

The Kintullagh Voice

DECEMBER 2024



The Newsletter of St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena

100
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

1924-2024



N.I. Top Grammar School



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SUPERB RESULTS AT ST LOUIS

This year marks a special milestone for St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena, as we celebrate our Centenary alongside exceptional A Level and GCSE results.

At A Level, an impressive 97.6% of students achieved three or more A*-C grades, with over 85% of all grades being A*-B. Many students have secured places in prestigious university courses across Ireland and the UK, while others are embarking on apprenticeships with top companies such as PwC and Deloitte. These achievements reflect the hard work and determination of our students, supported by the dedication of our staff and the constant encouragement of their families.

Our GCSE results are equally remarkable, with over 99% of Year 12 pupils attaining seven or more A*-C grades, including English and Maths. Among this cohort, 67 students achieved eight or more A*/A grades,

and 78 students earned seven or more A*/A grades. Overall, 82% of all GCSE grades were A*-B. Special congratulations go to Robert Crooks, who achieved 11 GCSEs including nine A* grades, and Eibhleann Ardiff, Benjamin Marrs, and Laura McClean, who each earned an outstanding 10 A* grades.

At St Louis, we pride ourselves on fostering a supportive environment that prioritises both academic excellence and emotional wellbeing. These results are a testament to our whole-school approach, where students, staff, and parents work together to help every individual reach their full potential in a happy and secure setting.

We are incredibly proud of all our students in the Class of 2024 and wish them every success as they take their next steps in education and beyond.



St Louis GCSE top achievers





Students who achieved 8 A* to A



Robert Crooks who achieved 11 A* to A Grades with Principal, Mrs O'Neill



Students who achieved 10 A* to A grades



GCSE top achievers with Principal, Mrs O'Neill



A Level top achievers with Principal, Mrs O'Neill



Conn Fyfe & Zach Hughes, 5A* - A grades



Some of our students who achieved 5 A level including 5 A* to A grades



A selection of AS students achieving 4 A grades



Some of our students who achieved 4 A* - A Grades at A Level



PRIZE DAY 2024

On Friday, 20th September, we came together to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our students throughout the previous academic year at Prize Day.

It was a lovely occasion as we welcomed students back into the school to celebrate their successes, particularly those who attained a commendable level of success and are now embarking on the next stage of their educational journey.

The event featured an inspiring address from our Guest Speaker, the accomplished past pupil Nathan Hanna. With a distinguished career as a journalist and news presenter, Nathan shared his insights and experiences, emphasising the importance of each student "following their dreams and aspirations" and offering motivation to pursue those aspirations with diligence.

Congratulations to all our Prize Winners; your accomplishments make us exceptionally proud.



Aisling Ardiff Top Achiever in Music



Aoife Walker Top Achiever in Spanish



Benjamin Marrs Top Achiever in Digital Technology, Further Maths, Geography and Double Award Science



Brian Martin Top Achiever in Art & Design



Guest Speaker Nathan Hanna



John McGroggan - The Kane Shield



Julia Babuszewska & Jessica Halloran receive the John Stuart Shield



Juliana O'Mullan- Top Candidate in Business Studies



Sofia Richmond Top Achiever in Moving Image Arts



Year II Maths Award Grace McGarry



FORMAL 2024

On the evening of 4th October, staff and students gathered at the glamorous Galgorm Resort for a night of celebration and excitement. The long-awaited school formal did not disappoint.

An evening of joy unfolded as students arrived in their elegant ballgowns and sharp suits, ready to enjoy a night filled with fun, laughter, and even some questionable dance moves! Celebrating our final year brought a sense of nostalgia for both staff and students as we reminisced about friendships, memories, and shared experiences.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone involved in organising this wonderful evening, including our dedicated staff, SLT, and everyone in between.

We have shared many unforgettable moments at St Louis, but our school formal is undoubtedly a special night we will always remember!





NAPCE UK PASTORAL AWARDS 2024

We are thrilled to share that St. Louis was shortlisted as a finalist at the prestigious NAPCE Awards 2024. Representing excellence in pastoral care, we were selected for the Raising Awareness of Pastoral Care category at the UK National Awards for Pastoral Care in Education. This category celebrates individuals, groups, or organisations that have made a significant impact in highlighting pastoral care and promoting positive improvements for the benefit of young people.

The awards ceremony took place on 11 October 2024 at the Worcestershire County Cricket Ground in Worcester. Mrs McGreevy proudly attended the event, which brought together educators and pastoral leaders from across the UK to celebrate the vital role of pastoral care in shaping the future life chances of children and young people.

St. Louis was honoured to receive a Finalist Certificate in recognition of our commitment to raising awareness and driving meaningful changes in pastoral care. This achievement reflects the dedication and hard work of our entire school community in supporting the holistic well-being of our students.



Being recognised on such a national stage reaffirms our commitment to providing a nurturing and supportive environment where every student can thrive. We are incredibly proud of this milestone and remain inspired to continue championing the importance of pastoral care in education.

PHA WORK WELL LIVE WELL AWARDS

St. Louis celebrates being awarded a PHA Work Well Live Well Award.

This award was given to us for Workplace Health and Wellbeing Recognition. St. Louis received this award as it is recognised as an organisation who displays an ongoing commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of their employees. St. Louis received this award from NICHS and PHA at the Titanic Building in November. Our seven Health Champions were also recognised, Mrs McGreevy, Mrs McVey, Mrs McCollum, Mrs Casey, Mrs Webb, Mrs Dumbleton and Ms Mosoczy.



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LGFA CAPTAINS 2024/25

CAMOGIE CAPTAINS 2024/25

SENIOR LADIES FOOTBALL CAPTAIN

Name: Caoimhe Scullion
Team: Cargin LGFA
Position: Centre Half Back
Year Group: Year 15



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?

Beating Castlewellan to get into the cup quarter final or Roisin Quinn falling over at the back of the bus on the way home from training.

Who inspires you as an athlete?

My parents and wee brothers.

What advice do you have for younger players?

Try your hardest and enjoy every minute.

Favourite pre-game tune: Rhianna Pon de Replay.

Favourite team mate and why: I couldn't pick a favourite, they're all great.

What makes your team special this year?:

There's a great sense of team and everyone gets on very well with each other.

SENIOR LADIES FOOTBALL VICE CAPTAIN

Name: Kate McGilligan
Team: Pearses Kilrea
Position: Midfield
Year Group: Year 15



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?

My favourite memory would have to be beating Rathmore in the group stages this year - very tight game and lead to us advancing to the ulster cup quarter finals.

Who inspires you as an athlete?

My family, friends, teammates and members of my clubs.

What advice do you have for younger players?

Keep working and training hard, it's worth it in the long run.

Favourite pre-game tune: Any song by Rhianna.

Favourite team mate and why: Clodagh Maguire, best playlist on the bus!

What makes your team special this year?:

We had a very strong team this year with an awful lot of younger players coming through that were not afraid to get involved and have a bit of fun - especially on the bus and off the field!

SENIOR CAMOGIE CAPTAIN

Name: Órlaith Gould
Team: Bridini Óga Glenravel
Position: Midfield
Year Group: Year 14



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?

This year's Ulster campaign.

Who inspires you as an athlete?

Sydney McLaughlin.

What advice do you have for younger players?

If something challenges your ability, it will change your ability.

Favourite pre-game tune: Dirty Old Town.

Favourite team mate and why: Hannah Friel - class work rate and attitude, always has a positive outlook.

What makes your team special this year?:

How quickly we've built as a team unit, from the seniors right through to the youngest girls on the panel, showing up for each other.

SENIOR CAMOGIE VICE CAPTAIN

Name: Casey Crawford
Team: Dunloy Cuchullains
Position: Centre Half Back
Year Group: Year 15



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?

Winning All Ireland in 2022.

Who inspires you as an athlete?

Senior players within the club team.

What advice do you have for younger players?

Go out and enjoy representing the school- it goes by in a flash.

Favourite pre-game tune: Dog days are over - Florence and the Machine.

Favourite team mate and why: Carragh Boyle- have grown up playing camogie with her at club and school, she never fails to make everyone laugh at training.

What makes your team special this year?:

The hardwork and determination we bring onto the pitch.



FOOTBALL CAPTAINS 2024/25

MCLARNON CUP CAPTAIN

Name: Ryan McKeever
Team: Roger Casements,
Portglenone
Position: Wing half back
Year Group: Year 14



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?
NI Cup quarter final.

Who inspires you as an athlete?
George Foreman.

What advice do you have for younger players?
Enjoy pulling on the SLG jersey.

Favourite pre-game tune: Smells Like Teen Spirit.

Favourite team mate and why: Caolan McGarrel- always locked in.

What makes your team special this year?:
Work rate!

MCLARNON CUP CAPTAIN

Name: Patrick O'Neill
Team: Erins Own, Cargin
Position: Half forward/
Half back
Year Group: Year 14



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?
5th Year Football.

Who inspires you as an athlete?
Lebron James.

What advice do you have for younger players?
No egos

Favourite pre-game tune: Neon Eyes by Morgan Wallan.

Favourite team mate and why: Oisin Hamill because of his commitment.

What makes your team special this year?:
Good attitudes!

