they work hand in hand with possibility. They see the sparks of creativity, curiosity, and potential in their students, and they nurture those sparks even when others may overlook them. This is a profoundly hopeful act, a declaration that no matter how dark the world may seem, there is always light to be found and tended.

Solidarity is another hallmark of teaching, woven deeply into the fabric of Catholic Social Teaching. To teach is to enter a profound relationship with students, sharing in all of their joys, struggles, and aspirations. It is an act of accompaniment, walking alongside young people as they navigate the complexities of life. Teachers do not stand above their students but beside them, helping them to see that they are never alone.

This solidarity extends beyond the individual classroom. Teachers are often at the heart of their communities, building bridges where there are divides and fostering a sense of collective purpose. They understand that the success of one student is tied to the wellbeing of the whole community and that education is not merely a personal achievement but a communal good. In this way, their work reflects the principle of the common good, a commitment to building a society where everyone can thrive.

To be a teacher is to enter a space of profound vulnerability. It requires openness to the needs, questions, and struggles of others, as well as willingness to confront one's own limitations and their doubts. Yet, this vulnerability is also a source of strength. It is what allows teachers to connect deeply with their students, to offer guidance not from a place of authority but from a place of compassion and shared humanity. There is a deep spirituality in teaching, in a sense that the work is about more than academics, it is about transformation. Teachers are called to see their students as God sees them, with infinite worth and potential. The vision sustains them through the long hours, the setbacks, and the moments of doubt. It reminds them that their work is not just a job, but a ministry, a way of participating in the ongoing creation of a more just and loving world.

For many teachers, the classroom becomes a sacred space, a place where miracles happen in the form of small victories and quiet breakthroughs. It is where a child who once doubted their abilities begins to believe in themselves, where a quiet student finds their voice, or where a community begins to imagine new possibilities for its future. These moments are not always celebrated or recognised, but they are the quiet foundation upon which hope is built.

Teachers remind us that change does not come from grand gestures or sweeping reforms alone. It comes from the patient, daily work of planting seeds and tending to them with care. It is in the relationships they build, the encouragement they offer, and the truths they help their students uncover that the world is transformed.

As pilgrims of hope, teachers walk a path that is often challenging and uncertain. Yet they walk it with courage and conviction, knowing that their journey is not just about education but about healing and renewal. Their work calls all of us to see the world not as it is, but as it could be, a world where every child is valued, every voice is heard, and every person has the opportunity to flourish. In their quiet, steadfast way, teachers show us what it means to be people of hope. They remind us that the future is not something to fear but something to build together, one lesson, one child, and one act of love at a time.

BY ODHRAN MCGOWAN







# Open Doors Careers in Construction Event

The "Open Doors" construction event, took place on March 19th, 2025, where it offers behind-the-scenes tours of construction sites, offices, and training centres to showcase the diverse careers within the UK construction industry. Our trip included visiting OB Construction, Eden Fabrications and Sigtime at the Eden Complex outside Portglenone, a business owned by past-pupils, Ruairi, Damien, Patrick and Daniel O'Boyle,

During my recent educational visit to OB Construction, we got a great insight into construction and the various roles within the sector. The job designs created using AutoCAD were outstanding, clearly showing the various components required to plan the layout and construction of different building designs.

What particularly stood out to me was the high level of skill shown by many of the workers, most of whom had followed alternative educational pathways rather than completing a full university degree. Many had come from apprenticeship backgrounds or had taken other courses before choosing to pursue a career in the construction industry. It taught me that, with hard work and dedication, you can achieve great things regardless of the route you take.

I also really appreciated how organised and efficient everything was. OB Construction works closely with other companies on site, such as Eden Fabrication and Sigtime. It was clear that there was strong teamwork and mutual support between them. Watching how smoothly and collaboratively they worked together was genuinely inspiring.

The whole experience left me with a deep admiration for the construction industry and the people who work within it. I'm especially grateful for the time they took to guide us through each stage during the 'Open-Door' event, and for the thoughtful gifts they gave us before we left.

After the visit, I developed a newfound respect for the construction industry. I'm now seriously considering a future in this field, as I've learnt that it offers a wide range of opportunities, no matter what academic background you have. There's a role for everyone who is willing to learn and get involved.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the visit to OB Construction, Eden Fabrication, and Sigtime. Everyone we met was friendly and welcoming, and it seemed like a great place to work.

*Leon Sandrews*







# Year 10 Home Economics

## Year 10 Home Economics Students Get Creative with Cheesecake Creations

Our Year 10 Home Economics pupils recently took part in a fun and flavourful "Make Your Own Cheesecake" activity, showcasing both their creativity and culinary skills.

Using a variety of ingredients, students experimented with a delicious range of flavour combinations, including Biscoff, Creme Egg, Mini Eggs, Mint Aero, Twirl, and Oreo – with plenty of taste-testing along the way!

The classroom was filled with excitement as pupils crafted their own unique cheesecakes, turning a practical lesson into a truly indulgent experience.

Well done to all involved – they tasted as good as they looked!







## Key stage 3 Art Clubs

**In our Key Stage 3 Art Clubs, pupils have been given the opportunity to participate in the St. Louis Network Art Competition. This competition involves all St. Louis schools, with students submitting artwork related to environmental themes.**

Our students have focused on the theme of deforestation. Through this project, we aim to highlight significant environmental issues and the urgent need for action.

The St. Louis Network has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing climate issues, and this competition provides an excellent platform for our Art Department to engage students in environmental advocacy.

By creating artworks centered on deforestation, our pupils are encouraged to reflect on the impact of this issue on our climate and consider ways to promote sustainability.

We believe that through these artistic endeavors, our pupils not only develop their talents but also gain a deeper appreciation for the environment and their responsibility to protect it.

The Art Clubs at St. Louis Ballymena aim to inspire and nurture young artists, empowering them to make a positive difference in the world.





# Reimagining the Future of Fashion

**On Wednesday, 19 February, St. Louis hosted a wonderful presentation on Reimagining the Future of Fashion – Prevention of Fashion Clothing Waste by Nuala Browne-Treacy, a sustainable textiles and fashion consultant and founder of CLÂN (Circular Lifestyle Awareness Network), based in Waterford. This event was organised by Mr Marcus Cooper, Director of Engagement & Fund Development for St. Louis Grammar School, in conjunction with Jayne Clarke, Museum and Heritage Manager for Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, as part of MEA Creative Enterprise Week.**

In November 2024, Jayne met Nuala through the Building Shared Creative Communities Project, supported by Creative Ireland. This initiative is being delivered through the Supporting Creative Micro-Industries strand and is a partnership between MEA Council and Waterford City and County Council. Its aim is to facilitate the exchange of ideas, knowledge, and experience in the fields of creativity, heritage, and enterprise.

Jayne and Nuala, along with council partners and representatives from Waterford Local Enterprise Office, were welcomed to St. Louis by Principal Mrs Jacqui O'Neill and Art Teacher Mrs Fiona McAuley. Nuala then delivered an enlightening and empowering presentation to our invited guests and students representing Art & Design, Geography, and our Eco-Council. She emphasised the need to rethink the current "take, make, and dispose" approach and

instead adopt more ethical practices aligned with a circular economy.

This model promotes redesigning textiles for longevity, reusability, and recyclability. Such an approach minimises environmental harm by preventing fashion clothing waste while also demonstrating a commitment to fair labour practices, sustainable sourcing, and positive social impact.

Following the presentation, our guests were given a tour of the Creative Arts & Expressive Centre and were highly complimentary about our excellent facilities and the outstanding creativity displayed by our students. Over refreshments, Nuala outlined an exciting follow-up activity: she has invited our students to design a brand logo for the local Ballymena Makers community hub. The design ideas must reflect The Future of Fashion with sustainability and circular economy principles at their core, while also incorporating creative and critical thinking. This experience will allow students to gain real-world insight into Responsible Design in the clothing and textiles industry, while also highlighting possible solutions such as a more sustainable circular economy.

Many thanks to Jayne Clarke, our guests, and our wonderful pupils, whose participation made this an amazing shared experience- one that I have no doubt will be revisited in the near future.

Welcomed by Fiona McAuley, Teacher of Art & Design and Gabrielle Lennon, Assistant for Creative Arts.







# Year 10 Film Club

**This year, in Film Club, we have visited Room 7 on a Monday lunchtime to watch films, discuss them, enter competitions, and overall have a great time with friends bonding over cinema.**

We were also extremely lucky to be given the chance to see 'Wicked' in the Ballymena IMC - in a private screening!

We were gifted this from Into Film as one of our members, Caitlin-Amy Ong, won a competition with them. We were accompanied by Miss McNeill, who runs the Film Club, and Miss Williams.

We really enjoyed watching Wicked, especially the performances of Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. We were so surprised at the quality of the CGI and special effects. Although - spoiler - the film is in two halves and leaves you on a very annoying cliff hanger! That's just an excuse to see the next half!

We would recommend Film Club to people who like a chill place to have their lunch and have thoughtful conversations.

*Caitlin Amy Ong, Stella Brown, Charlie Stewart and Ryan Brolly*







# Glenarm Castle Visit

## Year 11 Hospitality Students Explore Career Opportunities at Glenarm Castle

Our Year 11 Hospitality class had an exciting and inspiring day out at the Hospitality and Tourism Careers Event held at the beautiful Glenarm Castle on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 .

The event, organised by the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, offered students a valuable insight into the wide range of opportunities within the hospitality and tourism industry. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Council for coordinating the event and to Glenarm Castle for their warm hospitality throughout the day.