MCLARNON CUP VICE CAPTAIN

Name: Caleb Smith
Team: Tir Na Og, Randalstown
Position: Full forward
Year Group: Year 15



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?
Forresters Semi final in a blizzard.

Who inspires you as an athlete?
Rory Bonnes, and my mum.

What advice do you have for younger players?
Trust the process.

Favourite pre-game tune: Family Affairs by Mary J Blige.

Favourite team mate and why: Big D! Except for when he is marking me.

What makes your team special this year?:
The bond between the players!





HURLING CAPTAINS 2024/25

HURLING CAPTAIN 2024

Name: Sean Og Blaney
Team: Dunloy Cuchullains
Position: Full Back
Year Group: Upper Sixth



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?
Winning the Mageean Cup in 2022.

Who inspires you as an athlete?
Sergio Ramos.

What advice do you have for younger players?
Ice in the mind, fire in the belly.

Favourite pre-game tune: Power - Kanye West.

Favourite pre-match meal: Toast and Scrambled eggs.

Favourite team mate and why: Ryan Mc Clements, knows exactly what to do and where to be.

Best Trainer on the team: Jack Martin.

What makes your team special this year?:
The lads are motivated to win and deserve to see success.

HURLING VICE CAPTAIN 2024

Name: Fiontan Bradley
Team: Ruairi Óg, Cushendall
Position: Forward
Year Group: Year 15



What's your favourite memory from playing with St Louis?
Foresters Cup campaign last year.

Who inspires you as an athlete?
Kobe Bryant and Mr Cassidy.

What advice do you have for younger players?
Bring your hurl and sliotar to school every day.

Favourite pre-game tune: Thunderstruck.

Favourite team mate and why: All a bunch of great lads.

What makes your team special this year?:
Everyone works so hard in training.

MR MCALEER WINS ALL STAR AWARD

We are delighted to celebrate the remarkable achievement of our PE teacher, Mr McAleer, who was recently awarded a Devenish All Star. This accolade is a fitting recognition of his exceptional performances throughout the season.

Representing All Saints GAC, Mr McAleer played a pivotal role in securing the Intermediate Championship title this year. What makes this victory even more special is that he achieved it alongside many former pupils of our school, demonstrating the connection and enduring talent nurtured within the local club.

Mr McAleer's success both on and off the pitch exemplifies dedication, teamwork, and perseverance, making him an inspiring role model for all our students. Congratulations, Mr McAleer, on an outstanding year and this well-deserved honour!





Scéalta Lughaidh

GAEILGE 24

On Tuesday, 12th November 2024, St Louis' staff and pupils took part in the Gaeilge 24 challenge, organised annually by Conradh na Gaeilge.

The aim is to try and speak as much Irish as possible during the 24 hours of the day – in school, at home, and with friends! Participation in Gaeilge 24 throughout the country has seen a great increase over the past number of years, making it one of the best school activities for encouraging the use of Irish among the whole school community.

Many members of staff also made a great effort to recall the Irish they learned in school and speak it with colleagues and pupils throughout the day.

Labhair i agus mairfidh sí!



TURAS GAELTACHTA, SEPTEMBER 2024

In September 2024, Miss O'Brien and Mrs Campbell were delighted to organise a trip to the Gaeltacht region of Donegal for the Senior Irish Students (Year 11 – Year 14).

The sun was out as we surfed on Carrickfinn Beach, and staff and pupils enjoyed the changeable weather – even the hailstones!

We were welcomed back by staff in Teach Jack, who provided comfortable accommodation and a delicious two-course dinner. Pupils and staff then joined locals in a céili and enjoyed a quiz through the medium of Irish.

The next morning, we were joined by our friends Dean and Corey from Gael Linn, as they facilitated a workshop to prepare our students for the completion of the Gaelbhratach award. We look forward to our continued partnership this academic year.

Trips to the Gaeltacht region of Donegal provide pupils with an invaluable opportunity to practise their spoken Irish in a variety of contexts, e.g. in Teach Jack, at mealtimes, in local shops, and when speaking to local businesses that operate through the medium of Irish. We hope this experience has enhanced pupils' confidence and competence in preparation for their Speaking examinations in Summer 2024.





ÁN CHOMNAHAIL ULSTER CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024: A CELEBRATION OF TALENT IN LETTERKENNY

The Án Chomnahail Ulster Championships 2024, held in Letterkenny, was a thrilling showcase of Irish dancing excellence. We are delighted with the phenomenal achievements of our dancers, who represented their talent, dedication, and love for Irish dance on this prestigious stage.

Outstanding Results

Here is a highlight of our dancers' remarkable performances:

- Eimear Smith: Crowned Ulster U18 Champion.
- Elle Brown: Achieved the title of Ulster U17 Champion.
- Sarah Hasson: Secured an impressive 2nd place in the U17 Championship.
- Clíodhna Crawley: Delivered an amazing performance to finish 6th in the U16 Championship.
- Aoife Leahy: Excelled in the U15 Prelim Solos, claiming 1st and 2nd place.
- Rose Mc Veigh: Triumphed as the Ulster U15 Champion.
- Niamh Smith: Showcased her skills, placing 14th in the U12 Championship.
- Kate Hasson: Delivered a strong performance to finish 7th in the U12 Championship.
- Cayla Murray: Excelled in the U12 Prelim Solos, securing 3rd and 6th places.
- Charlie O'Brien: Claimed an impressive 2nd place in the U12 Championship.
- Conor McDonnell: Earned a well-deserved 5th place in the Ulster Championship.

Congratulations once again to all of our Irish dancers. We can't wait to see what the future holds for these talented individuals as they continue to achieve so highly.





YEAR 13 ENRICHMENT- ORDER OF MALTA FIRST AID

Lower Sixth students completed a first aid course that certifies them for three years. Delivered by Mr Quinn in collaboration with the Order of Malta, the course covers basic first aid and emergency life skills for adults, children, and infants. This includes CPR and the use of an AED, as well as managing injuries such as cuts, breaks, and sprains. For students planning to pursue healthcare-related courses at university, this certification is not only practical but also enhances their personal statements by demonstrating a genuine interest and proactive acquisition of relevant skills.

Paddy Murphy

Throughout Year 14, I had the privilege of attending Mr Quinn's First Aid class for enrichment every fortnight. We started with basic skills, like tying bandages, and quickly progressed to advanced techniques, such as placing someone in the recovery position, performing CPR, and using defibrillators.

Megan Sherry

Over the course of Year 14, I was fortunate to complete a first aid course led by Mr Quinn as part of an enrichment class. During the course, we learned how to apply slings, assess life-threatening situations, perform CPR, and use defibrillators. Mr Quinn ensured we were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to confidently handle emergency scenarios.

The teaching was dynamic and inclusive, combining PowerPoints, real-life demonstrations, and hands-on practice to meet all learning needs. At the end of the course, we completed an assessment and earned a certificate, proving our competence in first aid. This achievement provides us with invaluable skills that may one day help us respond effectively to real-life emergencies.





Eco Council

SUCCESS AT COP29 SCHOOLS EVENT

In November, Year 14 students Caoimhe and Cobhlaith proudly represented St Louis Grammar at the COP29 Schools Climate Negotiations held in Belfast City Hall.

The duo excelled in negotiating international climate agreements, showcasing their passion for promoting stronger global strategies to address the climate crisis. Their outstanding efforts have made the school extremely proud. Well done, girls!



TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE

As part of our ongoing efforts to enhance the sustainability of our school environment and promote environmental awareness, a tree-planting initiative was successfully carried out on the school grounds. This project was made possible thanks to the generous contribution of trees and the invaluable support of Chris Wood from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council. Collaboration with our Eco Council was key to the smooth execution of the event.

The trees provided by Chris Wood include native species well-suited to the local climate. They offer numerous environmental benefits, such as improving air quality, supporting local wildlife, and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the school grounds.

The tree planting took place on Thursday, 28th November, with Chris Wood leading the activities alongside Eco-Council members. The school grounds were transformed as students worked together to dig holes, plant trees, and ensure proper care was taken. The enthusiasm and teamwork displayed by the students were inspiring and served as a powerful reminder of the collective effort required to drive positive environmental change.

Looking ahead, the Eco-Council will monitor the trees' growth and ensure they are well-maintained. Students will also continue to engage the wider school community to raise awareness about the importance of trees and sustainability. This tree-planting initiative is just one step in our commitment to creating a greener, more sustainable environment at St Louis Grammar.





EMILY BOYD

Why did I decide to join the Eco Council?

I decided to join the Eco Council to make a difference in the school, such as transforming the gardens into beautiful spaces filled with wildlife like butterflies and bees, as well as showcasing a variety of flowers.

Joining the Eco Council also gave me the opportunity to attend workshops about the importance of recycling and the benefits of using reusable water bottles.

Being part of the Eco Council has opened my eyes to why we should focus on planting, recycling, and caring for the environment.

What role do I have in the council?

The council is divided into three groups: biodiversity, paper, and waste. I chose to join the biodiversity group because I enjoy planting and learning about different types of plants and how to care for them.

All three groups are equally important, so while we had the chance to choose our primary focus, everyone contributes to tasks across all areas.

As part of the biodiversity group, I get to help plant flowers and other greenery during the spring and summer months, often staying after school to take care of them.

What is my favourite memory of the council?

My favourite memory of the council is attending the recycling workshop, which was both informative and interactive.

We learned how long it takes for plastic to decompose in the ocean and discovered which items we often throw away could actually be recycled.

Another standout memory was the NI Water workshop, where we explored how water is treated and why reusable water bottles are so important. Being part of the eco council has provided me with the opportunity to participate in these workshops and learn many things I hadn't known before.



Where would I like to see the council going over the next five years?

In the next five years, I would love to see the council securing the Green Flag Award again and organising workshops for students across all year groups to educate them about recycling, the importance of avoiding littering, and how to plant and care for greenery.

I envision the Eco Council speaking in school assemblies to share what we do and encourage others to join. It would also be wonderful to see the school gardens thriving, full of flowers and buzzing with insects.

I hope the council continues its excellent work, keeping our school eco-friendly and inspiring others to contribute to environmental sustainability.





Our voices, Our Stories

LOUISA DOHERTY



Everyone knows the cliché question: “If you were stranded on an island, what would you take?” Most people think of phones or water. Speaking as someone who was shipwrecked on an island, I can tell you what you truly need.

On 19th August 2024, I was on holiday in Greece, sailing around with my uncle (a seasoned skipper), two aunts, and my cousin. We stopped at Paxos, a tranquil island known for its clear waters. That morning, I noticed a thunderstorm forecasted. Annoyed, I figured I'd spend the time reading.

The storm escalated quickly, with heavy rain and strong winds. Boats began fleeing the harbour, but we decided to ride it out at anchor. However, the anchor lost grip, and we were forced to leave. Worse still, the navigation failed, and visibility was so poor we couldn't see far ahead. Attempts to re-anchor failed as the weather worsened. Then, our boat capsized in the fierce wind, righting itself moments later- but the engine was gone.

Panic set in. My aunt scrambled below deck to find life vests. There were only four adult vests and a child's one too small for me. My uncle decided he'd go without. As we prepared to abandon ship, we struck rocks. My uncle shouted for us to jump. I landed in the water, waves crashing over me.

Clinging to a rock, I thought I would die as the boat crushed against me. Peace washed over me as I accepted my fate—until my aunt dragged me onto the rocks.

The five of us huddled together, battered and terrified.

We found a small cave but had to flee as it started collapsing. Sitting exposed to the storm, we screamed for help at a passing boat. Though unable to assist, it stayed nearby, giving us hope.

Eventually, a diving team arrived. They swam to us, urging us to jump into the water and swim to safety. Overwhelmed with fear, I was helped into the water by my family. Two divers supported me to the rescue boat, where I collapsed, shivering and in pain.

Once ashore, the divers helped us with blankets, antiseptic, and even money for necessities, as we had lost everything. Their kindness brought us to tears. At the medical centre, despite its rundown state, the staff provided care and dry clothes. Finally, I was able to call my mum.

This harrowing experience gave me a profound appreciation for life and the kindness of strangers. It taught me that behind every smile, there may be unseen battles- and that compassion is priceless.

What does it mean to be stuck between a rock and a hard place? Me!



A SONNET

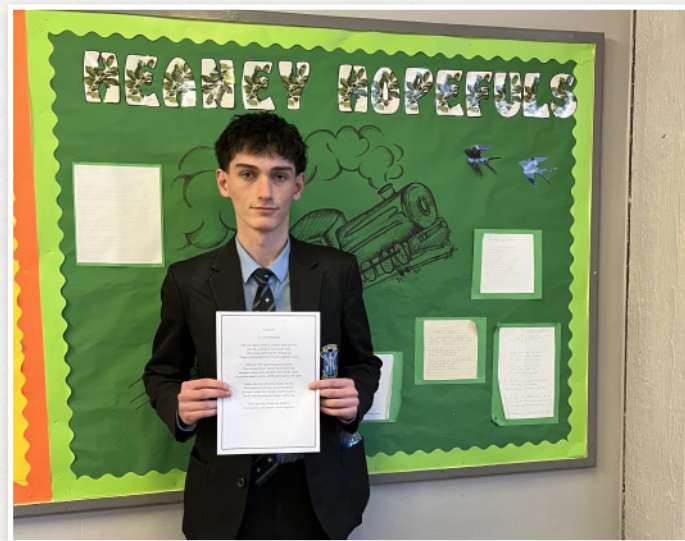
By Lorcan McQuitty

The train glides forth, a serpent swift and sly,
Roving a canvas of sun-kissed land,
Salty spray adorning the shining sky,
Waves embracing shores home to golden sand.

Cliffs jut from quarrelling navy waves,
Their ancient faces lashed by brockish sea,
Blossoms sway, wind whistles from lonely caves,
In patches green, where wildflowers dance with glee.

Inside, the hum of voices weave stories,
Rich tapestries of love, joy and laughter,
Strangers share this voyage, basked in glory,
Divine rays blessing passengers, gathered.

Vistas passing, shaded by weather,
One journey, one people, travel together.





A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MOLLY MCKENNA

From a young age, my life has been devoted to the world of gymnastics and trampolining. I began artistic gymnastics at the age of five and steadily improved to a national level. However, my journey took an exciting turn on my sixth birthday when I tried trampolining for the first time – a sport where I found instant success.

By the age of nine, I was competing in international trampolining competitions, and my career has soared since then. Along the way, I have achieved some incredible milestones. I became a Junior World and European Champion, and in 2023, I achieved the prestigious title of Senior Team World Champion. These achievements made me the first athlete from Northern Ireland to hold all these titles.

In October 2024, I added another historic accomplishment by becoming the first-ever Senior British Champion. These successes have not only fulfilled my personal dreams but also established me as a role model for young trampolinists with aspirations similar to mine.

The Olympic Dream

Although my discipline, Double Mini Trampoline (DMT), is not yet included in the Olympics, I remain hopeful that it will one day achieve this status. My ultimate dream is to compete on the Olympic stage before I retire. If that dream doesn't come true for me, I am determined to advocate for DMT's inclusion in the Olympics. My goal is to create opportunities for the young gymnasts who look up to me now, ensuring their dreams can one day become reality.

Behind the Scenes: A Day in My Life

Training Day

A typical training day is as rigorous as it is rewarding:

- 8:00 AM:** Breakfast with the team.
- 9:00 AM:** Team meeting to discuss training times and plans for the day.
- 10:00 AM:** Downtime to prepare for the day, packing leotards and extra kit if needed.
- 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM:** Training in the warm-up hall with breaks to stay refreshed.
- 2:00 PM – 5:00 PM:** Training on the field of play, familiarising myself with the competition equipment.
- 4:00 PM:** Media interviews, photos, questions, and autograph signings.
- 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM:** Recovery with physios, including massages, ankle taping, and icing.
- 7:00 PM:** Dinner with the team.
- 8:00 PM:** Evening team meeting to review hotel rules and plans.
- After 9:00 PM:** Downtime before lights out, ensuring a good night's rest.



Competition Day

On competition days, the schedule is even more intense:

- 7:00 AM:** Breakfast to fuel up for the day ahead.
- 8:00 AM:** Arrival at the arena to mentally prepare for the competition.
- 9:00 AM:** Watching competitors in other groups for motivation and insight.
- 10:00 AM:** Warm-up in the designated warm-up hall.
- 10:30 AM:** Practice routines on the warm-up equipment.
- 11:15 AM:** March out into the competition hall with my group.
- 11:30 AM:** Two-touch warm-up on the Double Mini Trampoline.
- 11:45 AM:** The competition begins, waiting for my turn to perform.
- 12:00 PM – 12:30 PM:** Compete, giving my all in front of the judges and audience.
- 1:00 PM:** Media interviews, signing autographs, and taking photos with the team.
- 2:00 PM:** Podium ceremony, celebrating with a medal.
- After 2:00 PM:** Supporting my teammates by watching their performances and enjoying the rest of the competition.
- 8:00 PM:** Team meeting to congratulate those who competed and encourage those yet to perform.
- After 9:00 PM:** Downtime and lights out, ready to focus on the next competition day.

Inspiring the Next Generation

These achievements and experiences have shaped me into a role model in my sport – a position I have always aspired to. To know that I am inspiring young trampolinists to pursue their dreams fills me with pride. I hope my journey proves to them that with hard work and determination, anything is possible.

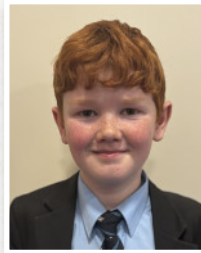


MEET OUR YEAR 8 STUDENTS!

As part of our school newsletter, we're delighted to introduce a few of our new Year 8 students! Each one has brought their own unique energy to St Louis Grammar, and we're excited to share their thoughts on their term at SLG!

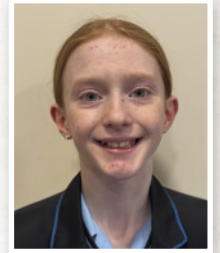
Conor McDonnell

- Primary School: St Mary's, Portglenone
- Class: 8 Layde
- Thoughts on St Louis so far: Really good, very enjoyable, and lots of activities to participate in.
- Favourite Class: Home Economics
- Extracurricular Activities: Hurling, Gaelic, Chess Club
- Spare Time: Practising GAA and Irish dancing
- Favourite Thing About SLG: New friends from new places!