Pupils took part in a variety of engaging activities designed to showcase different aspects of the industry.

Highlights included:

- A guided tour of the castle led by George the butler
- Conducting risk assessments and driving mini Land Rovers
- Exploring the vibrant walled gardens, participating in a treasure hunt, and planting their own sunflowers
- Enjoying freshly made pizza straight from the oven and delicious ice cream from the castle's milk parlour

It was a great day and experience for our students to help give them an insight into various career opportunities.







## Empowering Future Leaders: Year 13 Girls Shine in the SistersIN Leadership Programme 2025

This year, some of our Year 13 girls had the incredible opportunity to take part in the SistersIN Leadership Programme 2025- a transformative journey designed to inspire and empower the next generation of female leaders. From leadership training to real-world experience, the programme was packed with enriching opportunities that left a lasting impact on all who participated.

The experience began with a series of leadership modules, which introduced the girls to core leadership principles, effective communication, confidence building, and goal setting. These sessions provided a strong foundation, helping the students to reflect on their strengths and develop their leadership identities.

One of the most exciting aspects of the programme was the one-to-one mentor matching, where each student was paired with a female leader from the world of business, education, or public service. These mentors provided invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insight throughout the programme, both in person and through online mentoring sessions. The virtual meetings allowed for regular, meaningful interaction, despite busy schedules.

Back in school, the girls were challenged to put their skills into action through leadership projects, which aimed to make a positive impact within the school community, in line with our priorities as a Take 5 school. These projects varied from organising wellbeing initiatives to running revision clinics for our KS4 pupils.

A major highlight was the work shadowing experience, where students spent time alongside their mentors in their professional settings. This gave them a real taste of the working world, helping to bring their career aspirations into focus and sparking new

ambitions, as well as offering valuable networking opportunities which will be of great benefit to both the girls and to St Louis in the future.

In March, the students enjoyed a memorable day trip to the SistersINSPIRE event at Queen's University Belfast, where they heard from inspirational speakers, took part in workshops, and got a glimpse into university life. The energy and encouragement at the event left everyone feeling motivated and ready to lead.

The grand finale of the programme was the SistersIN Celebration Event for the Class of 2025, held at the ICC Belfast on Monday 7th April. It was a day to recognise the achievements of all participants, celebrate their growth, and look ahead to the bright futures that lie before them. Speeches from surprise guests Michelle O'Neill and Emma Little-Pengelly commending the achievements of all involved marked the end of a truly life changing experience.

The SistersIN Leadership Programme 2025 has not only equipped our Year 13 girls with practical skills and experience but has also ignited in them a passion for leadership, confidence in their abilities, and a belief that they can shape the future. We are incredibly proud of each participant and excited to see where their leadership journeys will take them next.







# SLG Alumni

## Dr Colette Cochran - Class of 2000

**Colette Cochran is passionate about encouraging women and girls into STEM. Now the Smart Engineering & Strategy Deployment Lead for GSK, a global pharmaceutical and biotechnology company, and based at their headquarters in London, Colette is originally from Dunloy and attended St Louis from 1993 – 2000.**

Talking to Colette recently about her time at St Louis she recalled,

*"I enjoyed every aspect of school life. Mr Stuart was the Principal during my time at St Louis and he was a real force of nature, all the students had great respect for him. I remember playing violin at the Ballymena Festival, being part of the school orchestra and taking part in the school's production of 'The Sound of Music!'"*

*"As part of the school choir we also sang 'O Holy Night' in the Chapel on UTV, which was amazing. The school always felt welcoming and inclusive and I'm sure that's still the case today"*

Colette explained that it was the teachers at St Louis who got her to really think about her career choices,

*"I felt the school always pushed and challenged me but not too hard! My A levels were Maths, Chemistry and Biology and medicine seemed to be the route that I would take. However, I had some inspiring female role models in the Sciences at the time, Sister Luana, Ms Mullan and Ms Dynan and they all got me to think about the different careers that my subjects could open up to me. Chemical Engineering in particular being something that I wouldn't even have considered if it hadn't been for them."*

*"St Louis supported me to apply for a scholarship to Queen's to study Chemical Engineering, which wasn't a standard subject for women at the time and I will always be grateful they did".*



As a member of the Royal Academy of Engineering Colette is acutely aware that only 16.5% of practising engineers in the UK are female, a figure she's determined to increase,

*"I love my job, no two days are the same! At GSK we manufacture many products including cancer and respiratory drugs and I lead on smart manufacturing, maximising the process to make manufacturing as efficient as possible. The advent of AI now means that we are able to make even greater gains."*

*"I also love paying forward the support I got at St Louis by coaching and mentoring young women in the sector and at University".*

Colette is full of encouragement for women and girls to consider engineering,

*"I would encourage girls to really think about engineering as a career. There is nothing you can't achieve when you put your mind to it and at St Louis you are in the best place to develop your passions. You also continue to be surrounded by great female role models!"*





# CENTENARY GARDEN

## BUY A BRICK

AND BE PART OF ST LOUIS GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS



### *Dear Friends*

Our Centenary Garden is a special space within St Louis grounds where the Sisters of St Louis were originally laid to rest. During the school's centenary year the garden has been renewed as a quiet area for reflection and prayer. Our aim for the garden is that it will not only promote prayer and reflection, but also foster a deep spiritual connection between pupils past and present, staff, parents, the parish and our wider school community.

As a valued member of our school community you now have the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy at St Louis by adding your name/message to a brick within the garden. Our pathway, skilfully designed in the shape of the cross allows you to leave a permanent legacy and reminder of your time at St Louis.

Your gift will go towards ensuring that St Louis continues to be able to provide the same outstanding education for future generations of students as you received.

To find out more and 'buy your brick' please visit [friendsofstlouisballymena.com](http://friendsofstlouisballymena.com) or contact the Development office at school by phone or email; [development@stlouisgrammar.com](mailto:development@stlouisgrammar.com)



**BUY YOUR BRICK TODAY!**





# PSNI Talk

**I am a Year 10 student who recently attended a talk with the PSNI. This session was led by two PSNI officers, James and George, both of whom were very engaging and clearly knowledgeable. Personally, I found the talk highly informative, covering a range of topics such as bullying, cyberbullying, and the dangers of social media - all of which are very relevant in today's world.**

I felt this talk helped me understand the true severity of bullying and the impact social media can have on young children and teenagers like me. The officers explained the potential consequences of certain actions. For example, they told us about a 15-year-old student who was prosecuted for drug misuse. This offence was recorded on his criminal record, and ten years later, when he travelled to Texas, he was turned away because of it. The moral of the story was to highlight the long-term consequences of a criminal record and to emphasise that bullying, harming others, or engaging in illegal activities is simply not worth it - it will catch up with you.

They also spoke about the dangers of sending inappropriate images through Snapchat and other messaging services like WhatsApp. One fact I found particularly interesting was that if you send a photo via WhatsApp, whether inappropriate or not, it then becomes their property, meaning it can be recovered. The same applies to Snapchat - photos and messages can be retrieved. This really caught my attention because it showed that everything you do online leaves a digital footprint and can be traced. They also mentioned that if you are suspected of taking or sharing inappropriate images, your phone can be seized for up to two years. This shocked me - two years without a phone would be extremely difficult and is a severe punishment.

Overall, I found the talk extremely interesting and very well presented by the two officers. They made their points exceptionally clear.

***Lughán Hardy, Year 10***







# Scéalta Lughaidh

## Seachtain na Gaeilge 2025

The St. Louis' school community had a week filled with 'sult, spraoig agus spleodar' (fun and enjoyment) during our annual Seachtain na Gaeilge (Irish Language Week) celebrations in the lead up to Lá Fhéile Pádraig (St. Patrick's Day).

### Céilí

On Thursday 13th March, Year 8 and Year 9 pupils enjoyed a céilí accompanied by our live céilí band lead by Mr Kieran Convery (Head of Technology & Design), Mr Kieran Dempsey (Former Head of Technology & Design), Mr Gerard McNeill and some St. Louis' pupils. Pupils really enjoyed the live musical accompaniment, and we were very grateful for their time and efforts. Ár mbuíochas libh! Year 8 and Year 9 pupils also enjoyed bingo and a quiz through the medium of Irish. Comhghairdeas ó chroí to the pupils who were presented with an award for displaying 'spirit of the céilí.' There were lots of spot prizes of uibheacha seacláide (Easter eggs) up for grabs in each form class. We also had our most talented feis dancers from within our school community showing off their skills. A perfect end to a fantastic week!

Tá súil againn gur bhain gach duine sult as an deireadh seachtaine fada chun Lá Fhéile Pádraig a ceiliúradh! The annual St. Louis' céilí was such a brilliant way to celebrate Miss O'Brien's and Mrs Campbell's favourite week of the year – Seachtain na Gaeilge!

Beannachtaí na Féile oraibh go léir! Lá Fhéile Pádraig shona daoibh!

### Bronnadh na bhFáinní

Miss O'Brien, Mrs Campbell and Year 10 pupils were thrilled to welcome Jack Warnock to St. Louis during Seachtain na Gaeilge for our annual Bronnadh na bhFáinní (Presentation of Fáinní).

Jack is a valued friend of Roinn na Gaeilge ar Scoil Lughaidh and has enjoyed a glittering career blending the beautiful Irish language with his outstanding musical talent. Most recently, Jack has presented his own radio show, Blas Ceoil with BBC, and has enjoyed travelling to Austria, America and Canada to play music. We wish him every success in his future endeavours.