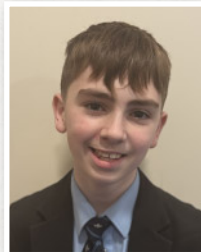
Tess Bradley

- Primary School: St Colmbas, Kilrea
- Class: 8 Laragh
- How are you finding SLG?: I love it
- Favourite Class: English, Geography, ICT and I love my form class
- Extracurricular Activities: HE Club, Cross Country, Homework Club
- Spare Time: Gaelic Football and Camogie
- Favourite Thing About SLG: All the extracurricular activities, the help teachers give us.



Ordhan Arthurs

- Primary School: St Patrick's, Glenariff
- Class: 8 Lir
- How are you finding SLG?: Great! The teachers are very friendly and welcoming.
- Favourite Class: English
- Extracurricular Activities: Soccer
- Spare Time: Football, PlayStation, ballet
- Favourite Thing About SLG: Our canteen lunches!



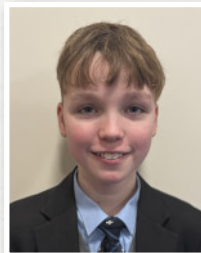
Lana Scullion

- Primary School: Glenann PS
- Class: 8 Lyndon
- How are you finding SLG?: I'm so happy to be here and I love it so far!
- Favourite Class: English
- Extracurricular Activities: Camogie/ Gaelic
- Spare Time: Camogie
- Favourite Thing About SLG: I love that in the morning and lunchtimes, we have so many different places we can go to hang out with my friends.



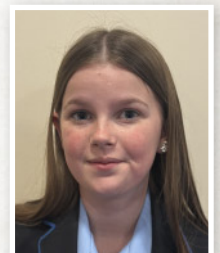
Brodie Stevenson

- Primary School: St Colmcille's, Ballymena
- Class: 8 Layde
- How are you finding SLG?: Very good. The teachers and staff are friendly and always happy to help. My year group is also very nice.
- Favourite Class: Home Economics
- Extracurricular Activities: None yet
- Spare Time: Basketball, PlayStation
- Favourite Thing About SLG: The canteen food!



Sienna Johnston

- Primary School: St Joseph's, Dunloy
- Class: 8 Lir
- How are you finding SLG?: Really enjoying meeting all of the new people
- Favourite Class: PE!!
- Extracurricular Activities: Piano, Gaelic and Camogie
- Spare Time: Camogie and Gaelic
- Favourite Thing About SLG: Friends and all the nice teachers





Faith Development

CELEBRATING THE POPE JOHN PAUL II AWARD RECIPIENTS

On 17 November 2024, six of our outstanding students were honoured with the Pope John Paul II Award at a special ceremony held in All Saints Church. The event, led by Fr Michael McGinnity and Catherine Diamond, the JPPII Coordinator, recognised their exceptional dedication to faith and service within their communities.

These students exemplify the values of leadership, compassion, and commitment celebrated by the Pope John Paul II Award. We are incredibly proud of their achievements and the inspiring example they set for our school community.

Well done to all!

Congratulations to:

**Caoimhe McGroggan, Yelisey Sestakovs,
Sarah O'Callaghan, Edward McKendry**





CULTIVATING AND CREATING THE ST LOUIS CENTENARY GARDEN

A bespoke space and place celebrating the interconnectedness between faith, ecology, and education

In the spirit of Pope Francis' call to care for our common home and inspired by 'Laudato Si', our school community has embarked on a transformative journey to repurpose a space where our nuns were once laid to rest.

The genesis of this project lies in the recognition of the interconnectedness between faith, ecology, and education. Staff and pupils convened to discuss the creation of a space that would serve multiple purposes – a place for quiet prayer/reflection, an avenue for ecological spirituality, and an outdoor classroom for learning and teaching experiences whilst marking the centenary of the school.

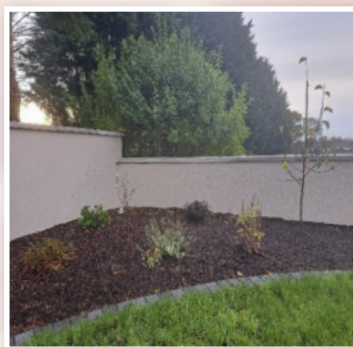
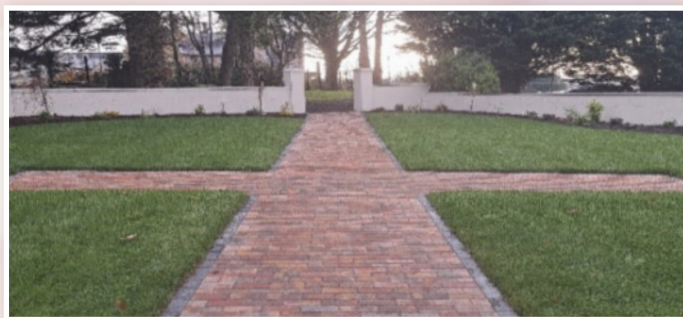


A space and place, transformed

The creation of the St. Louis Garden aligns with the Beatitudes of Pope Francis, specifically the fourth one that emphasises the blessedness of those "who protect and care for our common home". This project contributes to the faith development and formation of our Catholic school community by embodying the principles of 'Laudato Si', and fundamentally incorporating the Seven Goals of 'Laudato Si'. The garden will become a space for reflection, prayer, and communion with nature, fostering a deeper spiritual connection among pupils, staff, parents, the parish, and the wider community – those who use it.

As we tread on this ground, we hope to inspire others to join us on the path of environmental stewardship and the building of God's Kingdom.

Special thanks to Michael McCloskey for donating our beautiful statue of Our Lady.





MEET THE LITURGY TEAM!

We are delighted to formally introduce the members of our Faith Formation Liturgy Team - Molly, Edward, Riona, Harry and Ronan!



Hi, I'm Ronan, I am a Year 14 student and a proud member of the Liturgy Prefect Team. Being part of the Liturgy Prefect Team has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. It gives me the opportunity to actively contribute to the spiritual life of our school and to help shape the liturgical practices that bring our community together. I love the responsibility of assisting in organising Masses, prayer services, and other religious events, ensuring that everything runs smoothly and meaningfully. One of the most rewarding aspects is seeing the impact of our efforts on others. Whether it's through preparing the altar, leading prayers, or helping coordinate student participation, I feel a deep sense of purpose knowing that my actions help deepen the faith of our peers.

The sense of community that comes from working with fellow prefects, teachers, and students in this way is also very special, it fosters a strong bond among us all.

Moreover, being part of the Liturgy Prefect Team has allowed me to develop valuable skills, such as leadership, communication, and teamwork, while also deepening my own spiritual life. It's a privilege to serve in this capacity, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute to our school's liturgical traditions, making them vibrant and meaningful for everyone involved.



Hello, my name is Molly, and I am a member of the Liturgy Prefect Team in St Louis. Being a member of the Liturgy Prefect Team allows me to talk about, live out and promote our faith within our school community. It means I can actively lead, develop and participate in a wide range of events organised with a view to aiding development of my own faith formation and the faith formation of my peers. So far this year, we invited our school community to join with us in praying the Rosary on Monday 7 October -World Rosary Day – in response to Pope Francis’ call to the Christian community to pray for the specific intention of peace in the world. The Liturgy Team also helped to organise a pilgrimage for Sixth Form students to see the relic of St. Bernadette in St. Mary’s Chapel Belfast. Whilst here we were honoured to lead one of the liturgies planned to venerate the relic; this involved praying the rosary, hymn signing provided by our Sixth Form Chamber Choir, it was a very reverent experience and time of prayer that we will all reflect on in the coming years. As a young person of faith, to be part of this team alongside my peers feels inspiring, it gives me hope that my generation will be able to carry on the many traditions and great gifts that the Church has given us over the past 2000 years. Being a part of this team, a team that works so industriously to upkeep the faith handed down to us throughout the generations is something I am beyond grateful for. So, thank you, Lord, for the blessings you have bestowed upon my life. Amen.

Hello! I’m Edward and this year I have the privilege of being a Liturgy Prefect in St Louis. Some of you might be wondering what exactly this consists of. I’ll try my best to explain. What does this big word ‘liturgy’ mean and why is it important in school life? Liturgy is a chance for man to meet God in a simple, beautiful, and personal way; it can take many forms and styles and often knocks on the door of peoples’ hearts to allow God into their lives in a special way. For us as a team (and me personally), we have the ability to create an environment that is alive in Christ; an environment that promotes encounter, growth and love of Christ and places this at the core of life in St Louis. The organisation of faith formation events in school allows us to encounter Him who loves us, and to encounter Him as we interact with each other. I pray that our efforts enable every member of our school community, both past and present, to know the love of Christ.