Bliain 10 have been preparing for their Fáinne speaking examination for several months and were delighted to reach this important milestone in their Irish language journey. Each Year 10 pupil took a speaking examination covering topics such as Myself & Family, House & Area, Past Tense, Hobbies & Interests and School. Many are excited to continue their journey into GCSE Irish. Pupils can be seen wearing their Fáinní with pride in the corridors of St. Louis.

Labhair í agus mairfidh sí! Speak it and it will prosper!

### 2nd Place (Gael Linn, Abair)

In January 2025, Roinn na Gaeilge were delighted to enter 3 Year 11 pupils for Gael Linn's annual Public Speaking Competition, Abair. Comhghairdeas croíúil le Abigail, Taisija agus Katie a ghlac páirt in Abair i mbliana!

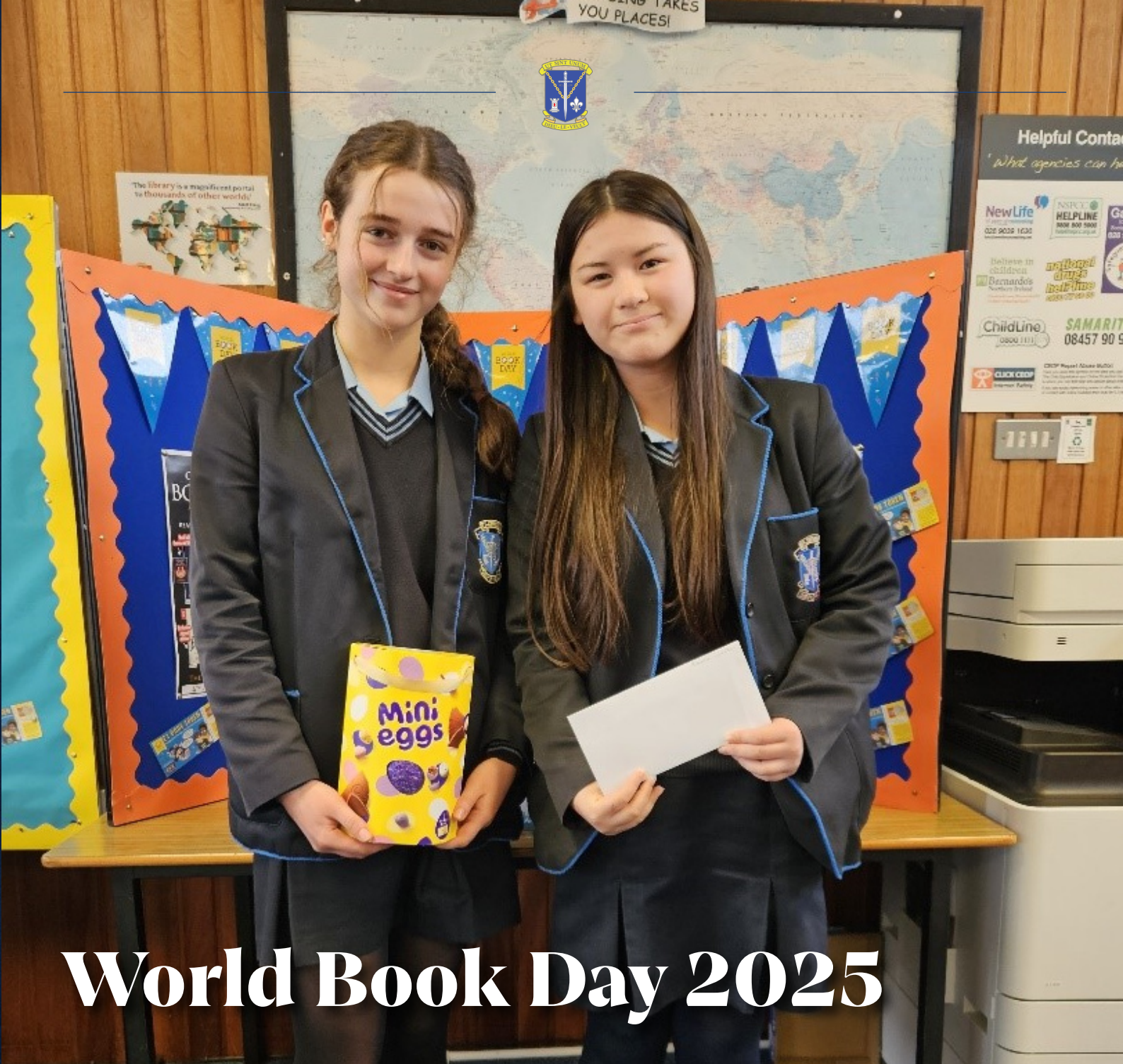
We are delighted to announce that Abigail was awarded 2nd place in her category and proceeded to the regional final held in March 2025. Abigail entertained audience members with her vision for the future; where students wouldn't have to go to school, Taylor Swift will be the next American president and everyone in Ireland would be a Gaeilgeoir. Abigail invited audience members to join her in bringing this vision for the future to reality!

A bhuíochas le Gael Linn as ócáid speisialta a eagrú dúinn!









# World Book Day 2025

## What a fantastic week we had celebrating World Book Day 2025!

We started off the week with our annual Book Fair which was held over 4 days in our school library. Pupils had the opportunity to buy books & stationery and enter the Book Fair Competition. Enthusiastic pupils spent £1522.40 on books which highlights the love of reading in St. Louis. The value of books for our school library from this total was £913.44! This allows the library to be stocked with the most up to date books for our pupils. Thanks to all staff and pupils who came to the fair and purchased books.

During the week we also held A 'Design a Bookmark Competition.' Congratulations to our winners - Caitlin Amy, Amber, Niamh and Lauren who received 'One 4 All' vouchers and Easter Eggs for their amazing artistic creations!

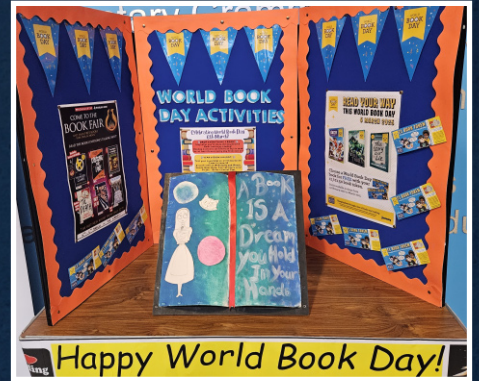
In Library Class, the Year 8 pupils also got involved in 'Book Wrap' where they had to guess the title of the book from the clues on the front of the wrapped books. Congratulations to 8 Lyndon who guessed the most titles correct!

On World Book Day itself, all junior classes were involved in a 'Drop Everything and Read' period which was a really relaxing way to start the day!

Finally, we had a Year 8 Kahoot Book Quiz which was the finale to our fun-filled week. Congratulations to our worthy winners Faolan, Darian & Iosif who all received Easter Eggs and book prizes!

*Mrs Boyd*





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# Year 8 History Workshop

**On Wednesday 26th March, every Year 8 class was taken out of normal lessons for a History Workshop about the Normans and the Middle Ages.**

The main purpose of the workshop was to give us a better understanding of Norman life - the clothes they wore, the weapons they wielded, and much more.

It was an educational and fun experience, with some activities requiring volunteers to take part in re-enactments of events such as: how to wield an axe, how they would have aimed a bow, how they fought with swords, and a final re-enactment of the Battle of Hastings.

The clothes worn in battle depended on whether you were a Norman, a Viking, or a Scottish Viking. A Norman would have worn a leather tunic with chainmail armour over the top for extra protection from archers—unless, of course, the arrow had a spearhead tip, which could easily slip through the holes in the armour!

The Normans also wore helmets with a distinct circular metal shape and a slight point at the top, usually worn with a soft cotton cap underneath to protect the scalp from the harsh metal.

Overall, I would say it was a fun and stimulating experience, a refreshing change from a normal school day.

*By Kaitlin Boyle*







# Year 14 Pupil Profiles

My name is **Erin McAleese**, and I am Head Girl here at St Louis. I currently study Biology, Chemistry, and Music at A Level, and I hope to study Dentistry next year.



Reflecting on my time at St Louis, I have to say that the Music Department has contributed to many of my fondest memories. The Irish traditional group, choir, and orchestra have given me the opportunity to play music and sing at numerous events, allowing me to enhance my skills and build lasting friendships over the years.

I am very grateful to have experienced so many wonderful opportunities, including public speaking competitions and sporting endeavours, all of which have contributed to both my academic and personal development. I look forward to the next step!

My name is **Jack Martin**. I am currently studying double BTEC Sports Studies and double BTEC Construction. I aspire to obtain an apprenticeship as a Quantity Surveyor. I joined St Louis in Lower Sixth, and since then, I have had two of the best years of my school life at St Louis.



During these two years, I was able to boost my confidence while also opening many doors to different career opportunities. My favourite memories at St Louis were competing in the Mageean and MaLarnon competitions, where I made many new friends whilst also developing my own skill set.

Competing in these games provided a platform through which I was nominated for – and awarded – an Ulster Schools Hurling All-Star. This has been, by far, my greatest achievement to date and is something I will always remember. I am very grateful for all the opportunities and guidance I have received throughout my time at St Louis.