Hello everyone, my name is Riona, and I am a proud and privileged member of the Liturgy Prefect Team here at St. Louis. The liturgy prefects work in harmony and unity as a team to promote faith through our school. St. Louis is a Catholic school, and it is such a privilege for me as a young person of faith to bear witness to my faith proudly in my school environment. Our team works to schedule events inside and outside school, to help promote faith development for all here at St. Louis. We are so lucky here to have our own Oratory, located in the original convent building, which we can use for prayer sessions, Masses and individual prayer and quiet time. It is a unique feature and has such beautiful embellishments which makes it a spiritual, comfortable and special place for students to get away from the stresses of life when they need to. Faith is so important for the entire community here at St. Louis and is deeply embedded into the culture and ethos of our school. It helps to keep us focused, calm and protected and to strengthen us when we experience times of difficulty in all aspects of our life. We as a team, are dedicated to bringing this to all, giving opportunities to express our beliefs proudly and putting our faith into action. Following our school motto “Ut Sint Unum” that they may be one, our faith formation work helps to guide us together with its sense of community.

Hello, my name is Harry and I am also proud to introduce myself as a member of the Liturgy Prefect Team in St Louis. It is an honour to be part of this team and to be afforded the platform to lead and bear witness to my faith, which is a huge part of my identity as a young Catholic and Christian. I am delighted that my school family has afforded me such a rich opportunity to develop the faith that has been taught to me by my family; a faith that I practice at home and is such a huge part of my life. Being a Liturgy Prefect has broadened my horizons by giving me the opportunity to promote the Word of God in school. For example, just last month, we were honoured to visit the relic of St Bernadette and lead the Hourly Water, Rosary and Litany Liturgy. This alone was a wonderful event and it was so reassuring to see such a public out-pouring of faith on the streets of Belfast. This experience is one among many that will resonate with me throughout my life, long after I have left St Louis.





A 'ONCE-IN-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE' FOR THE STUDENTS OF ST LOUIS!

On Wednesday, 16 October 2024, the Religious Studies Department accompanied a group of Sixth Form students to St Mary's Chapel, Belfast, to venerate the relic of St Bernadette of Lourdes as part of its inaugural pilgrimage to Ireland. The relic of St Bernadette, during its nationwide tour, will visit every diocese in Ireland.

This 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience was made even more extraordinary and memorable for our students, as they were humbled and honoured to be invited by Fr Tim Bartlett, P.P. of St Mary's Parish, Belfast, to lead the 11:00 am 'Hourly Liturgy of Water Gesture, Rosary, and Litany'. This formed part of the planned programme to venerate the relics in the chapel on Wednesday.

The student delegation included AS and A2 Religious Studies students; members of the Sixth Form Liturgy Team; members of the Sixth Form Chamber Choir; and Sixth Form students who expressed a desire to attend. This unique and extraordinary experience provided our Sixth Form cohort with an opportunity to encounter the special gifts and charism of Lourdes within their diocese. Students expressed the sense of privilege they felt in attending and participating in the liturgy, sharing what the experience meant to them as young Catholics today.

'It was a lovely and calming experience that was enjoyable too. We were all privileged to take part in the veneration of the relics; it was nice to hear about St Bernadette's importance to both young people and those who are sick. It was an experience I'm very grateful for and won't forget.'

'Visiting the relic of St Bernadette was a very special and peaceful experience. Being near something connected to such an important figure of faith was deeply touching. The atmosphere around the relic was calm and respectful, with people from all over coming to pay their respects. Seeing how much St Bernadette still means to so many, even after all these years, made me feel more connected to my own faith. The trip was a beautiful reminder of hope and the power of belief.'

'Visiting the relics was a memorable experience as we all got to share the significance and importance of St Bernadette as a school community. Seeing how all groups and ages of people shared the same love and peace from the presence of St Bernadette's relics was calming and reinforced the importance of our Faith in carrying us through day-to-day life.'

St Bernadette, pray for us!



*I shall do everything for Heaven, my true home.
There I shall find my Mother in all the splendour of her glory.
I shall delight with her in the joy of Jesus Himself.*

Saint Bernadette



KEVIN HEFFRON

Everyone at St Louis Grammar School would like to congratulate our past pupil, Br Kevin Heffron C.Ss. R who made his first progression of vows with the Redemptorist Order in September at Clonard Monastery in Belfast.

The importance of following your heart

“When I felt the desire to join religious life, the congregation I was being called to join was obvious. I wanted to join the congregation which I had known from my youth, and who had been so good to me and my family throughout the years. The Redemptorists! There was no very profound reason why I joined the Redemptorists. I felt that because I knew them and admired them, I would join them. My advice to anyone deciding what to do with their future would be the same. I would say that if you do what you love, you will work fewer days in your life. In my training for the priesthood, I still have to do university studies, so I definitely work some days! However, because I know that I love the practical side of religious life where I get to meet people in our parish and interact with them, I am able to tolerate the academic side.

After my time in Saint Louis, I went on to study theology in Queen’s University. For many, this might be a very strange subject choice. However, because I knew that I was hoping to enter religious life, I understood my studies to be purposeful as they would help me to fulfil my hopes. The best advice I can offer to you is to try and do what you love. Under religious vows, I know that my life choices will not make me a successful businessman, but they will allow me to be myself and live the life which I feel I have been chosen for. To end, I will rely on the wisdom of Oscar Wilde “*Be yourself; everyone else is taken*”.

Kevin Heffron





MATHS WEEK IRELAND 12-20 October 2024

St. Louis Grammar, Ballymena, celebrated Maths Week Ireland 2024 with an exciting programme of events designed to spark enthusiasm for Mathematics across all year groups.

The week featured the SLG 1% Club, a form class competition where pupils tackled challenging questions testing their logic, reasoning, and common sense with a mathematical twist. By the end of the week, 12 form classes had earned the prestigious title of SLG 1% Club winners:

- C Kelly & 8 Lyndon
- L Barker & 8 Lisbreen
- L McCrory & 9 Lisbreen
- C McVeigh & 9 Layde
- P Trainor & 11 Lismoyle,
- McToal & 12 Lisbreen
- C O'Boyle & 12 Lurig
- P Murray & 12 Lir
- D Boyd & 12 Laragh
- S Pickering & 157
- J Fleming & 142
- C McDonnell & 146

The week also included the Maths Week Olympiad, where students from Years 8 to 11 competed to win certificates ranging from Bronze to Platinum, and the launch of the KS5 Maths Club, offering younger pupils the chance to explore problem-solving with the support of Sixth Form Numeracy Mentors.

A highlight of the celebrations was the Year 10 trip to Queen's University, Belfast, for the annual Maths Week Ireland Lecture. This year, "The Mathemagician," Andrew Jeffrey, captivated the audience with his fascinating blend of magic and Mathematics centred on the Rubik's Cube. It was a memorable week of fun, learning, and mathematical discovery, showcasing the creativity and enjoyment that Maths can bring to the school community.

Last week, a group of us were fortunate to be selected for a Maths trip to Queen's University in Belfast. Initially, I wasn't sure what to expect and thought it might not be particularly exciting. However, I quickly realised it was a fantastic opportunity to explore what Queen's University is like.

Upon arrival, we were taken into an impressive lecture room with tiered seating that stretched high above the floor—a stark contrast to our school classrooms. The session was led by Andrew Jeffrey, and it began with an engaging presentation. We learnt about square numbers, cube numbers, and triangular numbers, which was both educational and captivating. One of the highlights was Andrew's incredible magic tricks, many of which involved the Rubik's Cube. He even brought up volunteers for challenges, making what could have been a routine presentation into an interactive and enjoyable experience.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the trip and would love to participate in something like this again in the future.

Aine Robb, 10LB

As a brilliant way to conclude Maths Week, a group of around 20 pupils and I had the exciting opportunity to visit Queen's University in Belfast. The trip was both educational and enjoyable, offering fascinating insights into the history of the Rubik's Cube and a range of intriguing mathematical tricks and patterns.

The experience was inspiring, providing a glimpse into university life while sparking our curiosity and appreciation for the creativity within mathematics.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Mrs Casey, Miss Warnock, Miss McToal, and everyone involved in organising such a memorable and engaging event.

Amber Anderson, 10LR

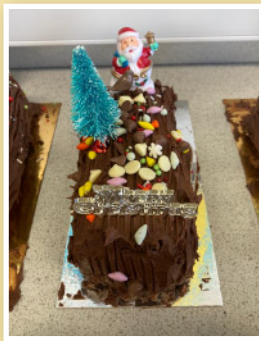




FESTIVE FUN IN HOME ECONOMICS

As the holiday season approaches, the spirit of Christmas has taken over the kitchens of our school, where Year 8 students have embraced the joy of Yule log making and baking for Christmas.

Our young chefs have come together to create delightful Yule logs that not only taste delicious but also reflect the festive spirit.



ENGLISH CHRISTMAS TRIPS

A Christmas Carol

A group of 65 Year 9 pupils enjoyed a great day out at The Lyric, in Belfast on Friday 15th December seeing a production of the novel they are currently studying in English, "A Christmas Carol"





The Adventures of Red Riding Hood

An exciting day out for 180 Year 8 students as they visited The Mac, Belfast to see “The Adventures of Red Riding Hood” on Wednesday 11th December. This was a lovely opportunity for Year 8s to experience theatre and ties in with the “Fairytale” unit they study in English this year, along with lots of other cross-curricular links. A brilliant and enriching experience for all, and pupils got great enjoyment from the comical twists brought in this version of the classic fairytale.

“A fun-filled adventure with some fairytale characters including Red Riding Hood, the Big Bad Wolf, Goldilocks and lots more. Red Riding Hood was on her way to her grandmother’s cottage when her red hood gets stolen – so she spent the performance on a mission to get it back! My favourite character was the Big Bad Wolf – he was very humorous when he was practising his roar. He had very good acting and performance skills.” Sarah Convery

“My favourite part of the play was when Timmy, who was in charge of cyber security, turned up to show us the dangers of the online world while still being fun and energetic! He was my favourite character because he was so animated and funny while still showing us the dangers of identity theft and online safety.” Erin Fawl





MOCK INTERVIEWS

A recent Mock Multiple Mini Interview (MMI) evening at St Louis offered Year 14 students a valuable opportunity to gain practical experience and guidance, thanks to the support and expertise of past pupils and medical professionals. Led by distinguished alumna Dr. Carol Wilson, a highly respected physician and role model, the event provided aspiring healthcare students with an engaging platform to refine their interview skills.

The MMI format, widely utilised in medical school admissions, assesses candidates through timed scenarios that evaluate key attributes such as communication, ethical reasoning, and critical thinking. Recognising the significance of thorough preparation, Dr. Wilson, along with a dedicated team of past pupils, parents, and medical professionals, generously volunteered their time to simulate the interview environment.

Their feedback and insights left students feeling better equipped and more confident about their future applications.

Participants described the experience as transformative. One student remarked, *"Getting feedback from people who've been through the process was incredibly helpful. I feel much more prepared and motivated now."*

This event highlighted the strong bonds between past pupils and the school, demonstrating how such connections continue to inspire and empower the next generation of professionals.





YEAR 11 ENGLISH BLITZ

On Wednesday 15th of November, Year 11 pupils took part in the English GCSE Revision Blitz. This blitz spanned across 5 hours and students received a bespoke revision session for all 5 tasks that would come up in their GCSE exam on 15th November. Teachers worked collaboratively to create engaging and effective revision sessions to equip the pupils for their first ever GCSE! Sixth Form English mentors were also a great help on the day, helping Year 11s with ideas as they completed group work and individual tasks.



I really enjoyed this blitz as I thought it was really useful to get tips from a range of teachers in the lead up to the exam. We gained new experiences, learning how to do a task in a different way than we might normally have done it. I would definitely love to do it again for English and even other subjects too!

Mya Carroll 11 Laragh



Firstly, my class - 11 Laragh - went over Section A of the Unit 1 paper with Miss Barker. We had a walking debate where we had to decide on the most important elements to include in our persuasive writing essays, and then worked together to practice writing effective paragraphs for a range of questions that could come up in the exam. We got to use peer assessment to mark these, as well as receiving feedback from our teacher and two Sixth Form Prefects who were there to help us out! Next, we went to Miss McNeill and she discussed Task 2 and 5 with us. We practised writing PETAL paragraphs here and worked together in small groups to point out techniques in an extract, and worked to discuss the effect of these. Lastly, we went over Task 4 and 5 with Miss Murray who got us involved in alphabet analysers to remember techniques, helped us with practice PETALs and worked with us to create points based on colour, image and layout for a range of images that could come up in Task 5!





BOOK WEEK NI

What a fantastic week we had celebrating Book Week NI (21st–27th October 2024)!

We began the week with a Year 8 Prize-Giving Assembly to honour the Summer Reading Challenge winners. One winner from each class received a Waterstones book voucher for their outstanding book reviews. Well done to all pupils who took part!

This year, our Year 8 pupils were thrilled to participate in the Book Buzz Programme, which promotes reading for pleasure. During Library lessons in Book Week NI, they received their chosen free book, selected back in September, to keep and enjoy.

Competitions were held in the Library at lunchtimes throughout the week for all year groups. The celebrations culminated in the Year 8 Club book-based quiz, with books and sweet treats as prizes. What a fantastic way to end our fun-filled week! Congratulations to all our well-deserving Book Week NI winners!





VIVA ESPAÑA!

An Unforgettable Spanish Adventure for Our GCSE Students



This year, our GCSE Spanish students embarked on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to Spain, immersing themselves in the vibrant culture, rich history, and thrilling attractions of Catalonia. From the bustling streets of Barcelona to the tranquil beaches of Salou, every moment was packed with excitement, learning, and unforgettable memories.

Exploring Barcelona: A City of Wonders

Our adventure began in the heart of Barcelona, a city bursting with life, art, and history. Wandering through the narrow streets of the Gothic Quarter, we marvelled at the stunning architecture, lively markets, and vibrant energy. Students practiced their Spanish skills while ordering tapas at local restaurants and discovering the city's unique blend of modernity and tradition. The highlight for football fans was undoubtedly the Spotify Camp Nou Experience. Exploring the home of FC Barcelona, we learned about the club's rich history and relived some of its greatest moments.

The Serenity of Montserrat

Next, we ventured to Montserrat, a mountain retreat known for its breathtaking views, cultural significance, and spiritual ambiance. Taking the cable car to the monastery perched high above the valley was an awe-inspiring experience. Surrounded by nature and stunning rock formations, students enjoyed a moment of tranquillity while learning about Montserrat's history and its role in Catalan culture.

Hands-On Learning at CosmoCaixa

Our visit to CosmoCaixa, Barcelona's renowned science museum, was both educational and entertaining. Students explored interactive exhibits on topics ranging from space exploration to environmental science. The hands-on displays and immersive activities sparked curiosity and left us all in awe of the wonders of science and technology.



Thrills and Fun in Salou

The seaside town of Salou offered a perfect blend of relaxation and adrenaline. Our group spent an unforgettable day at Port Aventura, one of Europe's top theme parks. From heart-pounding roller coasters to water rides and live shows, there was something for everyone to enjoy.

For a more laid-back evening, we headed to Diverland, where students competed in a fun-filled bowling night. Laughter and cheers filled the air as strikes and spares brought out our competitive sides!

A Taste of Spanish Culture

One of the most memorable experiences was the traditional flamenco show hosted at our hotel. The rhythmic clapping, soulful guitar, and passionate dancing captivated everyone. It was a beautiful glimpse into the heart of Spanish culture, leaving us mesmerized and inspired.

Retail Therapy at Maremagnum

No trip would be complete without a little shopping! Our last day took us to the Maremagnum shopping centre, a lively and picturesque spot by the waterfront. Students picked up souvenirs and practiced their Spanish while interacting with shopkeepers, and enjoyed the vibrant atmosphere of this bustling location.

Memories to Last a Lifetime

As we boarded the flight home, it was clear that this trip had left a lasting impression on everyone. From cultural discoveries to thrilling adventures, the journey brought our group closer together and deepened our appreciation for Spain's incredible heritage. This unforgettable trip wasn't just about sightseeing; it was about immersing ourselves in a new culture, creating lifelong memories, and building confidence in our Spanish-speaking abilities.

***We can't wait for our next adventure—
¡hasta la próxima, España!***





The Barcelona trip was truly an experience of a lifetime!

As the year group that missed out on our Year 10 skiing trip due to the pandemic, I was absolutely buzzing to have the chance to go abroad with my peers. We arrived at the airport bright and early, smiles spread across our faces, all thrilled to be heading to Spain.

The plane journey was so much fun, and I had already started making new friends. Once we landed, we jumped straight into action with a guided bus tour around Barcelona, taking in incredible sights like La Sagrada Familia.

On day two, we visited Montserrat before heading to Cosmocaixa, the science museum, where we saw fascinating animals and experiments. Day three was my favourite – I faced my fears on some of the biggest and fastest roller coasters in Europe!

Our final day was spent shopping and enjoying a virtual tour of Camp Nou. It was so interesting to learn about the history of the club. In the evenings, we relaxed by the pool and played fun games with friends.

The weather was beautiful throughout the trip, adding to the experience. I made so many new friends and am so grateful to our amazing teachers for organising such a brilliant adventure.

With late nights, early starts, and non-stop activities, it was an action-packed and unforgettable trip!

Lauren Burns



I am honoured to have been one of 25 pupils who took part in this year's trip to Barcelona.

It was a wonderful opportunity and a beautiful experience, filled with moments I will cherish forever! I had an amazing time with my friends and even grew closer to people I hadn't known so well before.

We learned about Spain's fascinating culture, traditions, and history while exploring Barcelona's breathtaking sights- from the divinity of La Sagrada Familia to the panoramic views from Montserrat.

Evenings were spent enjoying game nights, debriefs, and refreshing swims in the pool. The most memorable day for me was, by far, our visit to Port Aventura. It was such a surreal and adrenaline-fuelled experience- I loved every minute of it, even though I was terrified at first!

Our final day included a tour of Camp Nou and plenty of shopping. Although I was looking forward to seeing everyone back home, it wasn't until we were on the bus to the airport that I realised just how much fun I'd had in such a short few days. I had learned so many new things, made wonderful new friends, and created countless unforgettable memories to look back on!

I am incredibly thankful to the Spanish department for making this trip possible. I've learned so much more than just a language!

Vanessa Sige





PRESIDENT'S AWARD

15 St Louis pupils had a summer to remember when they completed their Gold and Silver Canoe Expeditions for the President's / DofE Award on the Dordogne River in France.