My name is **Caoimhe Scullion**, and I am a Deputy Head Girl at St Louis. I study A-level Biology, Chemistry, and English, as well as BTEC Engineering. When I reminisce about my previous years at St Louis, my happiest memories undoubtedly stem from the PE Department and my time representing the school on the Gaelic football and camogie teams. I was honoured to be selected as captain of the school's Ladies' Gaelic Football Team in both Fifth Year and Upper Sixth, and I can confidently say that it has had an extremely positive impact on my school experience. From the friendships I've formed to the opportunities I've been granted to develop my skills, it has thoroughly enhanced both my school years and my love for these sports.



I will forever be truly appreciative of my many fond memories over the past seven years and credit St Louis with the expansion of both my academic and interpersonal skills. I hope to enjoy university life even a fraction as much as I've enjoyed my secondary school experience.

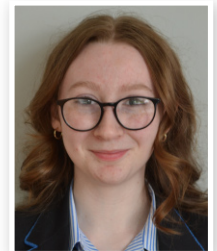
My name is **Paddy Murphy**, and I am Head Boy here at St Louis. During my time as a pupil, I've had countless experiences and formed lifelong friendships. I am particularly grateful for the numerous extra-curricular opportunities on offer. From the vast array of sports teams to additional academic challenges, these experiences have helped build strong relationships with both peers and coaches.



Next year, I hope to study Actuarial Science and Risk Management at Queen's University Belfast. The guidance from my teachers throughout my time at St Louis has been invaluable in nurturing my passion for academia and paving the way as I progress to university.

While it will be sad to leave, the nurturing environment at St Louis has been instrumental in preparing me for adulthood, and I look forward to what lies ahead.

My name is **Kate McClintock**, and I am a Deputy Head Girl. I currently study Music, Maths and Chemistry at A level, and I'm hoping to study Music at King's College London next year.



I have had seven fantastic years here, with many amazing extracurricular opportunities across both STEM subjects and the arts. A highlight of my time has definitely been my involvement in the Music Department, where I've gained many friendships and valuable experiences through choir and orchestra. I also have fond memories of my time in the Art Department, especially through participating in Junk Kouture.

My name is **Thomas Hasson**. I study PE, Business Studies, and Health and Social Care at A level. I hope to study Sport and Exercise Science at Ulster University next year.



I would say my time at St Louis has always been positive – whether through competing in various sporting competitions with my friends, or through other school events that offered countless opportunities to develop new skills and interests. These experiences have helped me grow socially, and more importantly, supported me as a pupil in reaching my full potential.

Throughout my seven years, the teachers and staff have consistently offered support and guidance whenever I've needed it, helping me to maximise my ability and prepare for the future. I'm very thankful for the memories, friendships, and supportive environment the school has provided over the last seven years, and I look forward to what lies ahead.







# Wolfson Funding

## St Louis Grammar School awarded £125k grant towards new science facilities.

St Louis Grammar School is delighted to have been awarded a grant of £125,000 by the Wolfson Foundation towards the development of two new Science rooms in 2025.

The Wolfson Foundation is an independent grant-making charity with a focus on education and research. Since it was established in 1955, the Wolfson Foundation has awarded over £1 billion (£2 billion in real terms) to projects across the UK.

Commenting on the award, Dr Noreen Mulholland, Head of Science at St Louis, said,

*"Science thrives at St Louis, last year we had 148 pupils studying Science at GCSE level and 88 at A Level. Results are consistently excellent, even considering the fact that some of our Science rooms are 70 years old. Originally designed for 100 pupils, the popularity of Science has grown tremendously over the last 20 years"*

The new rooms are scheduled to be completed and open by the end of September this year. As well as benefiting all pupils in St Louis, the new rooms will also enable the school to further

develop its Primary School outreach programme, giving local primary school pupils the opportunity to try out some practical science in state-of-the-art facilities.

Marcus Cooper, Director of Engagement and Development at St Louis, said,

*"Science is a priority for St Louis and two new Science rooms are a key project as we look forward to the next 100 years of excellence in education locally. Over the last five years we have developed new facilities for arts, music and drama through the outstanding Centre of Excellence for Creative and Expressive Arts as well as new, floodlit 3G sports pitches, now used by community groups every evening. These facilities have demonstrated the 'lift' that pupils and staff experience from a modern environment and I have no doubt that the new science facilities will transform the students' experience and prepare them in the best possible way for University and the workplace. Thank you so much to the Wolfson Foundation for their support and the positive impact it will have on our students' futures"*

**Main Image: Year 13 Chemistry students were delighted to hear about the Wolfson Foundation's support for two new Science rooms at St Louis from Dr Mulholland and Mr Cooper**





# Kintullagh – A House built on Irish Linen

**In 2024, St Louis Grammar celebrated the centenary year of the arrival of the nuns to open a school at Kintullagh. Before it was established as a convent, 'Kintullagh House' had been home to an influential Victorian family since 1867, and before that, a Georgian house existed on the site from around 1750, named 'Hillhead'. Hillhead/Kintullagh House were built on the fortunes of the Irish Linen Industry, of which Ballymena was a thriving centre. The families that lived here were extremely wealthy linen merchants who played a leading role in bringing the village of Ballymena into the Industrial Age.**

The original Georgian house of Hillhead was owned by Thomas Dickey and later, William Gihon who, in addition to exporting linen worldwide, were also leading figures in the community, acting as magistrates and Land Agents to the estate of Ballymena Castle.