All members of 7th Ballymena (All Saints) Scout Group, their 5 & 4 day expeditions included challenging water conditions, capsizes, very wet weather and wild camping. They were rewarded with amazing natural scenery and some beautiful days! Congratulations to Cillian, Ben, Aaron, Amelia, Luke C, Ryan, Isabella, Luke M, Louisa, John, Roisin, Colm & Alana.



RYOBI VISIT 2024

Year 14 BTEC Engineering students enjoyed a visit to Ryobi Aluminium Casting UK Ltd.

The students got a chance to see the processes up close, understand the various roles and opportunities that exist in Engineering.



ADDRESSING BULLYING HEAD PREFECTS



Hello, my name is Keira Young and I am delighted to be one of the St. Louis 'Addressing Bullying' Head Prefects. We aim to make the school a safe place, full of respect and trust by ensuring that all students feel comfortable and included. We are happy to offer any advice and answer any questions you may have, so please feel free to approach any one of us for help. No one should have to suffer in silence and I want to help anyone who should find themselves in that position.



Hi, My name is Patrick O'Neill and I am a Deputy Head Boy in St. Louis for the academic year 2024/2025.

I am also responsible for our team of 'Addressing Bullying' Prefects this year. The Prefects will always be there as an outlet for you to come to, whether it is in the case of experiencing bullying behaviours yourself, or if you have seen a child displaying bullying behaviours. Remember, knowing what is right doesn't mean much unless you do what is right. We will always be available for you to speak to and will make time for you, so feel free to approach us at any time.

Hi, my name is Niamh O'Shea, and this year I have been very fortunate to be given the role of Head Prefect for Addressing Bullying. Our goal is to create a positive school environment where all pupils feel comfortable and can enjoy their time at St Louis. If you are experiencing bullying, or know of someone who is, we provide a safe place to let your problems be heard. We are happy to give any advice, and also be a friendly face to chat to, throughout the school day.



Hello, my name is John McGrogan, and I am one of the Head Prefects with responsibility for Addressing Bullying. It is the aim of the Addressing Bullying team to create a sure and safe environment for our students, as well as offer support to those who need it. If you or anyone you know are experiencing bullying behaviour inside or outside of school, we are here to listen and offer support as we understand it may be intimidating to approach a member of staff. If you have any concerns, I am more than happy to help.



Prefects will be located in the creativity hub at break time every Friday for any pupil to have a chat. Pupils can approach prefects in the corridor by looking out for their yellow 'Addressing Bullying' badges.

Other Anti-Bullying Prefects include:

Ben Donaghy
Aine Donnelly
Hannah Friel
Orran Mayo
Aidan McNeill
Ruairi Robb

Knowing what is right
Doesn't mean much



Unless you are doing what is right!





INTERNATIONAL CHEMISTRY OLYMPIAD

Saudi Arabia

This summer, I had the privilege of representing Ireland at the International Chemistry Olympiad in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (21st–30th July). This ten-day trip provided me with unforgettable memories and was undoubtedly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

I was selected for the Olympiad team based on my performance in an online exam in February, followed by a written exam at DCU in April. In June, I travelled to Trinity College Dublin for two days of practical laboratory training, where I met my fellow teammates and became acquainted with technical chemical apparatus far beyond anything I had encountered at SLG.

On 20th July, the team and I travelled to Dublin Airport for our early-morning flight to Riyadh. To say the trip had a rocky start would be an understatement. An hour before our expected arrival time, we began a rapid descent. Upon touchdown, we discovered that a technical fault with the plane had forced us to land—not in the Arabian capital—but in Basra, Iraq, of all places. If anything can force four students and two mentors to bond quickly, it's an emergency landing! Thankfully, after a stressful few hours, we were able to board a connecting flight and finally arrived in Riyadh.

Upon arrival, we were transported to our accommodation for the week at King Saud University. We had to quickly adjust to the caustic Arabian heat (40°C), Saudi cuisine, and their prized delicacy of coffee and dates. After registering, we were required to relinquish our phones, smartwatches, and laptops to ensure we couldn't communicate with our mentors and thereby cheat during the competition—a somewhat unwelcome digital detox.

Over the ten days, I met individuals from all over the world: Denmark, Japan, Syria, Kyrgyzstan, Australia, Peru, and many more. My roommate was Milo, from France, with whom I remain in contact to this day. On one occasion, I even gave my friend Nicholas from Costa Rica advice about his upcoming trip to Belfast! I was struck by the universality of the English language—how fortunate we are to speak it, and the importance of learning and preserving languages as a cornerstone of culture.

I have many stand-out memories from my time in Saudi. On one of our first nights, the team and I played cards for hours with the Georgian, American, and Italian teams—



a session that eventually turned into an unusual international version of karaoke. We visited the historic town of Diriyah, the former home of the Saudi royal family, as well as various shopping centres and museums. Our trip also coincided with the All-Ireland Football Final, which we watched at the Irish Embassy. The contrast between the familiarity of a GAA match and the backdrop of a Middle Eastern city was almost surreal, and it was a particular highlight of the trip.

The Olympiad itself consisted of a five-hour practical exam and a five-hour theoretical exam. The practical exam came first and involved several experiments, including determining the oxalic acid content of turmeric and performing thin-layer chromatography. The theoretical exam, two days later, was equally demanding, covering a wide range of physical, organic, inorganic, and analytical chemistry. I was greatly inspired by the sheer intelligence of the other competitors. One conversation with a Moldovan team member stands out, where she casually mentioned her full-ride scholarship to Yale as though commenting on the weather!

Although I did not win a medal at the Olympiad, the whole experience was simply extraordinary. I am extremely grateful to the St. Louis Chemistry Department for the opportunity to enter the first round. I encourage all A-Level Chemistry students to take part in future Chemistry Olympiads— you never know where it might take you!

Conn Fyfe





EXPLORING THE WORLD OF CIVIL ENGINEERING

CIVILisation Belfast Day

On a grey October day, St. Louis students Andrzej Smolinski, Oisín Doherty, and Hugo Quinn ventured to Queen's University Belfast with Mrs McClintock to attend the CIVILisation Belfast Day, a unique event showcasing the fascinating world of civil engineering.

The day began in the David Keir Building, where the opening statement left a lasting impression: *"Engineers save more lives than doctors."* While surprising at first, as Andrzej Smolinski reflected, *"The delivery of clean drinking water around the world actually makes this a reasonable claim."*

The event highlighted the immense effort and precision required in civil engineering projects, from the hidden complexities beneath Belfast's iconic landmarks to the innovative measures protecting the city. Students explored the intricate planning behind structures like Victoria Square and the new Transport Hub, gaining a newfound appreciation for the foundation work that ensures their stability.

A highlight of the day was witnessing the Belfast Weir in action. Watching it *"creep open very slowly"* to protect the city from flooding left the students in awe of the critical yet understated role civil engineers play in safeguarding communities.

The Department of Civil Engineering at QUB showcased its collaborative work with leading companies, introducing students to exciting apprenticeship opportunities and career pathways. The event underscored how civil engineering offers not only intellectual challenges but also the chance to make a tangible difference in the world.

As Andrzej summed up: *"The care put into simple, but critical tasks, is admirable."*

For anyone considering a future in civil engineering, it's a career that combines problem-solving with the profound satisfaction of building a better world.





Centenary Celebrations

CENTENARY GALA BALL

500 guests enjoyed a wonderful evening celebrating the Centenary of St Louis Grammar on Saturday 9th November at Tullyglass House Hotel.

International star of 'Celtic Woman', Tara McNeill, and her husband, concert pianist, Alexander Bernstein, performed a special medley of songs. Jason Donnelly and his Ta Da Dance Company kept the audience entertained with an energetic set of Irish dance favourites and screenwriter, Declan Lawn, reminisced about his own school days on the Hill of Kintullagh and the special influence that his St Louis education continues to have on him to this day.

Past and present pupils and staff enjoyed a night that fondly looked back on the school's history, from its foundation by the Sisters of St Louis in 1924 with just 35 girls enrolled, to the present day, when 1,200 students make the daily journey to the Hill of Kintullagh.

The proceeds of the night, a magnificent total of £50,000, will go towards two new Science rooms, providing a modern, classroom environment for students from Year 8 to Year 14.

Thank you to everyone who attended and to our sponsors and past pupils, whose support has made such a tremendous difference to the school this year: The JAQ Group, The Macklin Group, Hill Vellacott, Creagh Concrete, Tughans, Larsen Building Products, Bathshack and Fibrus. Thank you also to our prize sponsors: McKeever Hotels, Contact Marketing, Galgorm Collection, The Boatyard Distillery, Ballymena Shamrocks, BH McKeague Opticians and Audiocare.



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THE ST LOUIS CENTENARY BOOK

by Derval Fitzsimons

The call came in December 2023 from an old classmate, Margaret Henry. Would I consider helping produce a booklet to mark the school's 100th anniversary? How could I say no to a friend of 50 years. And so a small group of us embarked on a journey that would last almost the entire year.

The book committee, as we became known, consisted of past pupils Margaret Henry, Mary Merron, Dolores O'Loan, Roisin Lynch and myself, former pupil and teacher Mary McCarthy, retired school Secretary Maire McCormack and St Louis Head of RE Shauna Rose Pickering.

We began work just after Christmas trying to piece together a history of the school from its inception in 1924 to the present day.

I have been a journalist most of my life, having started writing for the Ballymena Guardian while I was still at school. However, our task was complicated by the fact that I now live in South West Montana in the heart of the Rockies.

Thank goodness for technology - all our meetings were conducted online and while I interviewed, researched and

wrote the history, the committee members were sifting through and sourcing hundreds of photographs and documents spanning 100 years. Together we were able to uncover previously unpublished material which gives a unique insight into the history of St Louis.

The school that we know today was born when four brave sisters came to Ballymena from Monaghan at the behest of the All Saints Parish Priest Canon Thomas O'Donnell. Together, they created for us a solid foundation in both education and in the Catholic ethos. It took less than 100 years for St Louis to be named the top school in Northern Ireland.

"Our First Century at Kintullagh" was launched at a special event at the school on December 7, 2024. Storm Darragh did its best to thwart us, but despite the awful weather a huge crowd turned out for the launch and to reminisce about their days on the Hill of Kintullagh. A huge thank you to everyone who was there and to all of those who contributed to the book.

It started out life as a booklet but today stands as a tribute to all those parents, pupils, sisters and staff who have made St Louis what it is today.





'OUR FIRST CENTURY AT KINTULLAGH'

Centenary Book Launch

The launch of 'Our First Century at Kintullagh' took place in December. We were delighted to be joined by the author of the book, Derval Fitzsimons, as well as contributors and past pupils, Olivia Nash (1955-1960), Kate McCann (1969-1976), Marianne O'Kane (1980-1987) and Seán O'Boyle (1980-1987).

The audience were thoroughly entertained as our contributors reminisced about their schooldays.

Olivia Nash recounted her first day as a boarder at St Louis and the shock that her parents and grandad received when they realised it would just be Olivia and one other girl, Ann McNicholl, boarding in the Convent! Olivia recalled that after the day girls had all gone home – she and Ann would be taken down into the empty school to study.

Kate McCann's memories included hiding in a vaulting horse during PE and then under an oil tank to avoid class, invariably being caught by teachers. Head Girl, Marianne O'Kane, recalled an infamous incident involving the statue of St Louis in the main foyer as well as the leadership of the women of St Louis.

Head Boy in 1987, Seán O'Boyle, spoke movingly about the inspiring teachers at St Louis including Sister Sheila,

Roberta Thompson and Declan Martin and how St Louis remains an exemplar in education.

It was a lovely way in which to bring our Centenary celebrations to a close whilst looking forward to the next 100 years of St Louis in Ballymena.

Full of photographs and illustrations from the last 100 years, 'Our First Century at Kintullagh' is a must-have for everyone associated with St Louis. Now available from the school the book is a perfect Christmas gift for those families and friends who have experienced the very special St Louis values system and the school's family centred approach to education.

Purchase your copy at friendsofstlouisballymena.com



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SLG ALUMNI *Where are they now?*

John Shannon (1998- 2005)

John Shannon was in St Louis recently to present Mr Gillan and Mrs O'Neill with some new sports kit. John runs his own construction and facilities management company, Sx5 (Shannon Site Solutions), and has generously agreed to sponsor the jerseys for the junior teams this year.

Having left St Louis in 2005 it was John's first time back on the Hill of Kintullagh. He was delighted to see some of the development that has taken place.

John said, "Coming from an engineering background it is lovely to see how the new Centre of Excellence for Creative and Expressive Arts has been so sensitively integrated with the refurbished Kintullagh House. I've always had an interest in the restoration of old buildings and the work on Kintullagh House has been beautifully done. What a place to have your music lessons!"

John was the first of his family to attend St Louis, followed by brothers, Vincent, Peter and Neil. His sister, Susan, was the last of his siblings to attend and only left in 2025. Having studied Maths, Technology and History at A level John went on to do a Civil Engineering degree at Queen's. However, after two years he decided to leave.

John explained, "I have always been very clear as to what I need to do to get to where I want to be. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at St Louis and have to say that the teachers are really wonderful. Anytime I see them around they always say hello and ask after us all.

When I started university I could see that full time studying wasn't for me, I wanted to work and learn the skills I felt would be most

useful for me in my career. It was the right decision. From working as a senior engineer on the development of The Dub playing fields in Belfast to working for Bradley's in Kilrea things progressed very quickly and it wasn't long until I felt the time was right to strike out on my own.

I formed Shannon Site Solutions in 2015 and we now provide fit out and maintenance services for some of the biggest companies locally including Asda, Co-Op, Home Bargains, KFC, M&S, Howdens and Junction One. We also built Belfast Self-Storage warehouse, which everyone instantly recognises – the large blue and yellow building off Kennedy Way which you see from the M1 – it was, and still is, a great advert for us"

When asked if he had any advice for pupils today at St Louis, John recounted a story about winning contracts with some of the multinationals he now works with.

"I am confident on a worksite and have no problem ensuring that everyone is doing what they need to be doing! However put me in front of senior managers from any of our larger clients and I can get somewhat nervous. I recognised that as the company grew this was a problem and so I talked to a business coach about the best way to overcome this. And, while I still don't look forward to it, I knew that for me and the company to succeed I had to. I would encourage pupils that no matter what they end up doing in their careers to always recognise that you can continually be improving. I believe that my resilience and openness to learning was instilled in me at St Louis and for that I am very grateful".



John Shannon with Principal Mrs O'Neill, Director of Funding and Engagement Marcus Cooper, Director of Sport Mr Gillan, hurling star PJ Molloy, and Gaelic football star Conor Burns



Belfast Self Storage, which John's company built



NEW SCIENCE ROOMS

As well as celebrating the last one hundred years of St Louis in 2024 we are also looking forward to our next century.

Over the last five years we have developed new facilities for arts, drama and music through the Centre of Excellence for Creative and Expressive Arts as well as new 5G pitches for sports. These facilities have elevated the pupils' experience of school. Everyone involved with St Louis has been inspired by the new surroundings and infrastructure.

We are now planning two new Science rooms, where modern facilities will transform the students' experience of Science and prepare them in the best possible way for university and the workplace. The new rooms will complement current provision and enable all Science lessons to take place in fully equipped rooms as well as showcasing what updated facilities can achieve.

This key project, due to be completed by next September, will enable the next generation of scientists and entrepreneurs from St Louis to thrive.

We will be launching a special opportunity in 2025 to enable you and your family to be part of the legacy of St Louis and to help make the new Science rooms a reality.

If you would like to hear more about how you can be involved, please contact our Director of Engagement and Development, Marcus Cooper.

E: development@stlouisgrammar.com

T: 028 2564 9534.



Past pupils Eoin McMullan (2010) & Conor McCaffrey (2004) were delighted to hear about our plans for the new rooms while Rose and Shea from Year 9 explained how much they enjoy the practical elements of Science at St Louis.



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onefund

Thank you to everyone who has signed up to the new St Louis One Fund (previously the Voluntary Contribution). We're delighted that so many parents are now giving on a monthly basis to help the school provide the resources needed to continue to support all our pupils.

The One Fund helps to ensure that additional literacy and numeracy support is available as well as counselling and mentoring, sports, arts and IT equipment and the numerous high quality extra curricular activities that allow every child in our care to thrive.

So far this year your support has enabled the school to purchase 18 laptops for classes which need them. Our desktop computers are fixed and extra laptops mean that all pupils in each class now have to access to devices without putting extra stress on our main server. It also means we can be flexible as to where they are used, depending on demand.

Thank you for all your support, it is very much appreciated. For more information on how to join the One Fund please contact our Director of Engagement and Fund Development, Marcus Cooper, E: development@stlouisgrammar.com T: 028 2564 9534

Parent Lucian Bencze recently called into St Louis to donate a laptop for use by pupils in need. Lucian's company, GroutGleam Ireland, had committed to this generous gesture as part of their Christmas corporate giving. Thank you Lucian.

For information on how your company can support pupils at St Louis please contact Marcus.



Lucian Bencze, GroutGleam Ireland, and Ana Bencze (Yr 15) present a new laptop to Marcus



UPCOMING DATES

Christmas Holidays Monday 25th December 2024 – Friday 5th January 2025

Staff Development Day (pupils should not attend) Monday 6th January

Year 10 Ski Trip Saturday 4th – Saturday 11th January

Open Nights Wednesday 22nd and Thursday 23rd January

Staff Development Day (pupils should not attend) Friday 24th January

Year 15 Parent/Teacher Meeting Monday 28th January

Year 15 Romania Trip Tuesday 4th – Tuesday 11th February

Half-Term Holiday Monday 10th – Monday 14th February

Year 8 Parent/Teacher Meeting Tuesday 18th February

Years 11 Parent/Teacher Meeting Tuesday 25th February

Years 8, 9 and 10 Book Fair (Library) Wednesday 5th – Friday 7th March

Staff Development Day (pupils should not attend) Friday 14th March

St Patricks Day Holiday Monday 17th March

Year 9 Parent/Teacher Meeting Tuesday 25th March

Spring Concert Tuesday 15th April

Staff Development Day (pupils should not attend) Thursday 17th April

Easter Holidays Friday 18th – Friday 25th April

Excellence, Endeavour & Empowerment





Winter Edition | December 2024

The Newsletter of St Louis Grammar School, Ballymena



1924-2024