In 1867, William Alexander Young inherited Hillhead and rebuilt it in the Jacobean house we know today, naming it 'Kintullagh'. Using the best materials and craftsmen, the mansion was designed to impress visitors, making a statement with distinctive Dutch gables, turrets, a bell tower and grand stone entrance steps overseen by two stone lions, bearing the initials of William Alexander Young and his wife Margaret Young. The house was richly decorated in a Gothic style, with ornate carpentry, plasterwork, brass details, floor tiles and the Fleur De Lys featuring strongly throughout. Evidence that Charles Lanyon designed Kintullagh lies in its similarity to other Lanyon buildings including Tempo Manor, Stranmillis House and Killashee Hotel.

Along with fine mansions, these families owned land, mills, bleach greens, farms and houses in Ballymena, Galgorm, Lisnafillan, Fenaghy and Cullybackey. They had links to plantations in Florida and Argentina and invested in the railways in England, America and Canada. Locally, they were responsible for building our railway from Belfast to Ballymena and further to Derry and Portrush. They established a huge Spinning and Weaving Mill (Braidwater Spinning Mill, now a retail park) which gave employment to over 2000 people and introduced gas street lighting and a sewage system to the town.

They acted as Magistrates, set up local banks and investment companies, chaired many Boards, established a cottage hospital for the poor and during the 1845 – 1852 Famine in Ireland, they managed the workhouse and the Poor Relief Fund. Socially they mingled with landed gentry at society events, ran the local cricket club, established the Ballymena Philharmonic Society and had leading roles in the Church, with the Youngs hosting the Church of Ireland Primate at Kintullagh in 1895.

The ladies volunteered tirelessly for their community, raising funds, making donations and providing entertainment for the workhouse. They volunteered for a nursing society and health association and worked with the 'Girls Friendly Society' to empower and educate local girls and young women. They taught at the Sunday school at St Patricks Church and organised hockey and tennis matches. As independent modern ladies, they were held positions in local political groups and on the Board of Town Commissioners, positions that were historically dominated by men.

Research into Kintullagh and its families has revealed a rich history of industrial innovation, genteel society and service to the community with stories of the 1798 Irish Rebellion, the Famine, a slave plantation, a shipwreck, bankruptcy, a Royal visit in 1885, Roger Casement and a visit from two thousand Harland and Wolff shipbuilders on the front lawn of Kintullagh in 1878!

The families of Kintullagh went on to own several mansions in the area including Fenaghy House (now Galgorm Manor), Lisnafillan House (now the site of Wrightbus), Clonavon House (site of Police Station), Leighinmohr House (now Leighinmohr Hotel), Ballee House (site of Ballee High School) and Galgorm Castle. With so many of these demolished for other developments in the late 1900's, we are grateful to Canon O'Donnell who, in buying the house and land for the purposes of building a school, also saved an important piece of historical Ballymena architecture.

A booklet based on research into the history of the house will be available in the school Library.



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# UPCOMING DATES

Easter Holidays **Thursday 17th April - Friday 25th April inclusive**

(Except for some senior pupils who have been asked to attend revision classes on 17th/18th/24th and 25th)

Year 9 Parent Teacher Meeting from **9am-11.30am Thursday 17th April**

Centenary Golf Classic – Galgorm Golf Club **Tuesday 22nd April**

May Day Holiday (school closed) **Monday 5th May**

Staff Development Days **Friday 23rd and Tuesday 27th May**

(students should not attend except for those sitting external exams)

Satutory Holiday **Monday 26th May**

Junior Exams **Thursday 29th May - Monday 2nd June**

Years 8/9 Literacy and Numeracy Days **Tues 3rd June - Friday 6th June**

Year 13 Work Experience **Monday 9th June - Wednesday 11th June**

Year 8 Sports Day **Tuesday 10th June**

Year 9 Sports Day **Wednesday 11th June**

Year 10 Sports Day **Thursday 12th June**

New Incoming Year 8 Induction day **Friday 13th June**

UCAS preparation days **Monday 16th - Wednesday 18th June**

KS3 House Trip **Friday 20th June**

Ghana Trip **Saturday 21st June**

Junior Prize Day **Tuesday 24th June**

***Excellence, Endeavour & Empowerment***







Easter Edition | April 2025



The Newsletter of St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena